

URBAN DEVELOPMENT, CITY MANAGEMENT, AND PEOPLE'S LIVES:

A VIEW FROM THE CHANGING STREETS OF LESHAN

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING

BY

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MUNCIE, INDIANA

DECEMBER 2020

ABSTRACT

THESIS: Urban Development, City Management and People's Lives: A View from the
Changing Streets of Leshan

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DEGREE: Master of Urban and Regional Planning

COLLEGE: Architecture and Planning

DATE: December 2020

PAGES: 147

This study examines the changes of two streets in Leshan for studying how the modernization was carried out in a middle-level western city in China since 1979. It specifically focuses on how the changes in urban planning, city management, and people's use of space have been reflected in the change of the streets. The change furtherly reveals how the power of space was gradually transferred from people to the government in this process. In addition, analyze the vibrance that the city has lost behind the achievement of infrastructure construction and economic development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis gave me a chance to explore the possible answers to the confusion I had during my study of urban planning and I could not achieve this without the guidance of my thesis advisor Professor Nihal Perera, as well as my other committee members, Professor John West and Professor Jennifer Erickson. I want to thank them for helping me bring up questions about my study and guide me through my confusion. Special appreciation to Professor Nihal Perera's dedication to teaching me how to have a reflection on my research through writing.

This thesis is the result of the accomplishment of my two-year study at Ball State University. I would like to thank the Department of Urban Planning, Ball State University for supporting my study with graduate assistantship for two years and people in the department for assisting my study. Thanks to Christine Rhine and Kiya Mullins for their help in my research process. I appreciate my experience in CapAsia and Bosnia ethnographic field school, which equipped me with the ability to of critically thinking and doing ethnographic research. They made me have a more in-depth understanding of the complication and attraction of a city that further helped me generate the current topic of my thesis and have the ability to accomplish this task. I also like to acknowledge the Ball State University ASPIRE grant for funding my fieldwork.

Last but not least, I appreciate the people I met and talked to in the field. Thanks to them for sharing their experience and memory of the city with me.

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INTRODUCTION

Chinese Modernization

Despite the revolution, the central government of the People's Republic of China (PRC), formed in 1949, adopted to continue the modernization of China initiated by the Qing Dynasty. However, with Marxist ideals, the PRC focused on the economic realm. The Chinese Communist Party soon realized that the modernization of the economy was not enough for a modern society, especially the one the party wanted to build. For that, the modernization of other aspects of the society were also view as important. In 1956, the modernization of agriculture, transportation, national defense, politics, and ideology were added to the process (Liu, 2020). Although many aspects were combined, creating a composite process of modernization, the priority was still given to the economy. As it matured, this process began to reflect itself in every aspect of Chinese society (Hu, 2014; Liu, 2020).

The economic reforms of 1979 opened a new stage of Chinese modernization. In 1982, the paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping (1978-1989) modified the socialist ideology into socialism with Chinese characteristics, to suit the requirements of economic reforms which introduced aspects of a market economy. Since then, "Chinese characteristics" has covered the capitalist color in Chinese socialist ideology. The subsequent leaders have adjusted the meaning, but mostly for the purpose of upholding the absolute authority of the party (Xi, 2013-2019; Qian, 2012).

Chinese modernization is very broad and represents a radical transformation of the whole of Chinese society. After the economic reforms, the party's definition of

modernization changed three times. In 1987, the goals of modernization were subdivided into three areas: economy, politics, and culture. In 2002, building a harmonic society was added to the goals. In 2012, constructing an ecological civilization became the fifth goal of Chinese modernization (Zhang & Wang, 2019). Since these goals are inherently large, they are less often used and discussed at the local government level. Chinese people follow this discourse through their practical actions.

Before the economic reform in 1979, the “Forging Ahead Strategy” of industrialization made the society’s excessive reliance on political authority and its unlimited political power penetrated and controlled every realm and class of the country. Although the market economy made the authority transfer some rights to the people, the administration continued its deep penetration into people’s lives. The omnipotent characteristics of this power continued to influence how authorities managed the country (Chen, 2001). This point is further elaborated on when the transformation of Leshan is discussed in Chapter 4 and 5.

As applied to the physical environment, Chinese modernization is a continuous accumulation of physical structures. This was somewhat purposeful. Although started with measurable quantitative (physical) changes, the object was to use the large-scale physical change to trigger a qualitative social change that would modernize the whole of Chinese society (Hu, 2014). Following this strategy, the Chinese government was trying to achieve physical modernization in the short run. In the past forty years, the huge amount of urban construction projects modernized the physical space and China has achieved its goal of large-scale physical change. However, the tremendous physical change has not only triggered the transformation of society but has also caused a gap

between the modernization of Chinese people and the nation's physical space. In addition, there exists a disconnect between the physical spaces so produced and their users and uses.

The modernization of physical space was not a complete success because people's use of space is a process of space creation (Perera 2015). The gap between the legalized city space produced by the authorities and peoples' needs has instigated many informal spaces in the city to support the everyday needs of ordinary people (Perera, 2015; Hou, 2010; Chase, Crawford & Kaliski, 2009; Franck & Stevens, 2007). The process of modernization appeared to be a journey of conflict between these two elements; physical and social. So, one could not succeed without the other.

During the first stage, when physical change was prioritized, the Chinese state treated people as passive participants who were compelled to change themselves to suit the urban environment and its rules. The government educated people on how to adapt within this modern society, planting the concept of "modern" in people's minds, making people believe in it, obey the new rules, and follow the social order. However, people are never passive followers of outside instruction. As they encountered different ideas in modernization from different levels of the government, people adapted these to deal with their own situations, accepting, transforming, and resisting, others. In so doing, the people transform the abstract space built, provided, and defined by authority (Perera, 2010). Expanding their own activities, along with creating new practices, people gradually established their familiarity over the space and thereby transforming it.

By the 1990s, as the local government became more capable of managing the city, people's creations were threatened. Chinese urban planning thus transitioned from increment planning to inventory planning to suit the new requirement of modernization (Chen, Wang & Guo, 2013). The growth of cities, particularly the issues it created, highlighted the need to transfer its focus from economic growth to social problems, including urban poverty, social justice, and the erasure of traditional culture (Zhang, Zhao & Chen, 2013). This means the government had to pay more attention to peoples' lives and social and culture aspects of the society

Following these developments, President Xi Jing Ping proclaimed "cultural confidence" in 2014. He emphasized the importance of Chinese culture in future development. Although called "Chinese culture", this could be argued as another type of cultural governance used by authority to contribute to economic growth (Oakes, 2020). To some extent, however, Xi's intervention has introduced the idea of culture into the modernization process. The issue is who defines culture and how.

Some scholars have proposed that the most essential element of the modernization of China is the Chinese people (Li, 2000; Pan & Zhang, 1997; Yin, 2020). This modernization includes the ordinary individuals and the people who run and work in the government. The dominant power of the government over urban space has impeded the peoples' active participation in the process, as much of the participation that falls out of the state framework was usually considered illegal by the government. Meanwhile, the government's uneven investment between the transformations of space and people caused another gap. The processes of people's modernization was unable to catch up with the

fast paced physical change, forming a gap between the government and urban residents' process of modernization.

Issues and the Study

The key issue is: With several gaps between the people and the state in regard to modernization, how did the ordinary people express their voices in the city in the past forty years? This issue draws my attention to the relationship between abstract spaces produced by the authorities and how these have been adapted by the users, as they used these (Perera 2016). The Chinese state and cities are complex. In a larger sense, what the Chinese government produces is a large-scale abstract space with clear categories common to all places in China, yet this program is implemented by diverse administrators in cities of different levels across the country and used by diverse populations within them. As they administer and use, both the administrators and users shape their idea of modernization.

The key question is: How have Chinese cities become what they look like today? The detailed questions are: How was the modernization of Chinese cities conceived and produced by the central government? How did the local governments adapt this transformation and the program? How was the larger change in China and the changes caused by the local authorities received and reacted to by local people? What was the outcome and how was it negotiated? In view of a tangible investigation of these issues, particularly how they affect not much studied small cities, this study focuses on Leshan, a small city in western China.

Leshan is a fourth level city, according to the most well-known city ranking lists ¹ in China. Leshan's average income needs a huge improvement to achieve Chinese development goals. There are a number of local people working on small businesses and informal work for low to moderate incomes. It did not have an inflow of well-educated migrant labor bringing diverse culture from different parts of the country. It also has a local cultural heritage of which the people are proud. Unlike the cities with abundant migrants, in Leshan, the indigenous influence is stronger than the ones from outside. These conditions made Leshan an ideal place for understanding the modernization of middle-level cities with Chinese characteristics.

In the past forty years, when the local government became more powerful and efficient, the city became more modern. At the same time, Leshan citizens also reacted to this process and expressed their voices. In exploring these issues, I work to provide a clearer understanding of the modernization process in Chinese cities from multiple perspectives. This study focuses on three perspectives: urban planning, city management, and the effect of this transformation on people's lives and the overall city.

Due to time and other resource limitations, the transformation of the city is studied through a focus on two food streets significant to the public in Leshan: Hanyuan Street and NiuerQiao Street.

¹ There are 672 cities in China, the 337 cities in this ranking list, ranking based on their business attraction. There are four cities at the first level and 15 cities on the quasi-first level, called the new first level cities. The second level has 30 cities, the third level has 70 cities, the fourth level has 90 cities and the fifth level has 128 cities. Data source: New First Tier City Research Institute. Ranking of Cities' Business Attractiveness in China 2020. *YiMagazine*, May 29, 2020. <https://www.yicai.com/news/100648666.html>

The Food Streets

Food culture represents the culture of Leshan. Yet, food and culture are not totally congruent. The food culture was originally created as part of the street life in the first thirty years after economic reform but is facing some challenges in the recent ten years. Some urban spaces that used to cultivate street food and the culture surrounding it are not compatible with the government's current requirement of urban space. Hence, the food culture is at a turning point, changing its space function to suit life in the second period. At the same time, when Leshan street food became a tourist attraction, the food culture was gentrified and the providers and consumers of food disregarded Leshan's street culture and identity. Hence, food streets are an apt indicator of how Leshan changes

Both Hanyuan and Zhanggong Qiao Streets were developed during the 1990s. Before the construction of the Baiyangba Area, they both were at the edge of the city. In the rudimentary growing of the city from 1990 to 2012, both have become an important place in the Baiyangba Area. Here they will provide a lens to understand how the city has changed.

The rapid development has changed people's expectations of urban space. The concept of a clean and organized street, a view as projected by the planners and authorities, has been accepted by most people and people have grown accustomed to it. Some of the places built during the first period (1990 - 2012) cannot support the life projected in the second stage (2013 - 2020). Modern culture has replaced the previous local culture, dominantly influencing local people's life. The new life and culture demand new space.

In the present, the better constructed new urban spaces have been built and they are facing the problem of homogeneity and lack of Leshan identity. Analyzing the symbolic urban space including Hanyuan Street and Zhanggong Qiao Street that was built in the first round of development can provide a more insights into Leshan's new urban spaces.

The Methodology

Beginning with a literature survey, this study used convergent parallel mixed method, using quantitative and qualitative research to understand how the urban development, city management, and people's lives have changed both from the top-down and bottom-up perspectives. The relevant literature about Chinese planning, city management, modernization, urbanization, and traditional culture have been analyzed to understand how the development context was built in China from the top level. Then interviews, newspaper survey, and ethnographic research---including observations and informal interviews---were used to collect information to understand, from the bottom level, how the context in the document has been built in the practice. At the same time, demographic information and economic statistics are analyzed to explain some of the change of the city. Finally, the information collected from those perspectives were combined and compared to understand how the city has changed.

Most of the demographic, planning, policy, and economic information is available in government bureaus as well as Leshan archives and government websites. However, due to the improper keeping of planning documents, the information on the second master plan is not available.

Observations on the two streets were carried out prior to and during the research process. The observation of Niuer Qiao was carried out before and after a large change was made to this street and mostly occurred during the daytime, when the street was most active. The observation of Zhanggong Qiao Street conducted from morning to night, during the workday and weekend.

Interviews were mainly conducted with three groups of people. The first group is the officers from the planning department and the construction department. The second consists of the officers who execute the government's city management commands at the street-level and officers in the community committee where Hanyuan Street is located. The third group are the ordinary people who use the street, especially the shopkeepers and peddlers on the two streets. They were asked similar questions and their answers were compared. Interviews are used to understand the rich local culture, especially the food culture. Some interviewees were not willing to provide their full name and so provided a name that they wanted to be referred to by herein. Because several interviewees are sharing the same family name, they will be assigned a number with their family name when using the information they provided.

In addition, informal interviews were conducted with business owners and local residents who live or work nearby the aforementioned streets as well as city managers on the street. Those interviews mainly started in the midst of participation observation. The interviewees' personal information is not provided.

The Importance

China is exploring its own modernization while constructing it. This was expressed in Deng's words as "crossing the river by feeling the stone". The mega cities received the most attention and developed resources in this process, while the other cities got less attention. Yet middle-level cities are expected to be the future of Chinese urbanization. They are heavily understudied and their modernization less understood. The lack of studies makes them learn from megacities' development path. This experience is not compatible with small cities.

Less pressure from outside and historical traditions provided more space for smaller cities to explore their own culture and modernization. Yet, this advantage has not been recognized. A knowledge of the change of a middle-level city, especially the experience of the past forty-year-urbanization, will help to guide the modernization process in a way that is more suited for the middle-level cities to modernize with their own (Chinese) characteristics.

There is a new opportunity in President Xi's notion of "cultural confidence" (Xi, 2014). As Chinese governments build on this notion, on one hand, cultural governance has become a way for the government to further the control of the city (Oakes, 2020). Yet, on the other hand, there is an opening to challenge and/or negotiate the official definition of "cultural confidence" by adding people's culture into the process of modernization, enhancing their rights and preferences into the city.

The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis begins with providing a general understanding of Chinese modernization in the past forty years and then provides background knowledge on Leshan. The two periods of Leshan's modernization include: 1) when people had a larger say due to lack of definition and the latter period of government tightening its authority over urbanization, are studied separately, in two separate chapters. Then, by comparing the changes in the two periods, and learning from the recent changes during the COVID-19 pandemic, I will map out the overall modernization of Leshan.

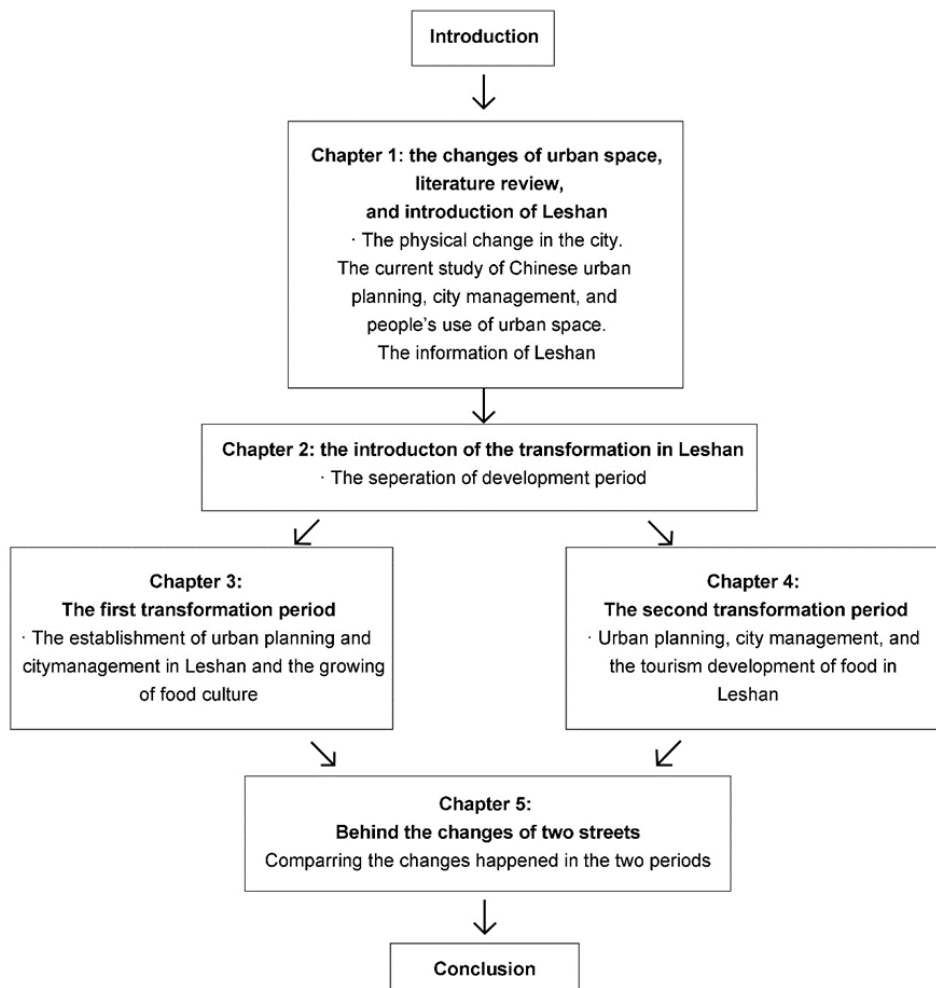


Figure 1. Thesis Structure

CHAPTER 1

THE CITY AND THE APPROACHES: A LITERATURE REVIEW

The Construction of Modern Urban Space

Modernization of Chinese cities, which began in 1979, has relied on Western planning theories. The planning theories the experts used to explore Chinese urbanism and its intended transformation also came from the West (Perera and Tang, 2013). However, the local understandings of urban space and the background economic reforms have modified the force of Western theories making authorities adopt different development preferences causing an uneven urban space. According to the Athens Charter (Corbusier, 1933), published in Europe in the early-twentieth century, three functions make up cities: dwelling, work, and recreation, with transportation meaningfully connecting them. These are the main functions that a modern city supports. In the West, this type of understanding was later critiqued by Jane Jacobs (Jacobs, 1961) for leaving out so many secondary and tertiary land uses besides these main ones. In China, urban planning still uses the idea of functionally separated spaces to guide urban expansion and pay different attention to the four functional spaces.

Modern Chinese cities are built to provide for these four functions and economic development has become the main mission of the government for the whole country after the economic reforms of 1979. The governments have built much to improve the function of work and transportation to better the economy. Meanwhile, because of the opening of the real estate market and the large fiscal income that local governments make by selling land, the dwelling function has become a significant component of these cities' modernization processes.

Yet, the development of public space, especially recreational space, has been historically overlooked by the government as public space cannot create an evident direct benefit. Western public spaces, mainly squares, parks, and plazas, are hard to find playing a similar role in Chinese urban history. Even if there were public spaces used by normal people, these were despised by the elite and authorities in ancient Chinese cities (Yan, 1999).

Under the “despotic” rule in ancient China, public life was not encouraged. Except for the square used by the authorities, there was no space to support such public life. The “square” used by ordinary people emerged through their use of other spaces. It was usually connected with the temple and the market. When street business was allowed in the Song Dynasty (960 A.D.-1279 A.D.), public life coincided with the street (Yan, 1999). This kind of public life had a tight connection with businesses. However, in ancient China, commercial business had been looked down upon by society under the influence of traditional Chinese culture².

Meanwhile, most of the users of space were powerless people and their creation of space had not been valued by those who had power. While the formation of the People’s Republic of China was paralleled by the movement to abandon traditional culture, the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was instrumental in dismantling the temple’s connection with people’s daily life. Therefore, the public space around the temple disappeared, but the public life in and around the street continued.

² There is a hierarchy within the four main positions in ancient China, which were scholar, farmer, worker, and merchant. Merchant had the lowest respect from the society.

Streets are tightly connected with people's lives but have not gotten enough attention from those in power. In the process of development and management of Chinese cities, public space was marginalized by the authorities. Modernization brought back people's attention to public space, but it will still take some time for it to get the same attention as space for living, working, and commuting. The positioning of public space as lesser in how China develops its cities indicates a difficulty of China will face towards modernization.

The creation of modern public space started with the "invasion" of China by Western countries during Qing dynasty. They may not have fully colonized, but many of their ideas prevailed. In the 1950s, a trend began of building squares in big cities. The notion of people's squares was influenced by the Soviet Union. The squares built at that time were big monumental landmarks in the cities. Although criticized by opponents, this idea of squares still has a big influence on other cities which do not have a square and desire to build one (Cao, 2005).

The long-term disregard of public space caused a big shortage of it, making it hard to achieve people's needs of public space for current life. In 2017, the Urban Planning Bureau in many Chinese cities started a project to repair urban ecology and respond to the shortage of public facilities. This project considered the daily needs of residents in public spaces and planned to increase the number of parks and squares to serve these needs. Although the government is trying to fix the shortage of public space in the city, it is facing many difficulties. To make matters worse, they faced the problem of most of the developed areas lacking space to develop such areas.

Demand for such spaces has also increased due to the acute increase of population in cities. The shortage of different functions of urban space is gradually resolved with the process of modernization; yet, compared to other basic urban functions, the concept of public space is less accepted by Chinese people and the government. Its meaning to a city is still in the process of being understood, not only for its role in the Westernized city, but also its importance in traditional Chinese urban life. With these tensions, the process of understanding public space is a process to explore modernization with Chinese characteristics. It is a reciprocal process of interaction for the government to educate people of the order of public space as well the government's responsibility to learn how people define public space and other urban spaces.

Streets in Chinese Cities

As illustrated above, Chinese street life was born in the Song dynasty, if not earlier, when street business was first allowed. In ancient China, in addition to the market and temple, streets provided an open space that supported a range of urban activities. The management of the street relied more on local elites and locals with reputation, instead of regulation. Without government intervention, the locals had more freedom to explore their use of a given street (Wang, 2014). The street was a public place where public life was practiced. This kind of public space had a vague boundary with private space, which is demonstrated by Wang's (Wang, 2014) illustration of how poor females participated in street life by sitting in front of their houses and chatting with people on the street in Chengdu in the late Qing dynasty. The accessibility and inclusiveness of the street created a high variety of uses, illustrating ordinary Chinese people's understanding of

public space. The plentiful street life became an incubator for local culture. When in the process of modernizing cities, many Chinese people largely maintained the traditional way of using the streets as a public place for business, as new classifications of urban space had not separated the space yet.

During the modernization of China, traffic and transportation were given priority and streets were improved to support the smooth flow of traffic. There was a well-known slogan at the beginning of the economic reform highlighting the importance of traffic functioning for economic development. From the government's view, it went "building roads is the first step to becoming rich". Although this sentence was widely used for road construction in rural areas, it still indicates how the authorities regarded streets as road to modernization.

Modernization enhanced the traffic function of the street, decreasing people's ability to carry out former mixed-uses. The vehicle became dominant on the street. As the number of public spaces, including parks, squares, and plazas increased, it moved people's congregated mixed-use from the street to these new spaces. Streets became the passageway to arrive at these places. This sudden transition of business to transportation has made the street an assisting space to serve the other spaces, leaving its ability to supplement the inadequate function of urban space largely underestimated. In a way, this brings the street closer to its definition in the Athens Charter as the combiner, but not one of those land-uses such as residential area.

The street still supports the function of commerce as there are shops open to the street. At a larger scale, with the expansion of shopping malls, the people's shopping

habits have changed, challenging this function of the street. Moreover, some "informal businesses" that used to occur on the street are removed by the government in the name of beautifying the city. The diverse activities that used to happen on the street were labeled informal or disorganized and such uses were forbidden by urban management entities. Yet, people need these cheap street businesses and therefore the government regulations faced much resistance. With continuing conflict, street business has become an issue that has not yet been solved.

As illustrated in this section, China is still in the process of exploring and understanding public space. Streets are a public space, but they become more complicated due to serving multiple functions. It used to be the public space for business and life in the Chinese cities, but modernization has assigned it with the new responsibility of traffic and transportation. Meanwhile, a street is also an important place for the cultivation of local culture and a good means to understand local culture, especially since it is a public space that is largely connected with urban life. As the most daily and accessible urban space, its users make up the biggest and the most diverse group of people in the city. They also serve as the battleground between local people to express their ideas and the city inspector to implement the rule of spatial order. It is a place for modernization and indigenous culture to collide and co-exist. The government's management of the street shows its attitude towards the ideas of the modern and indigenous culture and how these are treated in the development process. Hence, the changes to the concept of a "street" provide an insight to the modernization of Chinese cities.

A Modern City with Chinese Characteristics

The main approach to modernization by the Chinese state is modernization with Chinese characteristics. This thesis tries to understand modernization from the ground, combining the local bureaucracy's understanding of modernization and their strategy with the physical operation of these conceptual ideas to better understand the local modernization process. It studies the transformation of Leshan in the past forty years from three perspectives: urban planning, city management, and people's lives.

The first perspective to be examined is urban planning. Planning is not only a subject concerned with the development of the city, specifically. Rather, it is also a study of what influences people's understanding of urban space. It considers the combination of the concept of modernization and the physical urban space. Considering this, studying Chinese urban planning's transformation will provide an excellent lens through which to know more about how the guiding ideology can change as the government's understanding of modernization also grows with the process. Moreover, China has a powerful government, it is the dominator who mainly affected the city development. Understanding their ideology will help to understand the transformation of the city.

The second perspective is city management. It is one of the governmental functions that has seen large growth in the past forty years. In China, city management is usually conducted by the City Management and Law Enforcement Bureau. It is a kind of street-level bureaucracy. The city inspectors have a direct connection with the people. They are the individuals who work between the government and the citizens. The previous illustration mentioned the gap between the government and the people. Studying how city management evolved will help us to understand the government's

understanding---and misunderstanding---of people as well as people's agency to deal with authorized regulation.

The third perspective is the lives of individuals. I will use one of the local cultures, which saw fast growth in the past thirty years with the contribution of local people, to show how people participated in the city development and how the indigenous culture grew with the challenge of modern culture. During this process, people were influenced by the government's ideology of modernization and guided by their regulation to maintain the city in order. By studying people, it will help us understand the effectiveness of authorities' management and the gap that lay between the authorities and the people.

Chinese Urban Planning

Chinese urban planning education formally started at the end of 1960s and it grew with the development of the country in 1990s (Hou & Zhao, 2013). In 1989, China passed the Urban Planning Law and this law was replaced by the Rural and Urban Planning Law in 2008. When China formalized the idea of modernization, which is one of the standards of development, all things that originated from China have been labeled as traditional and not modern. To become a modern country, China had a huge need for new construction, which created many jobs related to planning. At that time, most of the graduates from urban planning were from the Architecture and Civil Engineering College. They were trained to specifically serve this new construction effort (Hou & Zhao, 2013). During this period, Chinese studies of urban planning were more focused on creating new construction, including documentation of master planning and

comprehensive planning, transportation planning, real estate development and so on to create more structures to lay the foundation for modern life.

With the efforts of nearly twenty years new construction, China's level of urbanization had grown more than 50 percent by 2011 (National Bureau of Statistics). In 2015, China passed a law to formalize urban design documents to better organize the city, which represented Chinese urban development's change in its focus on creating more new construction to improving the quality of existing city space (Zhuo & Cao, 2018). In the past 10 years, Chinese cities started to focus on providing a better urban environment for their citizens. More public spaces including parks and squares have been built. Public space has become a more popular topic in Chinese urban studies since 2000 and the number of studies about public space in 2017 is about 30 times larger than the number in 2000 (China National Knowledge Infrastructure data).

Regarding the study of city space, people's use of space has garnered more and more attention, but the discussions are usually limited to a formal and regulated context; however, people's actual use of formal public space is not always so rigid. Citizens often create an informal function or informal space in the formal space and change its function, but there is little research studying about this subject (Su, 2015; Dong and Pan, 2016). The different understanding of informal space between the government and individuals in their daily practice has not been seriously discussed by the scholars. People's changing understanding of urban space with the influence of urban planning also has not been paid much academic attention.

All Chinese urban planning documents are guided by the national government's Five-Year Plan, which is a national economic development plan. Every city's master plan and comprehensive plan should refer to the Five-Year Plan. The priority of economic growth led Chinese planning to value building brand new modern cities instead of thinking about how to help the country better adapt its tradition to explore Chinese characteristics of modernization.

Most of the existing literature understands Chinese cities from concepts including Chinese macro-culture, economic development, and regional development, but not much work attempts to understand current Chinese cities from Chinese micro-culture such as those at the local level. In the past 100 years, China has transformed its society from a feudal system to socialism and started to become capitalist after its Economic Reform and Opening Up policies in 1979. This fast transformation and the country's priority of developing the economy did not give enough time and sufficient effort to transfer people's lifestyles and values from the traditional China to a modern China. Modern China is mostly shaped by Western modernization, but it competes with traditional Chinese values and lifestyles that continue to exist in people's lives. Chinese culture is not "tradition" but a way of life established, maintained, and modified by the people as they lived their daily life over millennia. Understanding the people from their expression through the use of space could make a significant contribution to modernization with Chinese characteristics, but the priority of economic development has focused too much attention to additional construction rather than cultural and spatial adaptation.

City Management

The study of city management is not as popular as urban planning in China. After 2005, the published studies about city management had a higher growing rate, but studies of urban planning had been increasing since 1998. The running of a city needs the cooperation of planning and management, but they have been studied at different paces, which has caused some problems for the city.

The study of city management includes discussions on city management systems, law enforcement, transportation, “smart cities”, and sanitation. City management and law enforcement, which is also a government bureau, is the hottest topic among them. There is some research which has analyzed the conflict between street vendors and city inspectors from street-level bureaucracy theory and the perspective of Chinese urbanization and law enforcement, since this is a common conflict in many cities (Lipsky, 1980; Han, 2010; Liang & Zeng, 2019; Liu, 2017; Mo, 2013; Li, 2009).

In order to attract more foreign investment and promote further economic development, city governments needed to start organizing urban space. In 1992, street vending, which has existed for thousands of years in Chinese cities and helped to provide jobs for young people, was made illegal in the 1980s (Liu, 2017). However, because of lax law enforcement and the character of the street-level bureaucracy, street vendors still survive albeit in conflict with the city inspectors (Mo, 2013; Hupe & Hill, 2007; Liang & Zeng, 2019). Liu stated that the government made street vending illegal due to environmental and food safety considerations, while the people support the convenient, vibrant, cheap and delicious food that street vending brings to the city. The support from

the people maintain street vendors' businesses and help them win public opinion in their conflict with city inspectors (Liu, 2017).

In Chinese urbanization, there are more than a hundred million migrants from rural areas coming to city to make a living. Most of the rural migrants usually work as manual labor or work in the informal economy. Some of them work as street vendors, providing cheap food options. At the same time, because of low-income and little ability or incentive to spend, they became their own best customers by spending their income within that community (Li, 2009). Rural migrants have made a huge contribution to Chinese urbanization (Fu, 2007). They built the infrastructure and the buildings that help the city achieve its modern and high-end objective, but they have been discriminated against as workers relegated to low-end occupations and ignored by the government regarding their needs in the city (Li, 2009).

Street vending is not only a traditional Chinese lifestyle that has been kept until today, but it is also a necessary economic factor in the current urbanization process. It has traditional cultural meaning, but also it needs to be transformed to suit the modern society. It is a position has a tight connection with people's lives. Overall, street vending sits between the traditional lifestyle and modern lifestyle. It provides a good perspective to discuss the transformation from tradition to modernization, but there is no research studying city management and street vending from this perspective.

Peoples' Lives—Informal Space and Street

The contemporary city is built based on planning document instruction; however, besides the regulated space, people are trying to explore more possibilities of space in their everyday life (Perera, 2010; Hou, 2010; Chase, Crawford & Kaliski, 2009; Franck & Stevens, 2007). The street cultivates informal use of space in the city. The informal function of the street is essential to bringing the vibrancy and safety therein. It is also important for helping vulnerable groups to make their living in new, changed and potentially unfriendly societies (Jacobs, 1961; Duneier, 1999). In city management, street space is a formal public space under the government's control, but because of its diversity and the difficulty of street-level bureaucracy, it loosens the government's control in practice, especially for the back street and alleyway. (Hou, 2010; Liang & Zeng, 2019; Hupe & Hill, 2007).

Franck and Stevens (2007) proposed the conditions of making loose space, which are people's consciousness of the possibility of creating loose space and the accessibility of the useable material around a site (Franck & Stevens, 2007). Most Chinese cities fit these two conditions because people are unfamiliar with the order of public space. It is a new idea for Chinese people and they are building on this concept in step with the modernization process. The government is not alone in exploring suitable public space management as citizens are in the process of accepting this idea as well. Now, the city is trying to provide more public space to improve the quality of urban life, but Chinese people's low public awareness, caused by the traditional Chinese social structure and the loose execution of city management have provided more freedom and accessible material

for people to explore the possible informal use of the public space (Zhang, 2014, Liang & Zeng, 2019, Mo, 2013).

The function of Western public space like parks and squares has been recognized by Chinese authorities and citizens; however, for public spaces like streets, Chinese people have a more complicated process of acceptance. The traditional Chinese street was an open and self-organized space. The tension and cooperation between elite culture and popular culture both created and solved the streets' conflicts (Wang, 2014), but now streets need to transform into governmentally regulated public space. The rules previously formed through people's agreements have changed to be formulated by the government. More parks and squares have been built and streets have been organized when the both government and people are still in the process of accepting this change, which usually leads to city space provided by the government largely to be transformed during people's use.

In the modern city, the regulation of the street is based on the city's economic interest. Ignoring a street's inherent character of messiness, spontaneity and unpredictability compared to the rational order of planning, the need of economic development is being used to further the privatization of the public space to constrain people's expression on the street. (Loukaitou-Sideris & Ehrenfeucht, 2009; 2010). Meanwhile, the expansion of the Chinese city has created more new streets. The new streets are designed based on the well-organized public space idea and has left less possibility for street's informal function. The old streets with informal uses have potential to cultivate more informal use and have become the main regulated object of city

management, but at the same time, these disorganized old streets are the city space that have tight connection with people's lives and provide space that cultivates urban culture.

Modernization of urban space are taking back the control of public space from people. It not only influences how people use these spaces but also affect how they understand them. The transformation of urban space, no matter is the formal space changed into informal use or the informal spaces are regulated into formal construction, represent how the modernization concept are understood by normal Chinese people and the authority.

Summary

China has achieved great success in constructing new urban space by the span of infrastructure that has been built in the past forty years alone; however, this also has been tightly connected the urban development with the economy and shown excessive attention to the context of Western development and omitting China itself. When China wants to create modernization with Chinese characteristics, it is necessary to observe Chinese people's reaction to modernization when it reflects on the change of urban space. Chinese cities are experiencing a huge change and, although planning has been one of the important methods for the government to control the city space, the transformed physical city space has indicated that other factors greatly influence the change of space. The difficult execution of street-level bureaucracy and people's informal use of public space has transformed the well-organized city space described in the planning document. This transformation is an inevitable result of people's expression of their needs in the background of the top-down economic oriented space planning.

This research will study the transformation of two streets in Leshan to show how the planning, city management execution, and peoples' use of city space react on the ground and cause the city space to become what it is today. By analyzing this process, I hope to understand people and government's changing understanding of the modern city and how it affected the development of a middle city level. In the present, when Chinese cities are starting to care more about the quality of city space and peoples' lives, those objective existing factors that are out of government's formal regulation should be considered. It will contribute to improve people's life as well as the local government's understanding of Chinese characteristic modernization in a middle city level.

Introduction of Study Area

Leshan is a city in Sichuan Province in the Western part of China. The whole administrative area, which includes four districts, six counties, and one county level city has 3.49 million people (Leshan Statistics Bureau, 2020). "District" is an administrative division under the city that includes both urban and rural areas. According to the City Scale Standards published in 2014 (City Scale Standard, 2014), Leshan is a big city based on its population. It is also a four-tier city, ranking 176th among 337 cities, based on its business attractions (New First Tier City Research Institute, 2020).

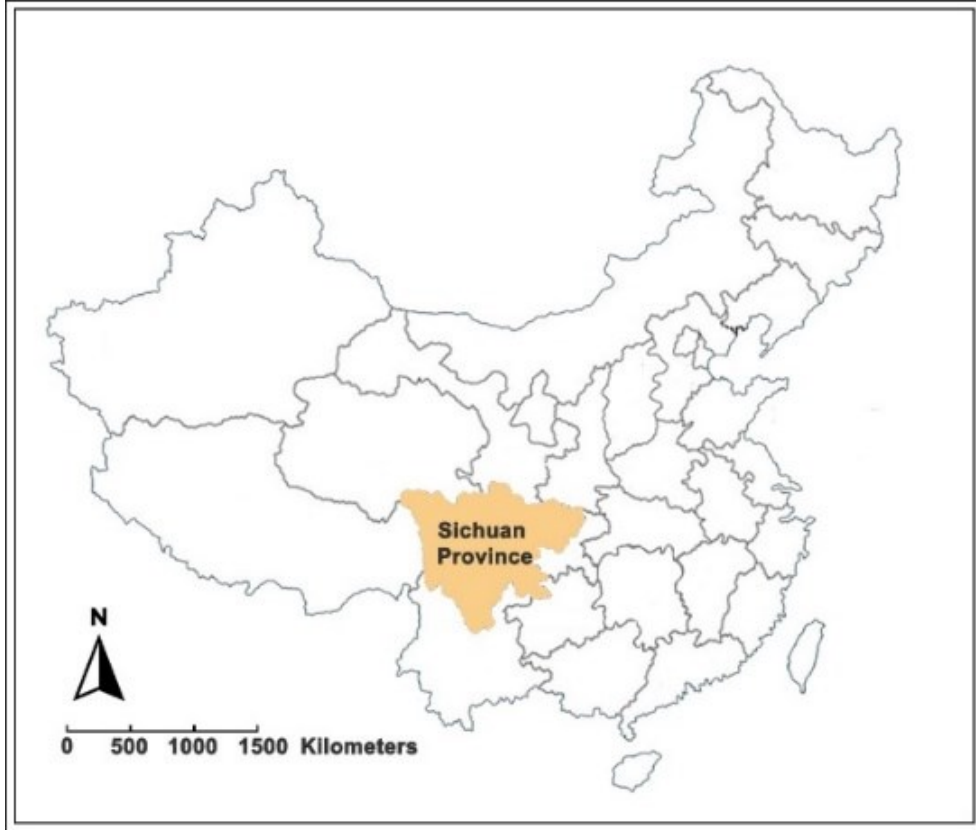


Figure 2. Sichuan Location in China

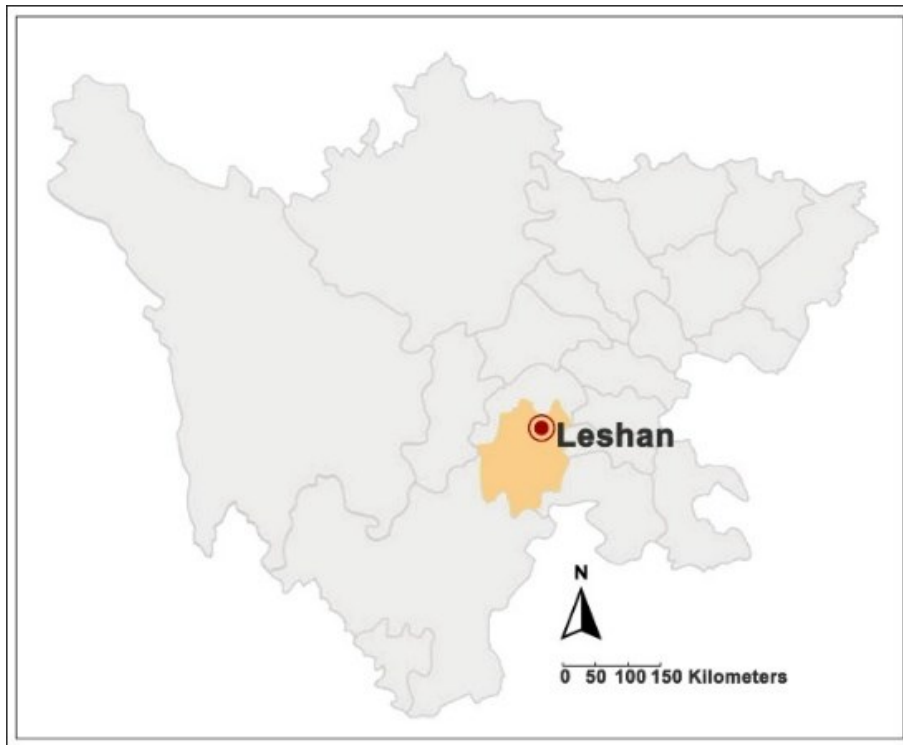


Figure 3. Leshan Location in Sichuan

Manufacturing and tourism are two of the most important industries in Leshan (Leshan Statistics Bureau, 2020). The city of Leshan is a famous tourist destination in China. It has three World Heritage Sites. Its beautiful landscape has been well known around the country since ancient times.

The state council first published the policy of the Development of the Western Region in 2000 which initiated the development of the Western part of China. Now, after 20 years of development, the western region has two mega-cities: Chengdu and Chongqing; however, the region is facing a serious problem of uneven development. Chengdu is the capital city of Sichuan province. Its GDP in 2018 was 1,534 billion yuan. Leshan, the economy of which ranks sixth in Sichuan, is 161.5 billion Yuan. Now, the development strategy of Sichuan Province is to use Chengdu as the regional center to impact the other cities around it, especially for the 727 cities and counties on the Chengdu Plain. Leshan is about one hundred and sixty kilometers away from Chengdu. It has been planned as the one of two sub-centers of the Chengdu Plain Megalopolis Development Plan (Government of Sichuan Province, 2019). If the regional plan materializes, Leshan will become a metropolitan city.

Shizhong District — the Original Leshan City

In 1978, Leshan county became Leshan city. When the current Leshan jurisdiction was founded in 1985, the previous Leshan city was named Shizhong district. Now Leshan city includes three districts: Shizhong, Shawan, and Wutong Qiao.

The subject of this thesis is Leshan city. Its study area is limited to Shizhong district. It was the original Leshan city located on the edge of a peninsula at the confluence of Qinyi River, Dadu River, and Ming Rivers. In this thesis, by Leshan, I refer to Shizhong District.

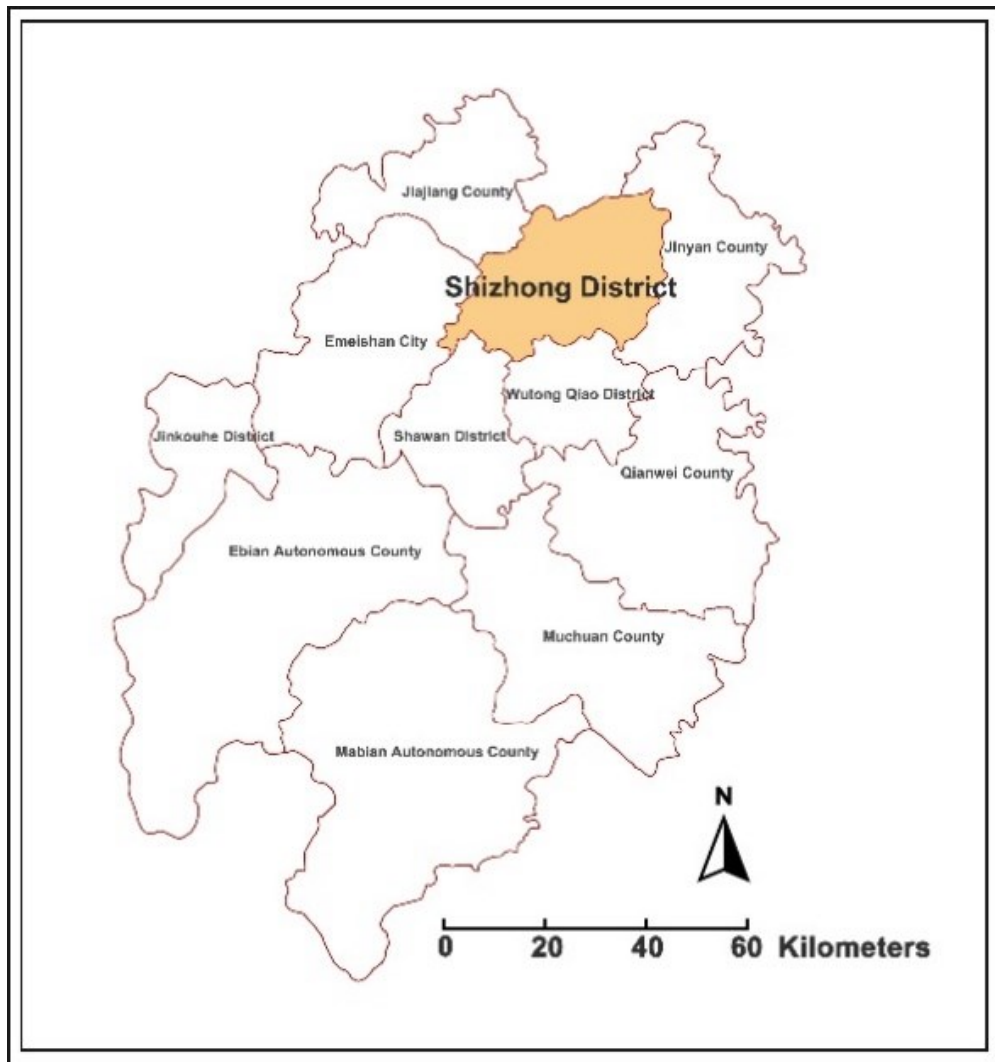


Figure 4. Shizhong District in Leshan

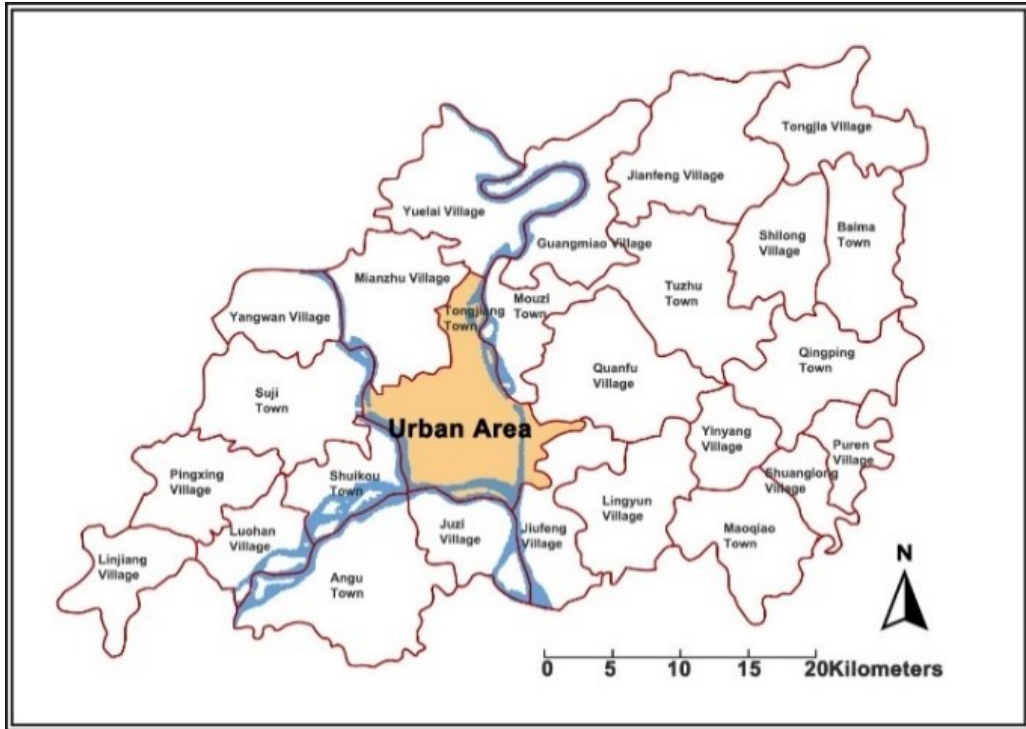


Figure 5. Urban Area Studied in This Thesis

“Shizhong” means urban center. Unlike the other districts in Leshan, which were named after their original town’s name that have thousands of years of history, “Shizhong” was a simple description used by the government when the larger Leshan city region was founded. With Leshan’s expansion, people in Shizhong district had some discussion about changing the “Shizhong district” into “Jiazhou district”. “Jiazhou” was Leshan city’s name since Tang dynasty. Some wanted to use “Jiazhou” to better represent the original Leshan city.

The reason behind these suggestions is the local people in Shizhong district consider themselves Leshan people. Many people in other districts in Leshan area prefer to identify themselves in their original town name, not as Leshan people. To avoid

confusion, I use “Leshan” to represent “Shizhong district” to better show this area’s identity.

Shizhong district is 323 square miles, including 10 villages, 15 towns and 7 streets, an administrative division larger than a community. In 2018, Shizhong district accommodated 637,204 people and 61 percent of them lived in urban areas (Leshan Statistics Bureau, 2020).

Leshan’s Local Culture and Tourism

The Leshan Grand Buddha statue tightly connects the city with Buddhist culture. Located a thirty-minute-drive away from Shizhong District, Emei Mountain is a famous Buddhism-related mountain in China. These two places provided Leshan with a rich Buddhist connection it can share. Leshan became famous after a movie featuring the Leshan Buddha played all over the country in 1981. In 1996, UNESCO recognized the Leshan Grand Buddha and Emei Mountain as World Heritage sites. Between 1980 and

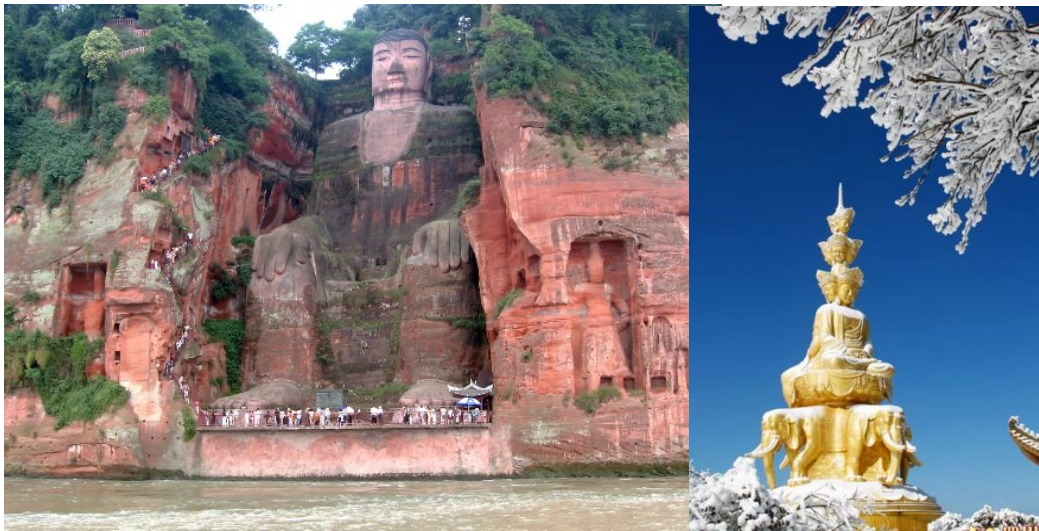


Figure 6. Leshan Grand Buddha and Emei Mountain

2010, Leshan city highlighted the Leshan Buddha and Emei Mountain as the biggest attractions for tourism.

Most people in China know about Leshan because of the Grand Buddha. The Buddha statue is separated from Leshan the city by the river. The statue was carved from a hill opposite the city, blessing the city from a distance. This project was started by a monk and took about ninety years to finish. Most of Leshan people are atheists, but many of them still go to the temple to make wishes, especially during Spring Festival. The Buddha has become a symbol of the city both for people in the city and outside it. Although most of the residents are not Buddhists, they still believe that the Buddha protects city.

Leshan is a food city. There was a saying that “if eating in Sichuan, the best taste is in Leshan”. In China, different provinces have different styles of food. Sichuan Province is famous for its delicious food. The cuisine in Sichuan is called “chuan cai” which is one of the top eight cuisine styles³ in China. Chuan cai can be subdivided into three styles: up-river style (shang he bang cai), down-river style (xia he bang cai), and small-river style (xiao he bang cai). Leshan and Chengdu are both centers of upriver style cuisine. This style of cuisine is characterized by an abundance of flavor.

In ancient times, Leshan was a harbor city. People working on the boats stopped there for food. Food was born of and transformed following the requirements and convenience of these people. Those kinds of food have a common character: easy to take away and can be eaten quickly and simply. Most people who work on the harbor were too

³ The top eight cuisine style in China is Lu, Chuan, Yue, Su, Min, Zhe, Xiang, and Hui. Chuan cai is the second of the top eight.

poor to afford high quality food, so the ingredients used in their food were cheap but fresh. The upriver cuisine style provided food with strong flavor. Its emphasis on flavor more than the freshness of ingredients provided a chance for the poor people to make simple and cheap ingredients delicious. After many years' development of local food, Leshan cuisine has become an attraction for tourists, especially during the last five years. At the beginning of Leshan's tourism development, local cuisine supported the role of the Leshan Buddha but, now, it has become the center of Leshan tourism. Many tourists would come to Leshan specifically for the food.

No matter whether it is the Leshan Buddha or Leshan cuisine, they both are important parts of local culture and identity. Now, they both are used as attractions in tourism development. The Leshan Buddha is a big part of Leshan history. It has become a central part of the heritage that refers back to the Tang dynasty. Now it is mostly used as a cultural symbol and has almost entirely lost its original function. Leshan cuisine is a central aspect in every Leshan person's life. Leshan cuisine evolved with the improvement of the city and people's lives in the past twenty-five years to become what it looks like today. If the Leshan Buddha was the cultural icon in ancient Leshan, and a creation by the government regime, Leshan cuisine is the cultural conerstone in contemporary Leshan created and developed by local people.

CHAPTER 2

THE TRANSFORMATION OF LESHAN CITY

The transformation of Leshan after 1949 can be divided into three periods. These three periods can be separated into two groups: whether they have received the influence of economic reform in 1979 or not. The first transformation largely has not been affected by the reform, while the latter two periods have been heavily influenced. This study will focus more on the latter two transformation periods. Although the economic reform began in 1979, it mostly affected larger cities. When its effects reached Leshan, it was a few years later. There were some projects that began in the 1980s, but the biggest changes started in the 1990s. Hence, I use 1990 as the dividing point to separate the transformation with or without the influence of economic reform. The transformation with economic reform can be divided into two periods, which will be further discussed in the later chapters. The first period with economic reform influence was from 1990 to 2012 and the second was from 2013 to 2020.

Leshan City's Transformation Before the 1990s

The entirety of the Leshan area became today's Leshan city administered by the province in 1985. At the same time, the original Leshan city became Shizhong District and is so named today. However, people in the old Leshan city, until now, like to use Leshan to refer to the district officially called Shizhong.

In 1920, with the rising growth of Chinese industry, there were many factories and public buildings like schools and cinemas opening in Leshan. With this development,

the city broke with the historic urban pattern established since the Tang dynasty. In 1950, after a long period of war, both the second world war and cultural revolution, the Leshan government planned to redevelop the main street and some public buildings, but because of a shortage of finances, those plans failed to achieve the envisaged modernization (Leshan urban and rural construction and environmental protection committee, n.d). Until 1970, Leshan kept its original city's area and did some small-scale construction with a limited budget. By 1958, the city had removed 799 houses to construct roads, (Lehan History Codification Committee,1995) but because of the immature relocation policy, many families were displaced in the new development area.

Based on the historical documentation of Leshan city, which is Shizhong district, from 1949 to 1990, the biggest change of the city was street construction. There were many streets being reconstructed and many new streets being built, which has largely expanded the city and provided roads with wider space and better pavement quality. Several ancient city gates have been torn down to suit the needs of modern transportation. Although there were not too many construction projects that happened during this period, road constructions have laid a foundation for future transformations in other perspectives in Shizhong district in the latter two periods.

The Transformation of Leshan City after 1990

The biggest transformation of Leshan happened in the 1990s when the economic reform of the late-1970s was affecting more of the country. Considering the development of Leshan planning, city management, and changes in people's lives, I categorized the

post-1990s transformation of the city into two stages.

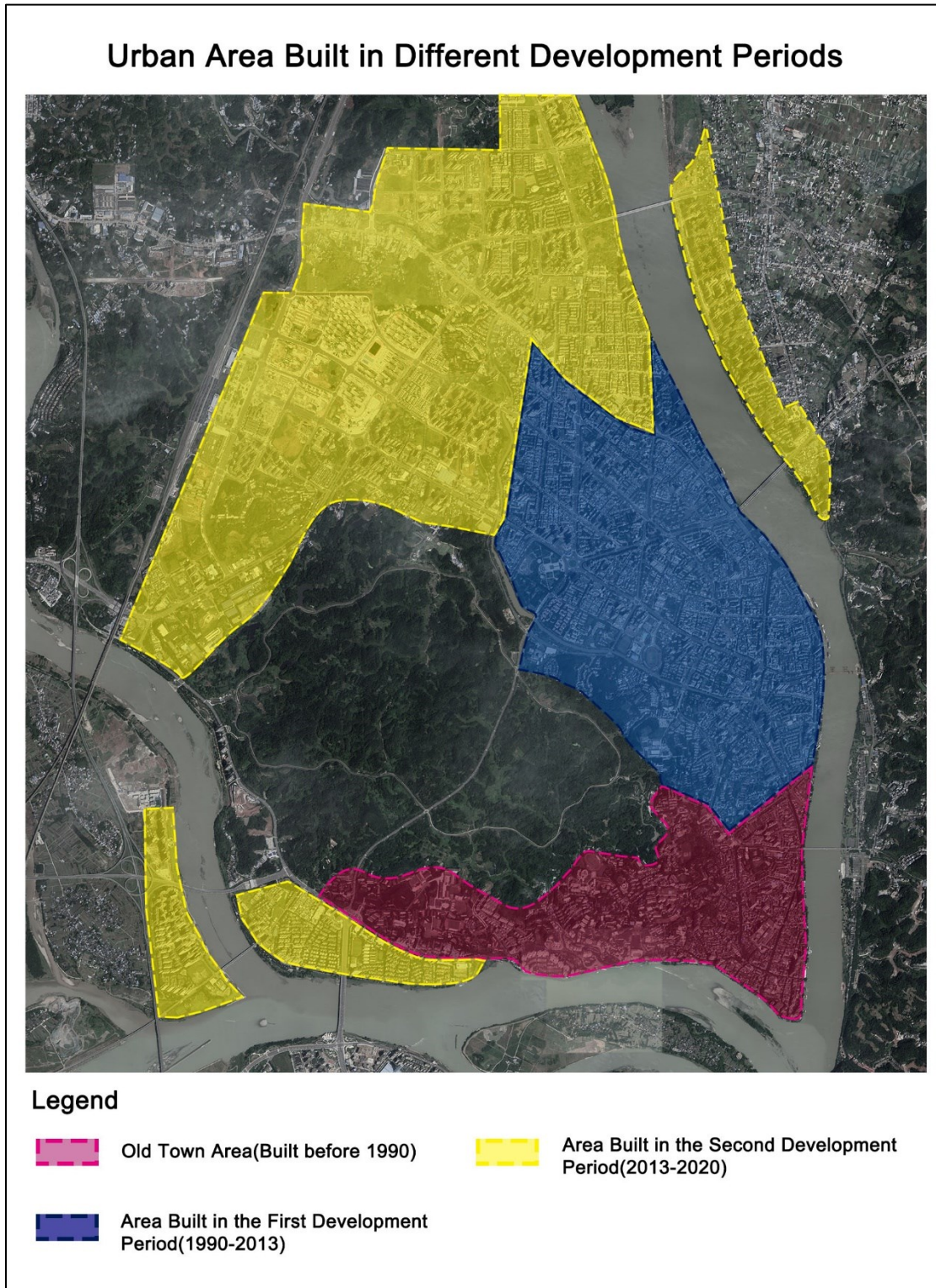


Figure 7.Leshan Urban Area Built in Different Development Periods

The key change in the first stage of development was the building of Baiyangba Area between 1990 to 2013. During this period, Leshan was at the beginning stage of fast development and modernization. Urban planning and city management were new departments in the government. Both were not capable enough to well manage the urban space. Meanwhile, as there was less outside influence, the local culture developed. Due to limited income, the residents had less money to spend on consumption. Although the popular culture of the East-coast and South of China was favored by the locals, especially young people, they had limited money to import such outside influence.

The main mission for development during this period was to redevelop the old town and build the new Baiyangba Area. The urban spaces in this area, especially for the spaces connected with oldtown, were shaped when the transformation was in its preliminary stage, which was quite different than how they work now. The development speed was very fast when the Baiyangba Area was first built. Some of the places built earlier could not attain the standard that are applied today.

Regarding economic growth, the city began its second stage of development from 2013 and continues until now. During this period, the newly built areas have exceeded the range of the Baiyangba area located at the edge of the city. The outside boundary was defined by the high-speed rail track and development in these areas was well planned. Even housing built by a big real estate developer, the upscale shopping mall, and the shops along the street were built according to the large-scale plan. They were uniform and orderly. Urban planning and city management departments have been powerful enough to manage the city and both concepts have been more accepted by both the governors and residents to manage and be managed in the city. People began to have

more income to spend on consumption. The second stage of development brought more outside influence that provided an opportunity as well as a challenge for indigenous development.

Leshan's development began from the condition of a poor city, but, unlike many fast-developing cities, its geographic location in the country and size required that it had a slower development speed, which created a buffer period for the local culture development. In the forty years after the reform, Leshan had changed dramatically. Its transformation will be analyzed in the next two chapters, which will show how the Leshan city was formed by these forty years.

CHAPTER 3

LESHAN'S FIRST TRANSFORMATION

Leshan City's Situation in the 1990s

In the 1990s, projects and activities were restricted for varying reasons and many different than in the past. The city had more construction projects to support development. The original Leshan city started at the end of the peninsula. The city expanded to the West and North. Since land in the western part is limited, the newly built Baiyangba Area was mostly located in the northern part of the city. The new city area started as contiguous with oldtown and spread further North and Northwest of the new area.

Economic reform has begun a new era for Leshan city. Many new things, including increasing recreational urban space, new facilities, new business types, and new lifestyles, appeared in the city. So many new things would bring challenges both for the government and Leshan residents, but during this stage, people were immersed in the happiness and excitement of the advent of new life. This enthusiasm, however, of creating new things has beclouded both the government's and residents' minds to reckon with the potential challenges which would come with the changing of urban space.

In the 1990s, Leshan's development mission had two parts: the urban renewal projects in the oldtown and the new construction projects that would expand the city area, creating Baiyangba Area (Leshan Urban Planning Committee, 1988). The redevelopment projects in the oldtown area were carried out in ancient Leshan city and its expanded area built from 1950 to 1986. At the beginning of this first development period, Leshan

people's living condition was poor and the basic municipal infrastructure had large shortages.

In the first period, there were more construction projects compared with the period before the reform. The Leshan government built more municipal infrastructure, providing basic municipal services including street lighting, sewer, and electricity connections, thereby improving the living conditions in the oldtown. It also continued road construction projects. According to the documentation of city history (Leshan History Codification Committee, 1995), some main roads have been designed to include three parts: a separated driveway, motorway, and sidewalk, which has been regarded as the better type of the road. Some roads also had landscape islands to beautify the street. A new park and square have been built. Meanwhile, since the private business market has opened, more shops and food markets have appeared. Many apartments were built when the real estate market opened at the beginning of the 1990s. During this period, the construction of Leshan city began with providing basic facilities and infrastructures and then the government started to care about the beatification of the city and build a new business environment with the open market in economic reform. The idea of modernization had been accepted by the leaders of the city and they were trying to put Leshan city in the context of modernization based on their understanding of it.

Outside of seeing the change of the city from its appearance, this study will begin with understanding how the context of modernization was accepted and used by the local leaders. I will first introduce how urban planning, which is an abstract concept related to modernization, has been used by the leaders to control the development of the city, and how the regulation of city management gradually formed to help the

government's management. Then, I will come back to the physical space to see what really happens in the physical world and people's reaction to these changes.

The Beginning of Planning in Leshan

With the economic reforms in 1979, modernization became the main goal for Chinese city development (Deng, 1979). During the first phase of Leshan's transformation, urban planning was adopted by Chinese city governments as a tool for managing urban growth. In the meantime, Chinese cities were facing a desperate need for construction and expansion, which made planning documents essential for instructing the new urban area development, especially focusing on construction projects. Leshan's planning was similar to other cities in China.

Leshan's first master plan was prepared in 1987. This document directed Leshan's development until 2010. It mostly focused on the land in the peninsula. In the 1980s, Leshan's government devoted most of the fiscal budget to road construction. In 1993, it made its second master plan (1993-2020). The second plan focused more on the redevelopment of oldtown and the development of the new urban area, Baiyangba. The areas built during this period included Hanyuan Street and Zhanggong Qiao Street, two streets investigated in this study. In 2003, the third master plan (2003-2020)⁴ was released. In contrast to the first master plan, in which the planners only considered the land in Shizhong District, in the third master plan, they planned the whole Leshan area, but the land in and around Shizhong District was still the focus of the plan.

⁴ The third master plan document was not found in the Leshan Urban Construction Archive. The planning documents before 2010 were not well stored by the archive.

When comparing the physical road pattern and the road map in the plan, it is clear to tell the demarcations of different urban areas and that they were built following the different plans as figure 7 shows. Although the master plans were for 20 years, all plans were redesigned (or updated) after 10 years due to the changes of the city. The contents of the planning document became increasingly detailed and the planned area became larger. With the appearance of large blocks, the pattern of urban space had become simpler (Figure 8).

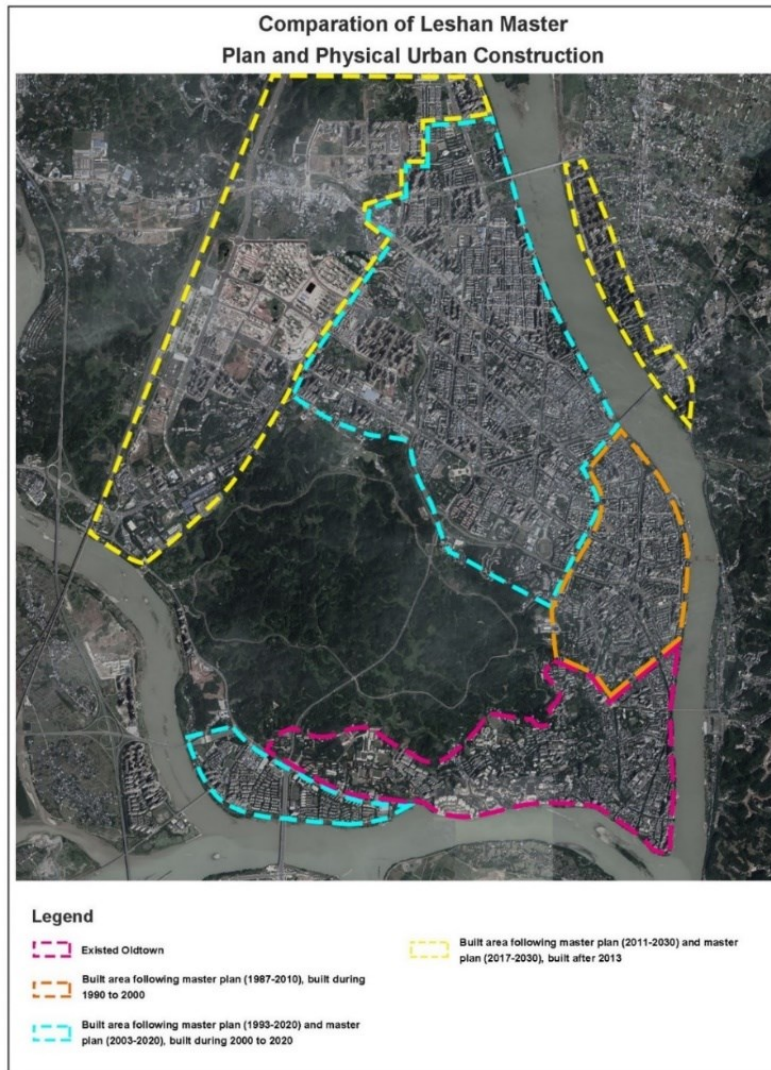


Figure 8. Comparison of Leshan Master Plan and Physical Urban Construction

The first planning law was published in China in 2007. Its purpose was to legalize the planning documents, thereby enabling the plans to regulate city development. Before that, the Leshan government built the city without seriously following the master plan. Following familiar practices, the city government kept doing the same even after 2007. During this period, the city's development largely followed the aspirations of the city leader. This has been largely changed in the recent years, but the peninsula is almost fully developed (Liu, Ji 2019). The Baiyangba Area, built between 1990 and 2019, has become the political, economic, and cultural center of Shizhong District and the whole of Leshan.

In the first developmental period, the Leshan government started to use an urban plan to modernize the city. However, at the beginning of Leshan's first development period, like many other similar cities, Leshan had a shortage of facilities and infrastructures that could support modern life. The urban planning in this period was more focused on large construction projects instead of the urban spaces these projects created. Modernization was simply city engineering carried out by people who worked in the field of construction, rather than the creation of a better urban life for people.

City Management in Leshan

When urban spaces were transforming, there was a need for new rules to guarantee the operation of the city. As the government played a main role in the modernization process, they also dominated the definition of the order of space. However, in the first transformational period, the local government was in the initial stage of exploring the way to modernization, the city management of a modern Chinese

city was burgeoning, but it was not mature enough to control the space. The governors set and implemented new rules for the city, but it was impeded by the people's non-conformity.

Before the 1980s, there was no official city management. Only a few people offered to clean the street without pay. After 1980, the city started to act on sanitation and cleanliness (Leshan Urban and Rural Construction and Environmental Protection Committee, 1988). With the development of Leshan's economy, there were more people and businesses concentrated in the narrow urban space in the oldtown, which brought more challenges for the oldtown streets. City management began with the sanitation issue, but as Leshan grew, there were more problems to be considered.

Without transportation restrictions, many trucks drove through the city and shared the narrow street spaces with pedestrians and bicycles. Because of the shortage of official fresh-food markets, many people engaged in street vending. This not so well-coordinated operation blocked the streets, making it hard for motorists and pedestrians to pass through. The fresh food market on the street also generated lots of trash.

From 1990, keeping the streets clean and well-organized became the priority for city management (Leshan urban and rural construction and environmental protection committee, 1988.). Preventing people from occupying streets for business had become a headache of government ever since then. In 2019, the management of this problem has achieved its highest point with the application of national city titles of Healthy City and Civilized City movement, which will be described further in the next chapter. With the growth of the city, more customized functional urban spaces were provided, separating

the activities that had created mixed-use in specialized urban spaces. Leshan city became much cleaner and more organized than before.

In order to support these processes, Leshan city established the Urban Administrative and Law Enforcement Bureau (UALEB) in 2002 (Qin, 2019). This is a local government bureau in charge of the enforcement of law and regulations related with urban management. UALEB was initially formed as a temporary management team to assist the government to administer the urban environment. As the government's need was urgent, the legal foundation of the team was not well established. The original temporary team was later developed into an official department of the government.

The emergence of UALEB in China is tightly connected with the Healthy City movement of the 1980s. Healthy City is a national honorary title initiated due to a desire to improve the quality of the urban environment. During that time, the cleanliness of urban spaces was thought to be damaged by peasants who migrated to the city in the millions, not least because a large proportion of them did business on the street (Liu, 2009). In order to apply for the “Healthy City” honorific title, the city needed to keep the streets clean and well-organized. So, the cities opted to stop illegal occupation of street.

To win the title, many city governments organized temporary urban management and law enforcement teams to deal with and prepare for the scrutiny from the national inspection team. The temporary management teams were not an official part of the city government, but, as they worked for the government, they were given the right to enforce rules and had the power to fine others. Their duty was mainly to fine vendors who

illegally occupied the streets and those involved in other activities that did not follow city ordinances.

During 1980s, the fiscal revenue of city governments mostly came from the central government. Through this movement, the local governments found another source of funding, i.e., fining the unregulated activities (Liu, 2009). The founding of temporary management teams by local governments were not well considered and this created numerous social problems. Without specific regulations to restrict the team members, their methods of enforcing the law sometimes caused violent conflicts between them and the street vendors and such conflict was more than occasional. There were several reports on the controversial actions of city inspectors. For this reason, according to my own observation, most Chinese-residents' impression of them was negative since they were perceived as those who enforce the government's strong top-down power. In 2000, the State Council of China published a document requiring all city inspectors to be official government officers rather than temporary workers for the government. Still, so many cities kept the status of the inspector vague. However, the city management's duty regarding enforcement and enforcement officers had become slightly clearer (Liu,2009).

With the official formalization of this type of team, it has become a bureau of the government. In 2002, the qualifications for employees of UAEB were raised to a college degree or retired senior officers of the army and they were required to pass the national civil service examination. Along with this change of prerequisites, more educated people were recruited (Qin, 2019).

According to the description of one of the inspectors in Leshan (Wang, 2019), their duty of management has become broader and the number of people in their bureau has increased since 2008. The government's capability of effective city management has grown with social development. Since 2000, the inspectors' duties were to organize vendor occupation of streets, but this task has never been fully fulfilled due to poor implementation of regulations.

In the first development period (1990-2013), city inspectors in Leshan used their power to regulate city order, but this control was too weak to regulate the street businesses. Even though they had a duty to manage the space occupation of street vendors, the difficulty of conducting their work often meant that they turned a blind eye to vendors' activities and only did their job when they received pressure from their leaders. This has created a balance between their work and people's needs of doing business on the street and left many free public spaces for people to use according to their will.

Regulations of the city have been set by government leaders. However, during this period, the process of modernization outlined by the government has not been accepted by the people, including the leaders who made the rules and the city inspectors who enforce the rules. These rules were not implemented well and normal people kept their original use of urban space despite changing regulations.

The Changing City

The changes in Leshan happened in “chaos”. The modernization of Leshan’s politics and economy has introduced new methods such as urban planning and city management as well as an open market that incentivizes locals enthusiastic to participate in the space shaping process. The modernization trend opened the gate for new things coming to Leshan and it also provided methods of management to support the governors; however, as illustrated in the previous section, the method of planning and city management did not create a strict control of space. Set regulations stayed at an abstract level, which would prove difficult to enforce on the ground. The city was quickly growing under such circumstances.

The biggest change in the city, in regards to people’s lives, was in housing. These residential buildings not only changed people’s way of living, but also contributed to the Leshan's changing urban appearance. Before the 1980s, there was no free housing market. People lived in houses built and distributed by their enterprises (danweis), all of which were state-owned. People did not own their house; so, they were not able to sell or buy. At that time, housing blocks were mostly five or six-storied apartments with no elevators. The entrances to apartment blocks directly faced the streets. The first-floor shops were owned and operated by the enterprise.

From 1990, housing has become a commodity. From the 1990s to the beginning of the 2000s, more people in Leshan moved to new apartments built and sold by their enterprises or private real estate companies. With the expansion of the city, many of the government department offices and their employees’ apartment buildings moved out of the oldtown. These were relocated to the new Baiyangba urban area. Most of the

government departments built and sold new apartments to their employees. Still, the first floor of the apartments were shops, but these could be sold or rented to other people to do business. This led to the establishment of small businesses along the street.

With the improvement of the town and incomes rising, living conditions improved. This paved the way for the emergence of *xiaoqu*. *Xiaoqu* is a small neighborhood organized by a cluster of apartments and a shared public space located in the middle. The shared public spaces in *xiaoqu* are only available to the people who live there. The apartment buildings in *xiaoqu* gradually became taller and were equipped with an elevator at the end of the first period of development. Some of *xiaoqu* also provided shops at the house-level facing the street. Currently, almost all ground floor spaces of residential and commercial buildings along the streets are shops. Most of *xiaoqu* was built in the 2000s by local real estate developers, while some big real estate companies from outside the city have invested many larger sized *xiaoqu* after 2010. Since these apartment buildings are usually built along the street, they brought more people to use the newly built streets and influenced how the streets developed and how they appear today.

Modernization has largely improved the status of public space. Building more public space has become a way for the local government to demonstrate the modernization level of the city. Meanwhile, it conformed with people's growing need for recreational space. When the Baiyangba area was first built, a sports center and a new square formed the most important public space as they were two of the most important projects at the beginning of the first transformational period. In 1994, the sports center was built close to the edge of oldtown, which is also the starting area of the new urban area. It has a stadium in the center and some other open space for exercise. After it was

built, it became one of the most popular places for Leshan people to have tea, play majiang and participate in square dancing. The new square was built close to the edge of new urban area in 2000. It was the biggest square in the Southwest of China. It was originally named Times Square, which, of course, shared the name with New York's, but local people liked to refer to it as "New Square". Gradually, its official name has been forgotten and is now referred to as Leshan Square.

When the sport center was built, there were lots of tea houses opening along with it. Leshan people liked to drink tea and played *majiang* in the open air and this center was ideally located on the river bank. In recent years, due to tight restriction of the sport center to its sport function, all tea houses in it were driven out. As for the square in front of the stadium, at the beginning, some groups of people began to dance there after dinner and, later, the management of the sport center built a stage in the square and organized free dance classes. There used to be two roller-skate rinks and a temporary small amusement park in the square, which made this place attractive for teenagers and children. When Leshan had limited public places for recreation, the sports center too had been used for multiple activities rather than just organized sports. The above changes incorporated the square into the activities of the stadium, expanded the stadium into the square, and created room for public activity in the new center.

The new square is a very important landmark in Leshan and that area has become one of the centers of the city. The 22-acre space used to be the biggest square in the Southwest of China, located at the end point of the widest and well-designed road built in 1994, Jiazhou Avenue. The projects of the new square and Jiazhou Avenue was the beginning of Leshan government's consideration of the beauty of the city. Since the

square was built, it has been the most popular place for people in Leshan to spend their leisure time. It always has many people gathering for walking, square dancing and doing business.

The most popular after dinner exercises for the people of Leshan is walking and square dancing. In the first period of development, the activity of square dancing was in its preliminary stage. Some critics argued that this caused noise ‘pollution’ and other controversies with residents who live nearby. For the people who enjoyed taking a walk after dinner, they were mainly walking on streets that around their houses as they did not have too many choices for their exercise. During that time, the provided exercise spaces were limited. There were only three places including the sport center, new square, and a waterfront road. In the first period of development, because of the deficiency of recreational space and Leshan people’s growing need for outdoor entertainment, Leshan people explored their own ways to entertain themselves, which created disordered use of public space in the government’s eyes.

The opened market economy stimulated people’s needs for consumption. In the 1990s, the city had three new commercial markets, Bizi Street Market, Niuer Qiao Market, and Zhanggong Qiao Market, but only one, Niuer Qiao Market, has survived and has continued to be a very important place for shopping until the 2010s. The appearance of commercial markets encouraged people’s use of urban space around the markets. The two streets on which this research is going to focus are related to Niuer Qiao Market and Zhanggong Qiao Markets. In 1994, Niuer Qiao Market was built at the edge of the oldtown. Its location outside of the city made it convenient for trucks to transport goods. In the 1990s, it was the most popular shopping place for the residents in Leshan as well

as people who lived around the city. The prosperity of the market has prompted change in the space around it. Although the government built these three markets, their management of the market mostly stopped when construction finished. Limited urban planning was utilized in designing these three places and has therefore left many less considered urban spaces around markets for people to utilize. The popularity of the markets has attracted a large number of space users which has created difficulties for the city inspector to manage the space.

The birth of a new urban space and growing income have largely stimulated Leshan people's desire to use and explore public space. The outdoor activities and urban night life have grown a lot. However, although some new public space was provided, due to imperfect consideration of space design, insufficient supply, less efficient space management, and the growing needs for more urban function, the provided space has been mixed-used. At the same time, the shortcomings on the city's side, especially immature urban management, unclear spatial order, and the lack of guidance, have given more freedom to citizens to explore possible uses of space by themselves. Whether it is the sport center or the newly built streets, these spaces have been used for functions beyond what they were originally envisaged to provide.

Streets in Leshan

Streets are the most apparent space to reflect the change of the city. Their importance to urban development has been indicated by the official reports of street construction achievements in the city's yearbooks. The changing design of streets showed the development progress and government's expectation of the city. Also, people's ways

to utilize street space have indirectly revealed the use and supply situation of urban spaces with other functions.

The old Leshan city had 28 streets and 10 alleys at the end of the Qing dynasty, around 1912. In the next 30 years, more than 10 factories were built around Zhanggong Qiao Area, which was the edge of the city. Then more streets appeared. When the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, Leshan already had 36 streets and 63 alleys, all of which were in the oldtown. Since the 1950s, Leshan has continued the reconstruction of roads, improving their quality and widening the street. By the 1980s, the streets in the oldtown developed to very close to what they look like today (Leshan History Codification Committee,1995).

With the growing need for transportation and urban aesthetics, street designs were changed to sustain these requirements of development. The streets in Leshan can be categorized into three types: the old streets reconstructed between the 1950s and the 1980s; the new streets built between the 1970s and the 1990s; and the streets constructed after 2000. This categorization is based on the physical layouts of streets, the differences of which represent the planning instructions in their respective periods of development. The new streets built from 1970s to 2000s mostly showed characteristics of the first transformational period.

Most of the streets in oldtown have been widened into four-lane streets with 10-foot sidewalks on both sides. The streets in the center of the oldtown are narrower than the streets outside. The streets in the oldtown are narrow, restricted by limited space and resources. The oldtown has been the economic and political center of Leshan city from its

origin. The narrow streets in the center of the area always faced the pressure of heavy traffic and crowded pedestrians. One of the missions of planning in the first stage of development was to move some urban function out of the oldtown. They thus created Baiyangba Area to ease the traffic pressure on the oldtown (Leshan Urban Planning Committee,1988). In Baiyangba Area, the new streets are wider to both support the growing traffic and create vistas, as opposed to the narrow streets of the oldtown. Some main streets in Baiyangba have wider sidewalks, bike lanes and landscape islands. The wider sidewalk space gave people the freedom to use it for pedestrian purposes.

Thus, the street has become an important urban space to accommodate diverse activities. After the economic reform, some people who lived around Leshan came to the city to look for work opportunities, but this young modern city did not have adequate infrastructure to support the growing population and people's increasing demands for urban functions; thus, the streets had become the place to accommodate such desired functions. At that time, the government had yet to start its work on city management. Hence, regarding newly built urban space, the city government lacked instructions to guide people to orderly use the space. With such gaps, people got more freedom to use the street to fulfil their desires through a mixed use of space.

Excepting for migrants, the redevelopment of the oldtown has moved many residents of the oldtown to Baiyangba Area. Many of them were farmers and the displacement destroyed their way of living and livelihoods (Liu, Y., 2019). With limited skills and capital, being a peddler on the street became the first choice for many of them. The increasing number of peddlers intensified on-street activities.

With these changes in the city, managing the free use of streets became the main goal of the city management department. Streets were the most accessible public space for citizens in their daily lives, compared with the sport center and square mentioned before, it turned out to be the most serious battleground between city inspectors and street peddlers when authorities tried to regulate the space. Yet, due to peddlers' large numbers and support from the locals, the small team of city inspectors was not capable of fully regulating the streets. However, when the government had more ambition on taking control of the space in the second developmental period, more specialized urban spaces were built and the street activities were regulated more efficiently, it became easier to manage the peddlers. The managing work in the first developmental period was difficult. During this period, Leshan people were in the preliminary stage of accepting the new order of the city. The government imposed the idea of modernization on local people and met with some resistance. It was a common phenomenon for people not to follow the new rules in the first period.

The newest streets were built after 2000. Many of them have six lanes and wider sidewalks with better quality pavements. The new streets usually have new *xiaoqu* on both sides. The façades of tall apartment buildings that run parallel to the street provide a clean and orderly view. The shops on the first floor sell goods of higher quality at a relatively higher price.

These streets have been regulated and managed since they were created. The design and the facilities on the street communicated to people the intended order of the street and guided them maintain that order. The spacious streets and the well-organized street order have made these streets unattractive to peddlers, making them quieter and

lacking vibrancy as compared to the “disorganized” streets. However, organization on this newest type of street indicated the orderly future of Leshan’s street in the second transformational phase.

Leshan’s streets carried both government’s expectation of the city and people’s agency in how they lived their lives. The transformation of street space shared a similar situation with other public spaces, but the conflicts between the government and people were more intense. The tension produced on the street in the first transformational period will be further demonstrated in the next section.

Food and the Street

With economic growth, when people have more money to spend on consumption, the increase in the number of local customers instigated the expansion of the local food industry. The accessibility of street space in the first developmental period provided a low-cost opportunity that was affordable for many vendors to transform old-style food to suit contemporary preferences. This allowed for the perseverance of traditional Leshan food but also created contemporary Leshan food culture that could flourish and evolve in an indigenous environment.

The ground floors of buildings are usually used for businesses open to the street. Most of the streets in Leshan are lined with shops. Almost every street in Leshan has restaurants. Whether it is a narrow street in the oldtown, or a wide street in the new city area, every corner of Leshan city has food. The majority of businesses facing roads on over two thirds of streets in Leshan is a restaurant. Some of the popular restaurants had

excessive customers than the numbers they could accommodate. So, they put their chairs and tables on the street, occupying the street in front of their restaurants. It became normal for a restaurant to use the indoor space only as a kitchen and storage space, putting the customers on the street. The streets in the first period were used for multiple purposes, one of the most common uses was for the purposes of food businesses.

In the first period, food business was tightly connected with the street. Here, I refer to them as street food. Even if many of them sold products in the shop, I want to show their influence on the street space and emphasize the informality of some kinds of food. The type of street food can be categorized in four types: restaurants and booths serving breakfast and lunch; restaurants that serve dinner (and some serving for the meal after the dinner, *xiaoye*); restaurants and booths that make *xiaoye*; and the restaurants and booths dedicated to selling snacks.

Generally, the size of the restaurants that serve breakfast and lunch is small and some vend on the street. They sell takeaway food like steamed buns, dumplings, wontons, and youtiaos and some of them also have a small space for the customer to eat. They are usually located in residential areas and near big office buildings. Some of the popular ones put tables and chairs out and let the customers eat on the street during the busiest breakfast and lunch hours.

Dinner restaurants are usually the places for people to gather. They provide bigger and more formalized space for people to have the largest meal in a day. Dinner restaurants prefer to locate in popular commercial areas, including shopping malls, but many of them can also be found at the ground-floor (shop) level in residential areas.

When more Leshan people transport themselves through private vehicles, there is greater need for parking space for these restaurants. Unlike shopping malls, which provide customers with underground parking, the customers of restaurants on the street usually park on the street, occupying bike lanes and sidewalks. During dinner time, it is hard to find a parking spot on the street. Dinner restaurants usually open before lunch time and close around 9 pm.

With the improvement of Leshan people's incomes and quality of life, there were growing need for more food and entertainment. This need stimulated the number of *xiaoye* restaurants and the appearance of Leshan night life. *Xiaoye* restaurants usually serve food from 9 pm to 2 am. At the beginning of the economic reform, these night restaurants served the people who worked at night. Now, with people having more money to spend on consumption, *xiaoye* has become a source of entertainment for people who wish to gather and converse at night. In order to attract people, *xiaoye* restaurants pay more attention to preparing and serving quality food in a relaxed eating atmosphere. This requirement laid a foundation for Leshan's street food to evolve and more types of *chuan*, which is a type of food suitable to eat in groups.



Figure 11. Chuanchuan Xiang

Chinese cities originally did not have a bar culture. *Xiaoye* restaurants now serve as the place to have an alcoholic drink. Most popular food in *xiaoye* shops is *chuan* which means food on sticks. Stick-food is informal food. The most common stick-food in China

is barbecue, but, in Leshan, there are more kinds of stick food, including *chuanchuan xiang* (cold cooked food soaked in chili oil cold soup), *mala tang* (fresh stick food dipped in the hot pot by customer), and *youzha* (fried food). These foods are perfect to eat while chatting and drinking.

Xiaoye restaurants are usually located on ground-floors of apartment buildings and the majority of the them put their chairs and tables on the street. They are usually small but occupy a large amount of street space. Like dinner restaurants, customers often come in groups, which has raised the demand for space to accommodate customers and their vehicles. There were a few barbecue restaurants that became famous because of their wide-open space and convenient parking, actually taking precedence over the flavor of food. The occupation of the street was not a big issue as there are less pedestrians at night and therefore the city management had less requirements for the use of the street at night and, at that time, the number of city inspectors was too small to change it. Moreover, these restaurants were popular and attractive to locals. They were local community eating places and had the support from the people.

Except for heavy snacks served at *xiaoye*, at night, Leshan people also consume snacks in the daytime. These foods are easier to take away than those consumed at *xiaoye* and people usually have these snacks at small breaks during work hours or after. Those snacks are mostly sold by street vendors in the afternoon.

Street vendors usually choose crowded places to sell their food. These include squares, open spaces in front of shopping malls, markets, and schools. At the same time, these restaurants increase the attractiveness of the space and draw more people. This type

of restaurant brings more demand for street of pedestrian traffic. School children crave these cheap and delicious foods. Capitalizing on this, school areas have the most delicious snacks and the biggest number of vending booths. However, most schools in Leshan face large traffic problems when school lets out. It is believed that the accumulation of street vendors aggravated the traffic congestion.

Before the economic reform, and when private business was allowed, most snacks in Leshan catered to the bottom-most economic level of the society. These foods were simple meals for the poor who did not have enough money to afford a formal meal, nor enough time in their daily routines to sit down and enjoy a meal. With time, as higher levels of health and sanitation requirements were adopted, the quality of this food has improved. In addition, these snacks are a cherished part of Leshan people's culture.

Food for leisure, including foods in *xiaoye* and local snacks, changed dramatically in the first developmental period. The increased street food business not only largely enriched the diversity of Leshan local food, but it also made the food more attractive. Also, the low cost, simplicity for starting a business, and considerable rewards have created a good environment for the local food to grow.

The open market after the economic reforms encouraged many Leshan people to start a food business. As people were in low socioeconomic conditions, both for the shopkeepers and customers, the shopkeeper took advantage of everything accessible to reduce their cost of business and increase their profit. Occupying street space to reduce their space costs was the most popular way for the majority of the street food businesses. During this time, citizens' acceptance of new government rules had not occurred. The

idea of informal urban space had not been broadly introduced and accepted by the people or the government. Moreover, there were fewer rules and less supervision from the government to guide people regarding new regulations. The loose city management and people's ignorance of new regulation in the modern city created an atmosphere that forced the government to acquiesce to the people's use of space.

Loose city management, mixed-used street space, and Leshan people's indigenous contributions have largely contributed the development of Leshan food. The first stage of development turned out to be the golden years for local street food development, which laid a good foundation for the prosperity of street food and tourism in the second period.

The Two Streets

The previous content has illustrated how the first transformation of the city influenced the urban street space and how the changing streets helped the development of local food culture. Both streets studied in this research were tightly connected with food and are both located next to markets, i.e., two important commercial spaces in Leshan's first developmental period. However, their importance in the city decreased in the second period (covered in the next chapter). The study of the two streets will further show how the transformation of the city has influenced the street and local culture.



Figure 12. Two Studied Streets' Locations in Shizhong District

Hanyuan Street

Hanyuan, Street is the back street of Niuer Qiao Industrial Goods Market that appeared with the founding of the market in 1994, which was the most important commercial place in the city. “Hanyuan” is not a famous street name for most Leshan people. Yet, almost everybody knows where Niuer Qiao is. “Niuer Qiao” means Niuer Bridge. It was a stone bridge built during late-Qing dynasty outside the city, named after a cattle market. “Niu” means cattle and “er” is a filler in Leshan dialect. Hanyuan Street is a name given when the city organized all the streets in Leshan city in the 2000s. By then, people were used to using “Niuer Qiao” to refer to this area, including this street.



Figure 13. Street Name Billboard of Niuer Qiao Built by the Government to Introduce Street History. Dec 14th, 2019

Hanyuan Street is 0.35 miles long with two lanes and a parking space on one side divides the whole block into two parts: North and South. The block is surrounded by three important main roads and a stream. This block was one of the earlier ones being built at the beginning of Baiyangba Area’s construction. From my standpoint, this block was the combination of the governors’ desire of building a new area as well as a place to accept those objects and people that moved from the oldtown because of the redevelopment projects. The complicated components in the block reflected the problems the governors were facing when developing a new urban area and redeveloping the old one. It also reflects how they solved the issues during that period.

The first plan assigned residential, commercial, industrial, warehouse and educational land use in this block, but the physical construction did not totally follow the plan. School and government used land took up a majority of the block. It contained two government-departments and one state-owned enterprise: the Education Department,

Natural Resource Bureau, and Leshan Chinese Oil Company. It also contained housing for their employees and a residential area with courtyard. A famous elementary school and the Education College of Leshan Normal University are located in the southwestern part of the block, but, since 2009, the college campus is used as an elementary school campus. By having so many entities and institutes located in this block, it is obvious to see the importance of this location. It lies on the junction point of the oldtown and the new city. That might be one of the reasons why Niuer Qiao Market is also located here and garnered attention and support from Leshan residents.

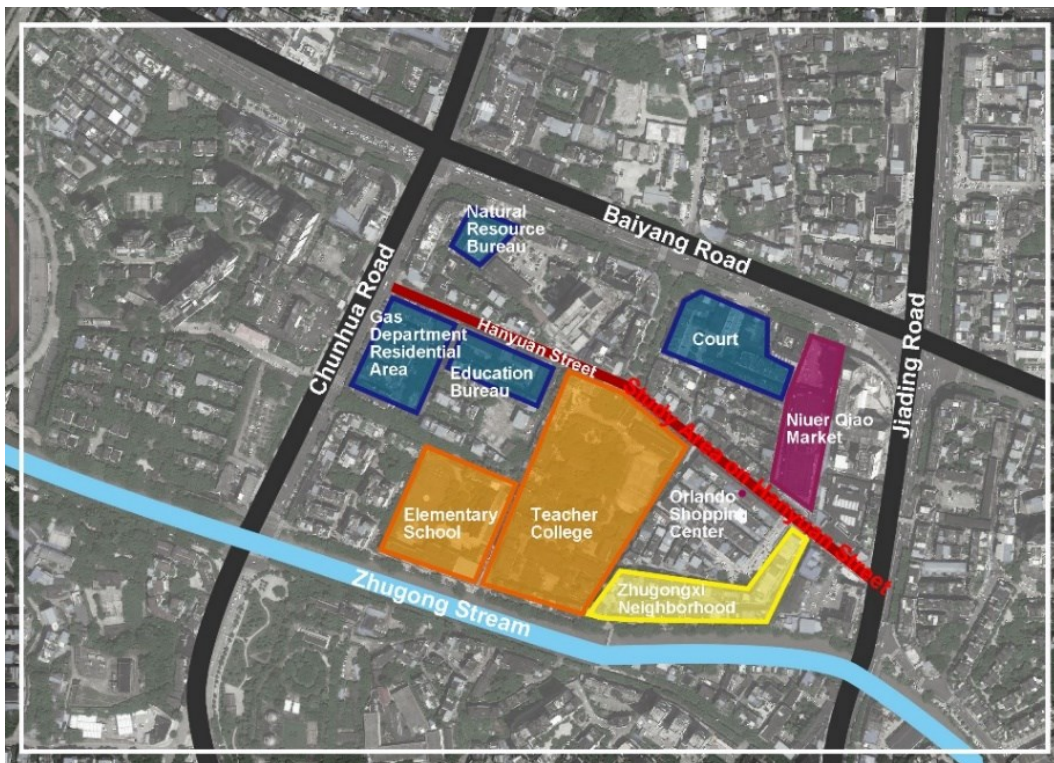


Figure 14. Map of Hanyuan Street

The western part of Hanyuan Street is peaceful and quiet with less business, while the eastern part is busy and noisy with lots of businesses operating and pedestrians walking through. The Niuer Qiao Market is located on the northeastern part of the block.

In the southeast of the block, close to the stream, there is a big residential area where the residents removed from the oldtown were relocated. In this dense neighborhood, Zhugongxi, most residents are moderate- to low-income.

Between Zhugongxi Neighborhood and Niuer Qiao Market there are some buildings built by private entities. These privately built buildings are rarer now, but in 1990s, when the housing market just opened, regulations had not been well established. In some cases, there were farmers building houses on land plots here and these have become a part of city. One of the private buildings, a six-floor-block, houses Leshan's first shopping center. Orlando Shopping Center, opened around 2004, occupies the bottom three floors. Despite the big investment, the mall failed and was closed in about two years. After many years of being vacant, it is currently used as the extension of the Niuer Qiao Market. Many shops including ones that used to be in Niuer Qiao Market are opened here. This could be regarded as an instance of competition between the local small-businesses and a big chain store in which the local small business won.

The buildings along the Hanyuan Street are all apartments, except for Niuer Qiao Market. The housing on the eastern part of Hanyuan Street was built earlier than the buildings on the west side. Moreover, the buildings on the western part of the street were owned by big state-owned enterprises or government and the apartments on the east were mostly privately built and small state-own enterprises, so the quality of the building is observably different. The façade of the buildings on the east look shabbier while the west ones are neater. Even if they are on the same street, the street views are different from the West to the East. The living conditions of apartments around the market are not very

good, but they have provided cheap housing to people who work in the market. This study focuses more on the street next to the market which is the busiest part of the street.



Figure 15. Street View on Hanyuan Street. Dec 20th, 2019



Figure 16. Small Restaurants Along Hanyuan Street. Dec 20th, 2019

The construction of this block started in 1993. Following the economic reforms, three markets were built in Leshan in 1994. One is in the oldtown. The second opened in Zhanggong Qiao Street. And the third is Niuer Qiao Market, located at the edge of oldtown. Originally, Niuer Qiao Market was housed in a building built by the government. There were some privately-owned buildings adjoining it and they are combined to form the (whole) market area today. The Education College was the first institute located on this block in 1978. In 1993, the elementary school was founded. The Zhugongxi Neighborhood for the displaced residents of the oldtown was built in 1994. It was also established at the same time as the market which led many residents of the neighborhood to work in the market or do business with the market.

The less organized nature of constructions in the block indirectly indicated the relative weak power of the government to dominate the order of urban shaping in the design and construction phase, not to mention the weak city management capability to control how space changed when used by people. It did not totally follow the assigned land use on the first master plan. Meanwhile, the national enterprise residential area represented the character of housing before the opened real estate market. The relocation of the residents who moved from oldtown reflected the Leshan government's eagerness for economic development and small consideration of people's lives. The expansion of the market with the private buildings also indicated the weak rule of the city management at that time. Many urban areas built in this period, especially at the beginning of the first transformational period, shared a similar situation with this block.

What makes Hanyuan Street worth study is the existence of Niuer Qiao Market. As the back street of Niuer Qiao Market, it was largely influenced by the market and used

as a commercial street. The popularity of the market often meant this street was crowded. The street was mostly occupied by people for participating in business or commerce and it was the people that determined its use.

The goods in Niuer Qiao Market were cheap and diverse, catering to the needs of people of different ages. Shopping in the Niuer Qiao Market was popular among Leshan people. Residents who lived outside of Shizhong District would especially spend one day or an afternoon shopping here. During that period, because of the lack of transportation services, it was not easy to move from place to place. Hence, coming to Niuer Qiao market was a planned activity for the residents who lived far away (Liu, J1., 2019).

At the end of the first transformational period, Niuer Qiao Market become less attractive to Leshan people. The reason for this is the opening of some shopping malls in the city and, possibly, people having more money to pay for more expensive goods. However, for the elders and the residents who lived in the town or villages around Shizhong District, it was still significant. Especially at the end of the Chinese year, this market would be crowded with people who were preparing for the Spring Festival.

The market has six exits with three of them located on the main roads. Stepping out of the exits onto the main road indicates that the trip to the market is over. However, for those who exit from the three gates on Hanyuan Street, the shopping experience would continue.

There were many shops opened to Hanyuan Street on the market side. Most of them are clothes shops which attracted many female customers. The other side has small restaurants that provide cheap and delicious food. Only the clothing-shop side has a

narrow sidewalk. The customers on Hanyuan Street include the people who work in the market and the customers who shop in it. This street provided different food to satisfy the needs of various people. The backstreet restaurants provide takeout food for shopkeepers, since they find it hard to leave their shops. The restaurants usually use normal tableware instead of takeout containers to deliver food. The shopkeepers usually return the tableware by themselves or the restaurant workers fetch them back.

The food served in these restaurants is different. Some of them serve rice or noodles for energy, while others serve snacks to have fun. The street food businesses provided more flexible service that perfectly suits the needs of the market. For example, one customer can order food from multiple shops and sit at any of them and the restaurant owners will collaborate to make sure all bills are covered.

Outside of the shops on both sides of the street, there were many street vendors on the road on the market side. So, there were several layers of vending, eating, consuming, and enjoying between the stores at the bottom of tall buildings to the carriageway in which vehicles pass. Many of the vendors have fruit and snack booths. Even though Niuer Qiao was not a famous place for food, the snack booths on Hanyuan Street include most kinds of Leshan snacks.

There used to be lots of snack vendors in the city and they were located separately in different parts of the city, since street vending was not allowed by the city, especially on the main roads. With the city management getting gradually more strict, many peddlers who used to open their booths on main streets were driven away by city inspectors to the back streets or alleys. The city inspectors usually turned a blind eye to

the sidewalk occupation on the back street. That made the back streets an ideal place for street vending. Hanyuan Street was one of the popular choices for them to continue business. The large number of customers and workers in the market provided sufficient customers to maintain their businesses.

Except for the peddlers from other places, people living around this street already constituted a big part of the business owners on the street. As mentioned above, there is a neighborhood accommodating the residents who used to live and work in the oldtown. When they were moved here, many of them did small business in the market or on Hanyuan Street. Most of them have moderate to low income. Moreover, the rents on this street were affordable because many of the apartments were built in the 1990s in poor quality and are small. Thus, the housing on this street has been conducive for the settlement of people with less money who want to make a living in the market or other places in Leshan. So, Hanyuan Street became a popular place for peddlers to do business.

Street vending occupied around 8-feet of space on the market side of road. Some of the vendors also put their stuff on the sidewalk next to their booths as well as the clothes shops of the high rises. Therefore, the sidewalk was not walkable for the pedestrians. Many pedestrians choose to walk on the carriage way, sharing the road with cars, motorcycles, and bicycles. Yet, the pedestrians dominated this street not only because of their huge numbers, but also because most of Leshan's drivers avoided this road as it was hard to pass through.

Hanyuan Street gradually became the gathering place for people who had less power. Their preferences on how to operate were based on their practical use of space.

The close connections between the space users on this street made allowed for an efficient management of the space via informal citizen rules. However, this order would soon be challenged by the officials.

When people began to more accepting of the regulations proposed by the government, their impressions on Hanyuan Street changed. In the early 2000s, when the city's security was not very good, Hanyuan Street was known as a place for thieves. Police had devoted a lot of energy to maintain safety on the street, but the residents were afraid to go out at night. After the safety of the whole city had been improved at the end of first developmental period, the residents felt safer on the street (Liu, Y., 2019). Yet, due to the street's disorganized nature, the people's impression of this street did not improve much. The not so well-maintained façades of the shabby apartments along the street, the small and cheap restaurants, the disorganized vending booths and their trash, the randomly parked bicycles and tricycles, the pedestrians walking on the road, and the loud sound coming from the shops and restaurants generated a feeling in some people's minds that the street was disorganized and messy, which helped a bit for them to accept the government's description of this street, "dirty, messy, terrible". At the beginning of the first transformational period, when Leshan people did not form a sense of organized urban order, Hanyuan Street was a popular street used by a large number of people. Even if there were safety issues, it did not hinder people's enthusiasm towards the street. In the late period of the first transformation period, which was around 2010, people had more choices for shopping and Leshan residents have accepted the government regulations (partly thanks to media propaganda). They had more or less accepted that occupying the

street for business was bad and Hanyuan Street gradually lost its reputation in the first period among Leshan people.

The formation and transformation of Hanyuan Street has shown how development affected the city during the first period. The space was shaped by the relatively weak planning and city management and the heavy use and informal regulation by the people. The government-built construction, Niuer Qiao Market, provided a coarse foundation for the space and then the space users transformed the space to suit their uses. The informal rules in regulating the space was great for its users, but it would cause many difficulties for the government when they used different contexts of function and a separate concept of modern urban space to understand it. This inability to be understood by the authorities is one of the reasons that Hanyuan Street faced more trouble when the government's capacity for managing the city improved during the second developmental period.

Zhanggong Qiao Street

Zhanggong Qiao Street is 450ft long and intersects a main road of the city that connects the oldtown and the new urban area. It is close to Min River and a stream. Zhanggong Qiao is a bridge (qiao) over Min River built around 1660. “Zhanggong” was a local officer who administered the building of the bridge named after him. Zhanggong Qiao

Street that continues from the bridge was named after him as well.



Figure 17. Map of Zhanggong Qiao Street

This street was formed around 1913 when many factories opened in this area. The area was regarded as a town outside of the city and Zhanggong Qiao Street was an important road that connected Leshan with other cities, especially with Chengdu. Hence, it was the main access road to Leshan (Leshan urban and rural construction and environmental protection committee, 1988).



Figure 18. Street View of Current Zhanggong Qiao Street on Friday Morning. Dec 20th, 2019



Figure 19. Street View of Zhanggong Qiao Street on Saturday Night. Dec 21st, 2019

Until the 1960s, it was an essential part of the intercity transportation system, although the road pavement was in poor quality and it was hard to drive a car on it. In the 1960s, a bus station serving intercity transportation was built opposite Zhanggong Qiao Street on the Jiading road. In the 1980s, there was another bus station opened at the beginning of the street. These two bus stations brought many people to the street, providing an incentive for street vending. As many fruit, vegetable, and cooked food peddlers occupied the street---making it an open market---street vending prospered.

After the economic reforms in 1979, the opening market incentivized the appearance of street businesses. There were a few shops open to Zhanggong Qiao Street, but street vending was the dominant business. In the 1990s, both bus stations were moved elsewhere due to the expansion of city and business on the street declined (Wang, L., 2019). The houses on the street were built with wood in Chinese architectural style. They were torn down in the 1990s when the area began to modernize. The street was widened to 45 ft and paved in concrete. Around 1993, a market was opened on Zhanggong Qiao Street. Its design was similar to the Niuer Qiao Market; however, due to traffic congestions, this market never developed to the level of Niuer Qiao Market. Many shops in this market were closed after several years.

Around 1997, new apartment buildings were built along the street. Like other apartment buildings in Leshan, the ground floors were shops. However, during that time, the shops did not perform well due to the low socioeconomic status of the people who had little money to spare. Business began to improve in the 2000s.

One of the most important reasons Zhanggong Qiao Street became famous in Leshan was that it was a representative place for nightlife at the beginning of the first developmental period. During this time, there were few places to go out at night, but there were some restaurants opened until midnight to serve the customers who worked night shifts. These restaurants provided a place for people to go. At the turn of the century, Leshan people started to spend more money on entertainment. As demand for nighttime outdoor activities increased, more restaurants that serve *xiaoye* appeared on this street. During this time, *mala tang* became popular. This was a food well suited for communal dining. *Mala tang* originated from Niuhua, a small town near Leshan city. *Mala tang* was first created in 1988 and progressed its original standard form around 1994. Finally, it became what it is today around 2005. The two *Mala Tang* restaurants on Zhanggong Qiao Street helped the street attract many people and allowed for more restaurants to open. The nightlife on this street has fascinated many young people and has made the street noisy and crowded. Because there was no supervision from the city management at night, this place also became a gathering place for local gangsters and drunken people.

Because of the disorganization and lack of supervision of the street, it allotted people more freedom to use the street to suit their desires. During that time, this street was not well-organized. All of the restaurants would move their tables and chairs to the sidewalk, extending their seating area and pushing the pedestrians to the road.

Many informal businesses were attracted by the crowds and informal regulations of using the space of the street. This street atmosphere has helped to cultivate many famous Leshan dishes that made a significant contribution to the development of tourism

in the second developmental period. The most influential food was the vending booth that sold *youzha*. This kind of food appeared in the city around 2000. Similar to *mala tang*, *youzha* was also a food served on a stick which was suitable for takeaway and communal eating. In addition, this food is much cheaper than *mala tang*.

This business was too small to sustain a shop. So, most *youzha* restaurants occupied the open space next to the street, placing their vending booths in the open air. Most *youzha* booths opened after dinner because they mostly served for *xiaoye* and there were no city inspectors to interfere with their business at night. Every night, they put out their tables and chairs to accommodate customers. Some booths even have a plastic canopy to create a shelter, enabling the restaurant to open on rainy nights. After they close, they clean the place, put the components together, and clear the place, giving the open space back to the city in the daytime.

After years of accumulation, *youzha* has become an important food in Leshan's *xiaoye* market, attracting many customers. In the late 2000s, under the regulation of urban order management, all of the *youzha* booths were moved away. Some of the booths that had good business opened small shops on Zhanggong Qiao Street.

At the beginning of the 2000s, singers used to visit the restaurants, one by one, to look for the customer who would like to order a song. They usually had a guitar, a sound box, and a book with a list of songs. They would walk on the sidewalk and through the open restaurants to find their customers. They usually sang while walking around to get people's attention. When a customer ordered a song, they sang next to the table. Most of

the singers were young. Sometimes, there were some children selling flowers, similarly moving across the seating spaces, especially targeting couples.

From business, consumption, and entertainment standpoints, these mobile vendors were filling in another gap in those areas, providing another consumer good or entertainment item that was not provided by even these informal restaurants. These kinds of business were popular during that period and made Zhanggong Qiao Street busy, noisy, entertaining and exciting.

With years of growth, Zhanggong Qiao has become the most famous food streets in Leshan, exclusively enjoyed by Leshan people since the majority of tourists would not come to the city itself but would mainly visit the tourist sites. The growth of this street has largely contributed to the improvement of people's quality of life and their increasing need for recreation in the city. This street was originally developed by and for the people. Unlike Hanyuan Street whose prosperity was largely initially assured via its proximity to an official structure, Niuer Qiao Market, Zhanggong Qiao street's achievement is shown through its adaptation from people's needs. The loose city management provided a relaxed environment to cultivate its growth. The food business gradually formed and would empower the business owners to deal with the government's management in the future.

Summary for the First Transformation Period

In the first transformation period, China was going through large economic reforms and the founding of the market economy. The city picked up on the growth

brought about by these reforms and improved. The open market suddenly increased people's enthusiasm and incentivized them to participate in the economy to increase their income. The growing economy also supported the local government to build more facilities and infrastructure to provide better living conditions. During this period, the city was full of vitality and new development.

This “new” stage was not limited to the people. It was also a transformational period for the government and the city. Leshan city, especially its weak management system and physical facilities, was not well prepared to welcome so many new changes. The huge gaps between the provided services, management tools, and people's needs caused people to rely on their own creativity to enhance the use of urban space. The street space was central to this change. The expression of the people's voice in the public space has largely increased the vitality of urban space and cultivated local food culture, but, in the governors' eye, it was a disorganized use of space, which should be organized from the top to create a better urban city and improve appearances.

The prosperity of Hanyuan Street was the byproduct of the commercial markets, while the boom of Zhanggong Qiao Street was due to people's growing need for outdoor urban functions. The weak city management provided space for people to utilize the space freely for both streets. People's participation in the use of these streets directly shaped their fame in the city.

The economic development in the first period has largely incentivized the people to use and transform urban space. This process also has caused many special “issues” for the city management. Hence, the city began to regulate its public spaces in the second

period. This period saw more rules, a more powerful local government, and the provision of more “complete” urban functions. This is a topic for the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE SECOND STAGE OF TRANSFORMATION

The second stage of development mostly happened at the edge of Baiyangba Area and its extension, which was a suburb of Leshan city. There were many large projects in this area carried out by the city government and private companies. With more capital flowing in, the Leshan government achieved its desire to create a modern city view with tall residential apartment buildings and office buildings along the roads in the new developing area. These new areas looked more advanced than some parts of Baiyangba Area and the old town.

The first stage of development roughly equipped Leshan city with the basic infrastructures and facilities. When Leshan's development stepped into the second phase, the government was expecting another round of improvement for quality of life. To provide a better urban life, the city needed to enrich its urban function and find investors to support this construction. To attract more resources from outside, the government began building the city to be more compliant with the modernization context and intended to get national titles recognized by the whole country enhancing the fame of the city. During the second phase of transformation, to build the formalized context of modernization, the Leshan government had an improved capacity to regulate space more strictly.

Planning

Planning became more effective and that helped the urban developers lay a foundation to further dominate the order of space.

The fourth master plan (2011-2030) was issued in 2013. Due to fast development, in 2017, it was re-edited. The content in this master plan included more subjects compared to the previous plans. Except for the master plan, planning has provided more kinds of plans that regulate newly built urban space from multiple aspects and scales (Liu, J1., 2019). The builders must get the site plan approved by the government in order to continue their construction. The majority of planning projects in the second stage of development (2013-2020) were implemented based on the planning and construction standards following the law and specification made by authorities. The effect of planning documents becoming more influential was not only that it considered more details on space design but also that there was less ability to go against this legal document.

The land use in the plan became simple. It was difficult to work with land blocks that had multiple uses, such as the block where Niuer Qiao Market located. There were bigger *xiaoqu* that took over a whole block. The single land use in one block largely accelerated the separation of urban functions. The simplicity of land use made the city look more orderly. The more thoughtful planning also provided more considerate space design to urban functions. It provided designed space for people and reduce their ability to change the space to their own design.

When there were more space rules included in urban planning, the provided urban spaces were more controlled by their providers, government, or real estate developers, before the space user got a chance to form their right to space in their practical use.

City Management

City management is another power that helps the government control the order of the city. The management capacity of city inspectors has also improved. Since 2013, the tension between the city inspectors and citizens has been mitigated (Qin, 2019).

The changing attitude of the inspectors and their progressive working capacity have largely reduced the conflict. A study noting the changing of Chinese law enforcement methods from confrontational to cooperating with citizens since 2012 is very likely linked to this change (Han, 2020). There are more regulations and more clear responsibilities now to guide their work.

Moreover, the residents' growing cooperation with regulation helped city management. This not only reduced the cases of those going against the rules, but also enhanced people's understanding and impression of city inspectors. According to a city inspector with fifteen years of experience in Leshan, there were more supporters and an understanding of their work among city residents, even though some of the bias of inspectors that was generated in the first period still existed (Wang, 2019). In the first development period, city inspectors' image on the media was tightly connected with bullying. This unflattering portrayal made people become angry towards city inspectors as the representative of government street level bureaucracy.

The separation of space by function reduced the disordered space that need to be regulated due to citizens no longer needing to gather in the same location for multiple purposes. More functional amenities were provided in the second period. The simpler space function created fewer occasions that required the work of city inspectors.

During this period, city management had stricter regulations on street order; however, despite the fact that there were more rules and less occupation of street, the cooperative relationship between street peddlers and city inspectors largely stayed the same. The occupation of the sidewalk by restaurants and vending booths was still a difficult issue that the city inspectors were not ambitious enough to solve and their leaders also did not push them to solve. The balance between city inspectors and sidewalk occupiers was damaged by the application of National Healthy City and National Civilized City in 2019, this will be discussed in later sections.

The Changing City

After the first period of development, Leshan had more infrastructure to support modern life. The development in the second period focused more on the quality of urban space instead of creating new infrastructure. The rising local economy attracted more investment. So, both the government and capital became more influential in defining and controlling the spatial order through the change of city.

The second stage of development brought bigger construction projects. Except for the projects invested in by the government, real estate became a favorable market for outside investment, which was like what happened in most cities in China. There were

many large and advanced *xiaoqu* built by famous real estate companies in the new urban area. The buildings in this kind of *xiaoqu* consisted of mostly elevator apartments around thirty floors. Some big *xiaoqus* occupied a whole block and accommodated more than 10,000 residents. The newly built *xiaoqus* usually advertise themselves as representations of modern and rich life and their residents usually have medium to high income. The large scale of *xiaoqu* simplified the function of a block and the types of space, but they also provided ground floor shopping along the street. The types of businesses and potential customers of these shops were simpler and the less diverse components of the street made the street view neat and orderly.

Along with *xiaoqu*, shopping malls also appeared in Leshan city. The branded goods in shopping malls came to be viewed as more attractive by Leshan people than the products in the Niuer Qiao Market. As the city continued to develop, more shopping malls opened and their location gradually moved from oldtown to the new urban area, the more modern and spacious ones being in the newer areas. Now, in 2020, Shizhong District already has six shopping malls. Two of the most famous ones opened after 2015. At the same time, citing traffic and fire safety considerations, the Niuer Qiao Market was closed at the end of 2019.

More and more public spaces have been built and the development of the city has provided diverse destinations for people to go. With the improvement of vehicle accessibility, Leshan people have expanded their choices for going out. As more spaces were built for various urban functions, people became less dependent on streets for such functions. The multiple uses that used to happen on the streets were thus replaced by professional spaces distributed in different parts of the city.

Streets in Leshan

In the second developmental period, as most Leshan people owned a private vehicle, traffic became the dominant factor that influenced how people used the streets. The development projects of the city not only provided wider roads to accommodate the growing traffic, but also supplied different facilities and destinations that influenced how the streets were used. The streets built in three different development periods, including the period before economic reform and the two periods after that, have been used differently.

The growing number of vehicles in Leshan increased the need for parking space and sidewalks became an alternative for parking lots. The old town area, which had been formed before the economic reform, had narrow sidewalk space and was hardly equipped with parking lots. Parking was difficult in the old town. The Baiyangba Area built in the first transformational period had a wider sidewalk but also had few parking lots. Street spaces became the main parking area. The new urban area built in the second phase had more parking lots under the regulation of planning requirements. There were fewer parking issues in this area.

The traffic issue not only affected the use of sidewalks, but also had an effect on the food businesses along the streets. When city management officers were still turning a blind eye to business on the street, at the beginning of the second transformation, many restaurants, especially small ones, occupied half of the sidewalk during mealtime.

In the old town and earlier built areas in Baiyangba, the limited sidewalk space provided only enough for restaurant seating extension and very little space was provided

for parking. Moreover, the traffic jam during the rush hour created a headache for the diners with cars in this area. Traffic and parking space on streets in these areas restricted the business to larger restaurants. However, the dense population on the street still attracted many food businesses to the old town. Except for old restaurants still open after many years, there were some new small food shops, and most of them did not provide room for their customers to stay. Street food vending booths were also popular in this dense business area.

In the later-built Baiyangba Area there were also few parking lots, but the wider sidewalks provided more space for parking. Restaurant customers' cars dominated the sidewalk during mealtime. The wider sidewalk also helped the restaurants along the street to be more competitive, due to the convenient parking. The convenience of parking was one of the reasons for the appearance of a new food street, Jiaxing Road, at the edge of the Baiyangba Area. Jiaxing Road was a new hot spot for food with locals in the second transformational phase. The new food street was spontaneously formed around 2010. It sells more formal food, compared to the dominant informal food sold on Zhanggong Qiao Street. Its wider street can accommodate more cars for the customers getting off from work for dinner.

Aside from diners, pedestrians also need sidewalks. Many Leshan people go out for a walk around their neighborhood after dinner. The crowded space on the occupied sidewalk forces the pedestrians to walk on the non-motor traffic lane used by bicycles, tricycles, and motor bicycles. Food business on some streets created issues like noise and occupation of the sidewalk which made some residents who live around such businesses support more government regulation.

The streets built after 2013 were wider and have fewer parking issues. The buildings built in the second phase were equipped with more parking lots. Many restaurants in this area were chains and they would not put their tables and chairs on the streets. Even so, there still were a few small restaurants occupying sidewalk with their tables and chairs. The spacious sidewalk provided enough space to contain the co-use of pedestrian, business owner, and street parking. Most of the food business in the newly built area operate in a more formalized space. They have restaurant space to accommodate their customers and vehicles. The street space in the newly built area have less connection with food.

The modernization of Leshan has largely streamlined and decongested traffic as well as reduced the frequent human interaction on the streets. The small businesses and narrow street spaces in the old town created more interaction between person to person and people and space. The well-designed streets in the second developmental period separated different functions and assigned particular locations for them, reducing the mixture of the use of space. In so doing, it also reduced the vitality of space created by people's interaction.

In sum, urban planning and city management became more powerful in the second period. As the government had better tools and stronger intentions of regulating the city, people's creativity on the streets was suppressed, making the traffic function define the streets. The importance the role of the street played in shaping Leshan city's identity has been decreased.

Food in Leshan

Locals' increasing ability to freely consume and the popularity of local food among tourists have largely helped the food business in Leshan to prosper. During the second period, the local food culture has been converted to a commodity to attract customers and investment from the outside, which, in turn, brought more challenges for this people-centric culture to evolve.

With the changing lifestyles in Leshan, food has become a form of entertainment. Increasingly more informal food has appeared to satisfy middle-income earners' appetite and demand. At the same time, there were more food from other cities or other countries coming to Leshan. The prosperity of the local food business has attracted more food from outside into Leshan. In 2017, around 70% of the new businesses in Leshan sold food. (Liu, J2., 2019).

A part of the development of local food in the first period can be attributed to critical local customers, but the locals have less ability to evaluate unfamiliar food from other places. Also, at the beginning of first period, Leshan had some foods from outside, but their influence was not very pronounced. The amount of outside foods was small and the foods were usually from provinces close to Sichuan, where the cuisine style is somewhat similar to Leshan. So, Leshan people had enough time and capability to digest the outside influence into their own food culture and make the food a part of Leshan food. During this period, the local diners played an important role in the development of hybrid local food. Leshan cuisine has trained the locals' pallet for tasting food with strong and plentiful flavor, but they have less capability to evaluate the food from outside the region and with other styles. Leshan people were picky and critical of local food's

flavor and imposed strict requirements on the process of evolving local food. When too many new styles of food came into the city in a short period, the local people were not able to develop the ability to evaluate outside food to localize them.

At the same time, when food became an attraction for tourists, the popular local food became a representative of indigenous culture. The prosperity of food business in

Leshan attracted more people to engage in local food business. During this time, the new open food businesses were more formal and have more outside influence, unlike the flourishing of street food business in the first



Figure 20. Queue in Front of the Wanghong Restaurant. Apr 21st, 2019

transformational phase which mostly had indigenous influence. At the same time, the amplification of traditional and local identities for the tourists led to less creative changes in local food. It is positive for the local food to improve its diversity and generate more economic benefit for its further growth; however, the precious value of Leshan food culture is its connection to indigenous culture. The local food culture could contain different food and transform it into a local style; however, when the outside influence flooded into Leshan and the local people and government cared more about economic value above the local food culture, the food culture will be weakened by influence from outside the region, instead of mastering it as a resource for its further growth.

In recent years, food in Leshan has become an attraction for tourists. Now, it is common among young people in other cities to make a day trip to Leshan to visit famous restaurants and food booths and share their experience on social media. The shops popular on the internet were called *wanghong* shop. They were the shops pursued by a significant number of young people.

Some of the famous local restaurants and street booths have given way to big restaurants with fashionable interior designs favored by young people. The rising fame of local food also attracts tourists who used to stay in the Leshan Buddha area to come into Leshan city. The increasing number of tourists in the city has accelerated the official development of Zhanggong Qiao food street, creating a new development for the local food, which will be more described in the next section.

The strong economic attraction of *wanghong* shops attracted much capital investment into restaurant businesses. This tide of investment has increased the consumer price of local foods. *Wanghong* shops were the most popular ones among tourists. Most *wanghong* shops used local culture to advertise their food. However, the good-looking food, upscale eating environments, and higher food price were trying to detach themselves from its original identity of cheap street food. *Wanghong* shops represent a fancy lifestyle pursued by many young people. This lifestyle viewed as fancy by them is different from the street culture that originally created the food they are selling now. The fancy *wanghong* culture is the opposite of the poor street culture. Now, it is the *wanghong* culture that is influencing the creations of street culture.

Regardless of the people's improved, or changed, requirements, the prevalence of *wanghong* phenomenon has made it harder for food to evolve from the bottom levels to the mainstream food like what happened with *youzha* in the first period. Most of the new food businesses of the second stage are opened in formalized shop spaces. In the second period, food had less connection with the street.

The Two streets

Hanyuan Street

As Leshan people's quality of life has improved, as the most popular shopping place in the first transformation, Niuer Qiao Market and Hanyuan Street were hard pressed to suit people's need in the second phase. When they gradually lost firm support from customers, its space that used to be defined by the people became easier to be challenged by the authority.

The improved quality of life of Leshan people brought new challenges for the businesses in Niuer Qiao Market. In the second phase, Niuer Qiao Market was not the best choice for most people and it was mostly regarded as the shopping place for people with less money. When people cared more about food safety and sanitation, the foods on Hanyuan Street became less clean in people's minds, even though all the restaurants there had food sanitary certifications. Some of the restaurants there have improved their sanitation standards to maintain their business, but they also have received some complaints about the increased prices because of the higher sanitary standard by established customers (Field observation, December 17, 2019). The decreasing business

in the market also made the restaurants on Hanyuan Street lost many customers. Although this street was facing some challenges of transformation, some of the restaurants still got some loyal customers who specifically come there from other areas, even other cities, to have food (Yang, 2019).

This street was a place that created life in the city in the 1990s. The cheap and convenient products and the way of shopping perfectly suited people's needs at the early time of the city's development. Now the development of the city has caused the people to adopt a different lifestyle belonging to a higher quality of life, according to their view. So, the Niuer Qiao Market area was forced to change. According to the shopkeepers in the market and on Hanyuan Street, their business started to decline in 2017 and fewer people shopped there. Many of the shopkeepers complained that their incomes were just enough to make ends meet every month.



Figure 21. Niuer Qiao Market Building. Dec.25th,2019



Figure 22. The Red Banner for Advertising Clearance Sale. Dec. 25th, 2019

At the end of 2019, the market was officially closed. However, as stated before, the city owned only one building, the one that started the market. The rest of the buildings that comprised the market were owned privately. Hence, the government only moved out the shops in its building. The rest of the shops in private buildings stayed the same. Although only a part of the market moved, it affected the rest of the market and Hanyuan Street.

A real estate company invested in a new market at the edge of the city, next to the high-speed train station. That market had been empty since it was built in 2014. Now some of the shops in Niuer Qiao Market will move there while the others choose to relocate their shops in Orlando Market next to Niuer Qiao Market. Some of shop owners were concerned that their business has already gotten worse; moving outside of city center would make them totally lose their competitiveness.

The moving of Niuer Qiao Market was first proposed in 2009 due to fire safety and traffic congestion (Liu, J2., 2019). At that time, the market was still prosperous, so the city failed to move it. With the market declining, the city finally moved a part of it, leaving the rest to explore their own future.

The decline of the market largely influenced the activities on Hanyuan Street. Reducing customers of the market also lessened the street users on Hanyuan Street. Meanwhile, the improved capacity of city inspectors and the community committee created more rules to “rectify” the disorder on Hanyuan Street. Even though there was a cooperative relationship between the city inspectors and street peddlers, the gradually stricter regulations of street order constantly challenge this relationship. In 2019, this cooperation was broken because of the Two Title Application Movement, which will be illustrated in the next section.

The stricter regulations brought tension between the peddlers and street managers. According to my conversations with two street peddlers and one officer who worked in the community committee, their different explanations of striping marks and booth fees indicated a breakdown of communication with each other. The peddlers thought the striping mark was the permitted vending area set by the community committee, but the committee explained this line was the parking line of bicycles when there were more rental bikes appearing in the city. The peddlers said they need to pay five yuan each month to the committee for their booth fee; however, the officer said there was no booth fee because their occupation of the street has never been allowed. The five yuan was used to pay for the street cleaner specially hired by the committee to clean the garbage created by these booths (Liu, Y., 2019; Yang, 2019; Zhang, 2019).

Through their different interpretations of the same thing, it showed the negligent work of the community committee and the fear of peddlers to communicate with authorities. The peddlers perfunctorily followed the requirement proposed by the committee but have little interest to know what kind of reward they have gotten through their obedience. The poor communication and negative attitude from both sides showed how government management lost its ability to dialogue with the people.

The decreasing customers in the market reduced the food customers on Hanyuan Street. Moreover, the growing local food business also made Hanyuan Street a less attractive as a place for recreational food. The function provided by Niuer Qiao Market and Hanyuan Street have become regarded out of date. People's changing use of space with the intention to support the well-organized space order proposed by the government have influenced their impression of this place. This area was the trendy place for Leshan people in the first phase, but in the second phase, it lost its fame. As people's influence grew weaker on the space, government enforcement constantly challenged the previous informal rules made by people and tried to bring the space under their control. Niuer Qiao Market and Hanyuan Street were like the creations of the first phase and they can hardly suit the fast changes of the city and people's lives during the second transformation. Even though there was a negative sign for the future of the business in this area, there are still lots of people's livelihoods attached here. That said, most of them were powerless people in the city. How their lives will be changed with the fading of this area is a problem worth the Leshan government's consideration.

Zhanggong Qiao Street

In the second phase, Zhanggong Qiao Street grabbed the chance to develop and successfully transfer itself to suit the city's needs in the second transformation by adopting the technology that the government used to develop the city.

Since 2015, Leshan's food became popular on the internet, attracting many people to Leshan for a food tour. The previous widespread fame of Zhanggong Qiao Street among the locals made it a highly sought-after place by tourists. Especially during the national holiday, this street was crowded with tourists. The tourists' visits had extended the business hours of a majority of shops in the nighttime with some of restaurants even staying open for 24 hours. Moreover, the streets next to Zhanggong Qiao Street had also opened many restaurants, making them an extension of Zhanggong Qiao Street. Zhanggong Qiao Street area has become a tourist food street acknowledged by people, including locals and tourists, but has not been acknowledged by authorities.

In 2016, a negative local newspaper report of Zhanggong Qiao Street argued for its upgrading and portrayed it as an official tourist place acknowledged by the authorities. According to the words of a city inspector who got involved in the upgrading project, "this report made the mayor angry about lack of street management on Zhanggong Qiao Street," (Qin, 2019). He urged the city Management and Law Enforcement Bureau in Shizhong district to control the organization of the street and make the street "well-organized" in fifteen days. This means the chairs, tables, and billboard that occupied the sidewalk needed to be regulated.

As the city inspectors carried out the order of the mayor, they were also put under pressure by the shop owners on the street who wanted to improve the street quality to

attract more customers. During this time, Zhanggong Qiao Restaurant Organization was officially founded and it was organized by most of the shop-owners on the streets, including some shops on the other streets around Zhanggong Qiao Street. They explained their desire for physical improvements of the street to the city inspectors. The city inspectors proposed the same to the city government.

However, the government did not have a development plan for this street in that fiscal year, so it did not make an adequate response to this request by the shop owners. After a discussion between the restaurant organization and city inspectors, the latter decided to make one restaurant as an improvement example and show the result to the city leader in the hopes of convincing him to approve a plan for the improvement of Zhanggong Qiao Street. One restaurant that operated for more than twenty years redesigned its signboard and changed the blue steel shed over the sidewalk into a traditional Chinese architecture style (See photo 10 and photo 12). The mayor, who checked on the improvement, was very satisfied. He permitted all the shops to change like the sample shop instead of tearing down the sheds that occupied the sidewalk.



Figure 23. The First Restaurant That Set As An Improvement Example. Dec.20th, 2019



Figure 24. Zhanggong Qiao Street Before the Redevelopment Project. Source: Leshan News Website. Apr 26th, 2016



Figure 25. Zhanggong Qian Street After the Redevelopment Project, Source: www.scol.com.cn. Jul 8th, 2018

All the restaurants on the street and the streets that connected to Zhanggong Qiao Street have standardized their signboards and shelters into a traditional Chinese architectural style. The shop owners spent about four million Yuan (USD 571,000) on this project, individually. The city also spent 10 million Yuan (USD 1.4m) on decorating the façades of the buildings, uniting the whole streets within one traditional Chinese architecture style. The government also put a big billboard at the beginning of the street, officially acknowledging this street as Leshan's food street (Qin, 2019).

In 2016, Zhanggong Qiao Street got its new name: Zhanggong Qiao Haochi Street. It was an official name acknowledged by the government. "*Haochi*," in Southwestern Mandarin, means esurient. It usually describes a street with lots of restaurants with local flavor and local food culture. This term is widely used for food streets for tourists all around the country, guiding the tourists to find delicious local food. There were bulletin boards, located at both ends of the street, showing information on the

restaurant's organization on Zhanggong Qiao. Each of them provides the names of all restaurants, the history of the street, and a map of member restaurants' locations.

The “traditional Chinese style architecture” is popular for street improvement projects. It used some elements of old Chinese architecture, including white wall, delicately decorated windows, and a traditional style roof, but mixed with modern building materials and styles. This hybrid style has been one of the standards used for improvement projects to presumably represent rich local culture. Yet the local traditional architecture did not look like that. This style has homogenized the appearance of tourist dining areas across the country and therefore undermines their local identities. They are also like Chinese food areas in other cities like London and Chicago where they have to dress up with stereotypical Chinese symbols for the Western consumer. In China, this style is a fast and direct way to distinguish the tourist-oriented food streets to develop tourism from other, more authentic, places.

This decoration project has been regarded as an upgrade of Zhanggong Qiao Street and has been propagandized by local media. By having a similar architectural style as Haochi Streets in other cities, Zhanggong Qiao Street has successfully put itself in a formal tourism development context. Being included in this formal context, it won the chance to acquire more economic benefits from Leshan tourism development, but it also decreased its connection with the informal context, which was mostly responsible for the success it has today.

As mentioned before, there was a big market on this street built in the first phase. After its failures, the market was bought by a private company to redevelop. Due to the

complication of the building's ownership, its redevelopment has been delayed. The company lent it to the city to use as a temporary farmer's market, organizing all the vegetable vending booths that use to be on the Zhanggong Qiao Street within this building. The market opened in the early morning and closed around 5 pm. It was always filled with people, but morning was its busiest time. It was a very big market and even attracted farmers from villages around Shizhong District. With the development of Zhanggong Qiao Street, the private company decided to take back the market and use it to serve tourists. This included developing a hotel, restaurant, coffee bar, and a performance space, as well as providing abundant choices for tourists.



Figure 26. The Crowds in the Farmer's Market at 9 AM, Dec 2019

The project manager thought the quality of the tourism on Zhanggong Qiao Street needed a lot of improvement and their project (see figure 27) responds to tourists' needs

on this street. He emphasized the local culture experience that will be provided by this project and most of the experiences they will cultivate will be related to historical Leshan culture (Xu, 2019).



Figure 27. The Design Image of Market Owner's Redevelopment Project

Now the city is building another market on the Yanwu Street close to Zhanggong Qiao Street to relocate all the vendors in the old market. According to the city inspector, some of the newly built markets were not acceptable for many vendors because of the higher booth fees and not enough available booths. They still vend on the street and refuse to use the market (Wang, 2019). So, a similar situation might well happen with this new market, causing the vendors to sell on the street under the risk of city management's punishment.

The strict street regulation to serve tourism on Zhanggong Qiao Street will not let vegetable booths occupy the street again, but this big market was heavily used by

thousands of residents around it. The soon to be disappearing convenient function of the fresh food market will further decrease the potential of locals using Zhanggong Qiao Street and give more rights to the street developer to prioritize tourists.

After the redevelopment project, most of the restaurants on Zhanggong Qiao Street were well oriented towards tourists. Most of the food they sell were informal food for entertainment. A few old-style rice restaurants and grocery stores have rented their shop to new-style food restaurants, like bubble tea shops. On the new signboards, some restaurants used words like authentic (*Zhengzong*), a time-honored brand (*Laozihao*), and showing the ages of restaurants to indicate they are the authentic, local food. The price of the food in some restaurants were not the acceptable price for locals.

The city government has built a parking lot on a nearby street and street parking was banned on Zhanggong Qiao Street recently. Now the street is sanitized and has an attractive layout. It is a successful attraction for the tourists, but many Leshan local customers prefer to patronize food establishments in other parts of the city.

The redevelopment project of Zhanggong Qiao Street was originally proposed by the shop owners on the street. They paid for part of the upgrading fee and found an advertisement company to design the unified decoration for their shop. However, by just looking from the appearance, it was hard to tell which parts were done by the shop owner group or the government. They used the same language of defending space. To some extent, part of people's acceptance of government-defined language indicated the success the government had in taking back their control of urban space from people and people taking back this power proactively. Unlike the decay of Hanyuan Street, Zhanggong Qiao

Street got its second prosperity by following the government, but as demonstrated previously, the food culture has become a commodity for tourism, and Leshan people's connections with this street are gradually removed in order to create more space for tourists.

Two-Title Application Movement in Leshan

The Two-Title Application Movement clearly showed Leshan government's ability to control the city in the second phase, which is the outcome of their many years of implementing development in the city. This movement has profoundly helped the government to deal with illegal street occupation, which has been a headache for them since the first transformation until now.

The two titles this movement is referring to include the National Healthy City and National Civilized City. The National Healthy City is one of the most important city brandings awarded by the National Patriotic Health Movement Committee in Beijing. It evaluated healthy education, urban environment sanitation, environmental protection, the sanitation of public facilities and drinking water, food sanitation, prevention of infectious disease, and the cleanliness of residential areas, government related departments and companies in the applicant city (National Health Commission of People's Republic of China, 2011) The healthy city movement started in 1990 around the whole country.

The National Civilized City title was proposed a little later than the National Healthy City in the late 1990s. It is the highest honorable city branding and most difficult to receive. It is awarded by Central Committee of the Communist Party of China for the

Construction of Spiritual Civilization, founded in 1997. The civilized city means the city that has best promoted socialistic modernization, has shown comprehensive progress in economy and society in a scientific development, has the harmonic development of physical civilization, political civilization, and spiritual civilization and made an achievement on spiritual civilization, and had an improvement on citizen's overall civilization (Central Committee of the Communist Party of China for the Construction of Spiritual Civilization, 2003). In 1994, Leshan Shizhong District decided to apply for the National Healthy City title but failed to get it. It won the Provincial Healthy City and Civilized City in 1997. Since then, the city has tried for the national title, but it has never succeeded.

In 2018, the Leshan government planned to apply for both the National Healthy City and National Civilized City titles. The application of the Healthy City title was started before the latter. The city created what was called the "Two-title Application Movement." After the first round of Healthy City examination in 2018, Leshan was ranked at the bottom level of all the cities in Sichuan province that participated. This made the leaders of the city angry and they gave a very strict command to every bureau of the government to participate in the application process (Qin, 2019).

The two departments that took the main responsibility during the process in 2018 were the Urban Management and Law Enforcement Bureau, along with the government of Shizhong District. The other bureaus needed to cooperate with the Urban Management and Law Enforcement Bureau to keep the cleanliness of the streets where they were located. Except for the work exclusively for the upper level, the responsibility of management was distributed to every level of government. Besides the hard work of

sanitary workers, the officers in every community committee, which is like a government management unit at the very bottom level, needed to patrol the streets and keep them clean and well-organized. Because of the limitation of the number of officers in a community committee, they also hired some additional people to help them. They all wore a red armband with “Shizhong District Two Title Application Persuader” on it. Their jobs were: picking up the trash; organizing the random parking of bikes, motorbikes, and cars; and helping city inspectors evict street vendors. At the second half of 2019, it was normal to see a person wearing a red armband on the street in Leshan.



Figure 28. The Persuaders Are Picking Trash on the Street. Dec 25th, 2019

Parking the way organized by the application-movement forced Leshan residents to change their habit of randomly parking on the street. Police became more serious about

fining those who park illegally than before. The random parking situation improved, but half of the sidewalks were still occupied by cars with official parking lines, since the city did not have enough parking lots.

The strict command from the mayor meant the city inspectors spared no effort on keeping the street vendors away from the street. Street vending has been illegal since the 1990s, but due to a large number of peddlers and the needs of people to buy goods from them, it was hard to stop street vending in the past. For a long while, the city inspectors were in the dilemma of being between the pressure from their leaders to organize the city and the difficulty they faced to conduct their work. To accomplish the command from their leaders, city inspectors formed a cooperative relationship with peddlers.

The leaders in the upper level also knew how the work was being managed on the street, but they did not really care about the peddlers doing business on the street if they did not create trouble. Street vending is connected with low-income and vulnerable people's lives, but the government did not have a solution to provide enough jobs for these people, so they turned a blind eye to it when it was not an obstacle to hinder the development of the city. The previous mayor did some work for the street vendors and the vulnerable people, but the current mayor, who took office in 2013, paid more attention to urban development and regarded the street vending as an obstacle for Leshan's further development.

At the beginning of the movement, many vendors stopped their work to cooperate with the examinations, but then they realized it became hard for them to go back to the street. City inspectors took their duty seriously this time. Many peddlers had stopped

their business for a long time; some people had changed their job; some opened a shop after the break; and some others chose to go back to the street under the threat of losing their booth and being evicted by the inspectors (Yang, 2019).

People who continued their business had a hard time and are still having a hard time today. For the peddlers who opened a shop, the cost of the business had increased but their goods had some limitations to attracting more customers. For the peddlers who still “fought” on the street, the strict examination from the inspectors restricted the area and time for them to do business. They mostly choose streets that connect with paths, so that they could run when the inspectors came, and they would hide for a few hours to make sure the inspector had left. Now, the new normal is to see the inspector patrol on the street, but no vending booths. On Hanyuan Street which used to be the gathering place of street vending, it is hard to find a vending booth now. With the decreasing business on the street, the street has become quieter, but they are still a few vendors exploring a way to continue their vending business.

Except the vending on the street, all the restaurants that occupied the street by putting their tables and chairs out have been regulated. On Zhanggong Qiao Street, where one could see such sidewalk occupation, all the shops must follow the rule of leaving an area of the sidewalk open. Their situation is much better than the restaurants on other streets, since a part of the occupation of sidewalk has been formalized. In the redevelopment project in 2016, the government permitted their occupation of the sidewalk by building a formalized canopy over the sidewalk, connected to their shops. Compared with shops on other streets, the disorganized occupation in Zhanggong Qiao

has been officially permitted and formalized as an organized occupation by the government. To ensure the organization of the street, inspectors also have devoted much time to patrolling this street and not letting the street peddlers return. Although the main businesses on it are restaurants, the disappearing street vending has decreased the vitality of the street that influences the business of restaurants, one of the owners of a restaurant complained (Liu, X., 2019).

The two national titles were the tool the local government borrowed from the higher-level governance to give them a reason to strengthen their power in the city. In addition, the adoption of these titles helped the central government to further manage the people at the local level. Applying these titles was for further economic development, which should be beneficial for the local people, but as illustrated above, applying for these titles has already caused some trouble for some people's lives. How will these kinds of people benefit from their sacrifice? Obviously, they will not be the people who will benefit from these titles.

Streets Policy after COVID-19 Pandemic

The pandemic caused many people to lose their jobs and the decaying job market exasperated the problem of unemployment. During this time, the government was not powerful enough to reinvigorate the market on its own and so it borrowed the people's power to solve the issue, or in other words, allowed them to help themselves like what most people did in the first transformation period. When COVID-19 broke out in China at the end of 2019, most businesses closed, and many people lost their jobs. While the Chinese economy is reviving again, there are not enough positions for the people who

lost their jobs during the pandemic, hence informal business has become a method for the government to create jobs. The changing street policy brought Leshan into new stage of transformation.

At the beginning of May 2020, the Chengdu city government published eight rules encouraging people to do business on the street and allowing restaurants to expand their tables and chairs on the sidewalk (Wang, 2020). Premier Li has praised the rules in Chengdu at the press conference of the National People's Congress in June. Suddenly “street booth economy” became a hot word broadly discussed among Chinese people. Many city governments have followed the Chengdu government’s policy of opening street spaces for doing informal business. City inspectors, who used to evict peddlers from the streets, now help them to start business. The Office of the Central Steering Committee for the Construction of Spiritual Civilization has declared that the occupation of the street for business will not be considered in the assessment of the National Civilized City (Financial Reporter, 2020).

After the pandemic, the informal street business that used to be discouraged by the government has been recognized for its contribution to the city. The news report of Xinwen Lianbo emphasized the increase in the number of employed due to street business (Financial reporter, 2020). There is another word that has been broadly used in the news reports besides relating to Xinwen Lianbo, which is “yanhuoqi”. It is a word to describe a sense of life. The small businesses on the street created a close human contact and more chances of communication between strangers. The reasons they were used for criticizing street businesses in the past, including sanitary problems, interference to traffic, and marring the appearance of the city have not become problems that would

cause troubles for the city, because, at this time, the city inspectors are trying to deal with the problems instead of removing them. The role of city inspectors has changed from regulating the disorganized activities defined by the government to helping people maintain their businesses. The government's relationship to people has changed from opposing to cooperation. The current harmony of street business has proved that the previous actions of the government of forbidding street business was not the way to solve the problems created by the street business.

The trend of a street-booth economy was started by the influential cities such as Chengdu and Hangzhou and has spread all over the country, influencing middle and small cities and small towns. Most of the big cities that have received the title of National Healthy City and National Civilized City have passed the step to prepare for the index examination for the title application. These city governments have started to think about how to manage the city based on people's needs through cooperation, but many smaller cities, like Leshan, are still in the process of applying for the titles. Although this strategy was proposed by the mega-city governments, compared to those cities, the benefit of street-booth economy in middle and small size cities is greater, because this economy better suits those people's finances and consumption capability, not to mention the other benefits that are not measurable by numbers.

The pandemic brought back street business that had disappeared on Leshan's streets. By following the advocacy in the high-level government, suddenly, Leshan government encouraged people to do business on the street, following the direction of the national government. Meanwhile, the Central Spiritual Civilization Construction Instructing Committee Office declared that the street order temporarily will not be a

criterion for the Civilized City award this year to support the temporary street management policy during this pandemic period. This is the first time that the government has indirectly admitted the contribution of informal business to society and encouraged people to do it.

This accidental experience has given a lesson for the government to rethink the role of informality played in urban function and government and the people's power over urban space. This pandemic created a new possibility for people's right to public space and conducting informal activity, but it is still uncertain how much the local government has learned from this experience. It may really start the third period for Leshan's transformation, or it may happen temporarily as first-aid.

A Summary for the Second Development Period

When Leshan stepped into the second phase, the urban spaces had been regulated, more rules formed, and people changed to be more willing to follow the regulations. The formalized context threatened the informalities. Not only did government management not welcome informality, but this concept also became unwanted by its previous practitioners. The upgrading of Zhanggong Qiao Street, Wanghong restaurants and Leshan people's desire to shop in the shopping mall instead of Niuer Qiao Market has proved the transformation of the dominance from informality to formality. When the formalized context became the mainstream, the local government wanted to improve this context by attaining the requirements of national city title to promote economic development.

The Two-Title Application Movement is like an assessment for checking how well Leshan city has developed to the formalized context. It checked the progress of city infrastructure development and the government's management capacity. It also lent the power from the higher administrative level to the local government to strengthen its control of the city.

In the second development period, the Leshan government has gradually taken back the control of urban space. The modern spatial order has been founded with new buildings and new rules. The food culture cultivated in the first period has become a commodity that contributes to the local economy in the second period. The development of Leshan's economy made the Leshan government install more regulations on urban space by creating a "modern city image" to attract more investment.

While Leshan is on its way to win the honorable city title, it has come at the cost of some Leshan people having a hard time for their lives. The unforeseen pandemic provided a chance for the leaders of Leshan to reflect on their management of the city. The change of policy on street business is not just a method to solve the high rate of unemployment, it also has given the government a prompt for thinking on the advantage of letting people have a right to city.

CHAPTER 5

BEHIND THE CHANGES OF THE STREETS

The streets I focus on in this thesis were mostly developed during the first stage of Leshan's post-reform or it could also be regarded as the beginning of the transformation (1990-2012). The two streets were chosen because they well represented the rules that the government applied to regulate urban space and the problems that the transformation created during the two transformational phases. These two streets were shaped and changed by the change of the city's master plan, city management standards, people's requirements of life, and their understanding of urban space. They transformed with Leshan's modernization process. The two streets became popular when local people spontaneously and actively participated in the activities on the street during the first stage of the city's transformation, but they were forced to change when the Leshan government participated on different levels in defining these places in the second transformation stage. By studying these changes, I try to understand the role the government played in Leshan's change, how it influences the changes and why the changes happened in this way, and the lessons that can be learned from the changes.

In the second transformational period, the Leshan government gradually took back control of urban space through construction projects and the rules set for maintaining order in the city. The government legalized and formalized rules that are beneficial for it and defamed and informalized the ones that are regarded as the obstacles for development through the economic lens of growth they used to look at the city. When the officers in the government removed the informal function in the city, they had the duty to supplement the missing functions, but it was a hard task to achieve. Also, when

the government adopted economic development as its principal standard to evaluate the value of urban spaces, it omitted the other values that have a contribution to the local society.

What Happened— the Changing City Orders

The development of Leshan showed a relatively wild growing of the city when it was in its beginning period. Then, in the second phase, when the majority formed a foundation, the government attempted to take back control of urban space that the people controlled during phase one. The modernization process helps the government to change the order of the city and set new rules, making sure the established order will be under its control.

Through studying the transformation of Leshan and by analyzing what government have done, how they did it, and Leshan people's reaction to their work, it is clear to tell the transfer of right to space happened through the tools of urban planning, city management, and the correctness of the space order defined by the authorities. In those tools, the local government was the dominator who defined how space could be used.

Urban planning became more influential in Leshan's second transformational period. By comparing government-related projects built in the first period and the second period, there is a big difference between them. The projects in the first period were more focused on the construction object itself, for example, the buildings for Niuer Qiao Market and Zhanggong Qiao Market, the sports center, and the new square. The provided

facilities had fewer considerations on how they connected with their surroundings, which left a large space for local people to fill in order to see to their needs. When urban planning evolved in China, it brought more aspects into its definition of space. Space has been well designed, but the many considerations of the space started for the benefit of small group of powerful people. As a result, the projects implemented in the second period have more reckonings in which its connection with the urban environment, governmental definitions of the use of space, and people's individual needs are debated.

Except for the plenty of newly built urban area, more and more built urban areas have been involved in redevelopment projects. In recent years, it has been a trend in Chinese cities to redevelop built urban areas to make up for the shortcomings of infrastructure and amenities. The redevelopment projects are aimed at improving the quality of life in these built areas but, under some circumstances, the new project will bring about new urban spaces that would break or replace the previous organization of space formed by people's everyday use. It is another method for the governors to take back control of the space. Yet, the urban areas that were regarded as messy and disorderly by the officials usually have their own informal orders. It is shaped by people's everyday beliefs and practices. Each person's spatial practice is a complicated net formed by her/his repetitive use of space. It is an efficient way of using space from the user's perspective, but may not be legible for the outsider, especially for the authorities who employ a more abstract framework that is expected to work for large groups of people and communities with little nuance.

Although the well-planned urban space has laid a physical foundation to restrict the free use of space, the governors did not completely control the space in the way they

want. The decreasing of informal space and defective, blueprint-style designed urban space compelled Leshan people to do some “rebel actions” to break orderly space that the government originally intended to create in order to sustain their need of livelihood. These “rebel actions” may not see by the performer as wrong, since they just continue their activities like they did in the past, but they have been categorized as improper action by an authority.

People’s “inappropriate” use of space, in turn, incurs the government to be more devoted to city management. In the second developmental period, the Leshan government extended its authority over urban spaces that it used to ignore, using management and the supervision of enforcement from city inspectors to make the space transform to the desires of authorities. The growing city management capacity improved the control of the transformation of space to ensure they move on the trajectory the authority wants them to be on. Although, there are lots of difficulties in enforcing the rules in the street level bureaucracy, as the city inspectors would cooperate with peddles to accomplish their work, the government basically controlled the situation. This way, the city government gradually acquired the ability to define the order of the city.

People’s insurgent actions would continue if they constantly hold a different view of space from the government. Hence, coercing people into accepting the officials’ values is important for the government to gain further control of space. To reclaim the dominance of space from people, they emphasized the importance of order, glorifying the actions following that order, and then stigmatized the actions and spaces that did not fit in that order.

Within the past forty years of transformation, authorities have been propagating the concept of a modern society to convince people to follow the new rules and this was an important aspect of the government initiative. Performing well in the public, which is performed under the instruction that the rules are related to public morals. People were educated at school and by daily news of the government's agenda. From a people's vantage point, not following the rules was normal in urban areas in the 2000s. They hardly saw this as protesting anything, but rather continuing what they used to do. Now, there has been a change. Not following the rules has become a wrong, immoral action and could be criticized according to the moral standard.

The central government has proposed two words to get people behind the programs: Being civilized (*jiang wen ming*) and have *suzhi*, akin to class. "Being civilized" has come to represent a good quality that the government wants every citizen to have. It is a moral and regulatory restriction. It not only is affected by Chinese traditional morals but also included the rules that formed in the modern society. The central government even proposed a city title called "National Civilized City" awarded to Chinese cities with the highest national honor.

As with being civilized, having *suzhi* has also been the standard for citizens which has been advocated and propagated by the government, media, and schools. *Suzhi* is currently used to identify how civilized a person is and it is tightly connected with level of education. This word is mostly used in urban areas and people think rural individuals are low in *suzhi*. As they show up more in people's daily lives, these two words have become a regulation that citizens would use to restrict themselves and other people to follow the rules.

Not only by giving instructions to tell people what is “right” for a space, the government also labeled these spaces as inappropriate and illegal, putting them in the context of informality. It did this by simply characterizing them as “dirty, messy, and terrible”, connecting those informal activities with a negative description. Because of the unequal power between the government and ordinary people, through regulations and government’s powerful propaganda, the order made by people was superseded by order adopted by the government.

After nearly forty years of the government’s propaganda, now there are more people willing to follow the order defined by the government, because they have been convinced that it is beneficial to build a harmonious society. As these ideas have been widely accepted and valued in society, people have helped the government to create the order it wanted in the city.

To better rule the city, the government wants to simplify society (Scott, 1998). The space created by the people is too complicated to understand for the authorities. Hence, the most efficient way to manage a place is by using the government’s standard which is the modern city, replacing the previous one. The modern city has provided uniform and simple standards, using statistics and maps to replace people as the management object (Scott, 1998), to regulate urban space. The elements that make the streets diverse have been removed under the modern standards, leaving behind clean, readable, uniform, and homogenous street spaces.

The transformation of Leshan city, which is the strategy of the government to take back the control of urban space, created a context that dichotomized the order of space

into the order of a modern city, which is defined by the government and all other uses are informalized. This dichotomy pushed the areas that were built in the first transformational period to a turning point to redefine itself under the new city order in the second stage.

The two streets studied in this thesis faced, or are facing, a turning point. Zhanggong Qiao Street has grasped the governments developing method, using it to its advantage and made itself become a tourist site that fit the modernization context. So, it has won back its fame and commercial value it had in the first developing period and took advantage of the official power to formalize its sidewalk occupation, which is not allowed in other streets. However, it has sacrificed its previous close connection with Leshan people's lives, becoming an official showcase that represented Leshan culture for the tourism industry. Hanyuan Street was not that fortunate. The decline of Niuer Qiao Market made it lose the main source of users. The crowds of people have disappeared, leaving it a quiet and organized street. The businesses along the street are still operational, but their future is unclear.

The projects and regulations for changing the urban order under the name of upgrading and modernizing have been carried out in Leshan in the past twenty years. These did bring better living conditions for the locals, but the modernization values that support the government to conduct the transformation also helped them take back control of the urban space from the people and also placed the seed of a modernization concept in people's mind to restrict them to the defined use of public space and reject uses that are against the rules.

What Happened to the Street — the Waning Vitality of Streets

Under the transformed context through planning, city management, and people's changing will to follow the defined order, the urban space in Leshan has been largely transformed. The new regulations and people's refreshed attitude toward rules have led to decreasing the diversity and vitality that was created from the mixed functional space. Streets, as the most accessible urban space for every citizen, are unable to provide the right to space that people could easily acquire in the past.

Streets provide a low-cost space for people to utilize and incentivize diverse uses. Although it is the most familiar space for people where most of their daily practice occurs, it is also the most unfamiliar space, since nobody can give a comprehensive dictation to fully describe the use of street. It is not like parks or squares have more specific definitions. Its vague definitions of space that offers normal people rights to define the function of such spaces in their practice. However, when the city is more organized under the instruction of urban planning, city management, and modern space order, the official definitions of a street's functions became more acceptable by people and clarified their blurred understanding of space through this explanation. As people's understanding of the street has changed, their way to use it has changed.

From the Leshan citizens' standpoint, the combination of a familiarity of street space and a lack of definition of its use makes the street a space where it is easy to carry out the functions for which the city had not provided in the first development period. The diverse use of the street supplemented the shortage of the government to sustain the operation of the city. People had freedom to define the space and they had lower costs to

use street space during the first period. When the government took back control of the space, their separation of space function raised the financial cost people spent on space use. They need to take the risk of going against the government's rule and face the critique from other citizens or even themselves who have accepted the new moral of obeying the rule. Through observations in the field and news reports of the actions that challenged the rule, the elder people and people with less education are more to likely rebel and challenge the government's rule. Conversely, young people are more willing to follow rules and conducting their actions within that context. The different actions between ages has indicated a possible continuing decrease in diversity on the street.

The street space in Hanyuan Street and Zhanggong Qiao Street have been mixed-use to comprehensively serve their business function. The businesses there have attracted diverse kinds of people. For example, Zhanggong Qiao Street used to be the entertaining place for taxi drivers at midnight and the gathering place for local gangs (Liu, X., 2019). When Niuer Qiao Market was opened, the pedestrians on Hanyuan Street were not only the customers in the market or the residents who live nearby, there were also some peddlers attracted by the crowds and some people who waited on Hanyuan Street to find work that generated from the market, like recycle trash collection, moving goods, and so on. When both Zhanggong Qiao Street and Hanyuan Street have been forced or not been forced to formalize, the new streets became simpler and more readable for the outsider to understand, but at the same time they lose the vitality that generated from street users when they participated in the process of interacting with the street space. Now Hanyuan Street has lost its diverse pedestrians and turned into a quiet path that contained some

small business serving for the resident's daily needs. Zhanggong Qiao Street has become one of Leshan's tourist sites.

Leshan is pursuing further modernization by more economic growth and needs to attract more outside investment and consumption. The new urban order has helped the government build a readable environment to fascinate outsiders. When they use local culture as a story to lure the outsiders in and then provide a well-organized urban space to convince them to spend their money, they did not realize the disadvantages behind the two elements. Culture will not flourish in a well-provided space that depressed people's freedom to participate in space shaping. The government will need to pay for a higher cost or more heavily rely on the outside investment to sustain the readable formal context it intends to build. People who work in the informal context express their intelligence positively through their close connection with the indigenous environment, which is helpful to foster local culture and they also solve their livelihood issue without the government's help.

When the objective of the local government's building the formal context is for modernization, it is also important to realize they have lost the important sources to explore modernization with Leshan's definition, since the process of people forming the informal context is their active participation in the space production process, which implies large information of their understanding of modernization and urbanization. The outsider's power has been prioritized in the development strategy adopted by the government. Even Leshan did not like that other megacities received the outside influence more and faster. This logic of development maximizes the outside influence and minimizes the contribution made from locals. By following this path, it will not only

hurt the local cultural development, making Leshan become a city that much resembles any other, but also further influence the future development of the city.

The decreasing function of the street not only affects the vibrance that helps facilitate and create culture, but it also influences thousands of people who live on the business carried out in the streets. There is no provided data to show how large this group of the population is, but in Leshan's first development period, it was one of the main forms of business. The rudimentary Leshan city provided an environment for these people to grow on their own, but now the government suppresses the space of this growth. And yet there still are many people who are not competitive enough to compete with the limited jobs provided by the city. There are some people who need to have informal jobs, and there are some people needing to rely on the cheap services provided by them. This issue is similar to the working migrants in the megacity, but the difference is that the huge number of migrants accumulating in one place, for example an urban village, made this issue hard to solve, but when putting it in the context of a smaller city, it will be another story.

As a middle level city, Leshan has fewer urban problems than the megacities like Beijing and Shanghai and its government is more capable to deal with the problems that are too big to solve in the megacities. The informal use of space has become an issue in the megacity, but at the same time, these cities are getting huge benefits from informality to cover urban function that the governments are not capable of offering. The huge number of migrants who usually work as manual labor heavily rely on the cheap services provided by the informal business. The development of megacities needs the contribution of the big population of migrants, hence it is hard to remove the informal function from

the city. The prosperity of megacities is the cooperative result of all the contributions in the formal and informal contexts. It is a wise solution to turn a blind eye to it and leaving some freedom for its growth. However, the size of informal activities that take place in Leshan was not as large as the ones in megacities. It is an issue that has the possibility to be solved by the government and they even have the capacity to take advantage of it for the local social transformation instead of denying it or ignoring its value.

Informality does not have a good reputation in the eyes of the authorities, since it operates outside of their framework, but it is beneficial to the coexistence of formal structure. The formal structure is a subject has been greatly discussed, studied, and praised on the surface. The informal structure has been buried underground, contributing to the city without being seen. However, if Leshan only sees the contribution made in the formal context and follows the similar strategy adopted by the higher-level city government, the capacity of local government would easily break the balance between the formal context and the informality that exists in the megacity and reduce the contributions made by informality. The populations who work on informal jobs and who rely on their service is much smaller than the one in the megacity. Moreover, their importance in the local economy is not as important as the one in bigger cities, so it is easier for the local government to deal with.

However, the disadvantage of doing this is not just that the city government needs to fill the vacancy of disappeared informal service, it also needs to solve the living problems of the local citizens who lost their income resource because of the government's deprivation of their working space. By doing so, it enhanced the tension between the city residents and the government. Most people who work in informal

contexts in Leshan are local people or the people who live nearby. Their sense of belonging in the city is different from the migrants in the megacity. This sense of belonging and the support they can receive from their local interpersonal relationships like their families, relatives, and friends gave them a more mitigative attitude when they faced the oppression from authority to change their livelihood. As what happened when the Two Titles Application Movement forced street peddlers to leave the street, a quiet portion of peddlers found a way out, like opening a shop or finding a job. There were some peddlers still waiting for the chance to come back to the street, perhaps because they were hard pressed to find a way to get through this predicament. They are powerless people that the local government has the duty to take care of. Overall, the tension between the peddlers and local government is not as big as the ones in the megacities. However, if the Leshan government insisted on changing the current situation to suit the formal context like the strategy adopted by the bigger city governments, it would break the harmonic balance and create more problems that are their duty to resolve.

The simplified streets represent that normal Leshan people have lost their last defense to express their voice in participating in the city's transformation. This simplifying process initiated by the government creates loss and troubles for Leshan's people as well as itself. The vitality on the street not only represents the vibrance of the city, but it also represents the different kinds of people who have taken part in the city's operation. The orderly space indicates the government has taken back their control, but it also means they have the responsibility to take charge of the urban services that used to be provided by the informal businesses. Taking back the dominance of the city may seem

an achievement for the government, but by analyzing its effect on the street as has been shown, the disadvantage that the governors were unable to see is evident.

The Honorable City Titles

In Leshan's second transformational period, the local government paid more attention on its city titles to shape the city's brand. These titles characterize the city and it also imposed the restriction on the city on who controls these definitions of maintaining the city. However, these univocal definitions for Leshan restrict Leshan's people to grow with the city and limit the development trajectory to focusing on economic development instead of growth in multiple aspects of society.

The existence of these four titles showed that the Leshan government's development strategy is largely influenced by the higher-level government and the better resources that usually comes from outside of Leshan. It perfectly illustrated the meaning of socialist modernization with Chinese characteristics. Chinese socialism decided the supreme power of the government, which is dominated by the Communist Party. The government is the dominator for the city's development, deciding the direction of growth and strategy, and taking charge of implementation. Meanwhile, the centralized ruling system defined the power relation for the government in a different hierarchy. The lower level governments rely on the authority awarded by the higher-level one to enacting their development strategy, which made it normal for the lower-level government to follow the path adopted by its higher level. Socialism with Chinese characteristics is the ideology proposed by Deng Xiaoping for the reforms started in 1979. This ideology introduced the capitalist market economy into socialist China and used "Chinese characteristics" to

cover the fact that the nation was adopting the ideology of capitalism. The market economy brings the Chinese economy to a new stage by absorbing more resources around the country or even around the world to make the economic cake bigger and bigger. This transformation of ideology also prioritized the importance of the economy in the country's growth.

The ideology of socialist modernization with Chinese characteristics made local governors, who are the decision-makers for the local level of modernization, turn their eyes on the authority in the higher level and economic development resources from the outside. They evaluate the growth of the city from the economic perspective and ignore the growing chances provided in the local which would be beneficial for the comprehensive growth for the local city. All four titles are productions for the local government making the city fit the frame created from the higher-level governance to get more economic benefits from outsiders. In this fitting process, the local city sometimes makes some sacrifices by reducing its diversity in order to keep consistent with other cities to reach the unified standards. However, these standards are proposed through a general understanding of Chinese cities, it may not suit all the Chinese cities. Under this system, no matter if it is the governors in a megacity or other smaller sized cities, both regard these as an approach for a city's further growth. But when it operates in practice, its effects will be different, like what I demonstrated before: the balance between formality and informality that can exist in the megacity can easily be broken in the smaller city, while this is much harder in a megacity

The title of healthy city, civilized city, and tourist city are the city titles created by and belonging to the government. They were proposed in the higher level of government

and applied by the lower level ones. People's active participation in getting them is rare, but they have been involved in these contexts passively. The effect of "healthy city" and "civilized city" that started in 2018 in Leshan, happened fast and observably. Leshan leaders' strong desire to win the two titles made the government devote lots of effort to the application process. It was obvious to see the difference on the streets when they became more ordered with many government officers supervising and regulating the activities happening on the street. The disappearing activities on the street sparked various levels of influence on the lives of people who used to conduct them every day on the street.

Although "food city" is the title for a tourist attraction, before it has been included in the formal context, it is the result of a bottom-up process. The popularity of Leshan's small food among outsiders and the Leshan government's acceptance of making local small food as one of the representatives of Leshan culture, to some extent, have indicated a victory of local people for having their voice in the city's development, which is usually dominated by the local government.

Leshan has been a well-known tourist city even before the economic reform. It held the title of the National Outstanding Tourist City in 2000. It had been famous for the Leshan Buddha and Emei Mountain for many years. In recent five years, Leshan local small foods were known by more people in other cities through the internet, making more people visit Leshan city, instead of only staying in the heritage sites.

About ten years ago, informal food was not on the official tourist recommendation list. Leshan officials would recommend Leshan style formal dishes rather than the local snack to the tourists. Yet, there were some snacks in the

recommendation list, those snacks were not the real popular food among local people. In recent years, the popularity of informal local food has taken tourists into the city and reminded the local leaders of the value of contemporary culture created by Leshan people. So, the government helped the development of food tourism, ratifying Zhanggong Qiao Street as an official food street, to discover there was more business value behind it. Still, the authorities have not totally recognized it as a cultural icon that represents Leshan's culture like the Leshan Buddha and Emei Mountain, but it has become a representative for Leshan which grew and was empowered by normal people.

The differences between the “food city” title and the other three is that it is the result of bottom-up growing process. While the others are imposed on the city through a top-down approach. The bottom-up process was generated through people's spontaneous participation for their own benefit. When Leshan small food evolved in the first developmental period, people regarded it as a kind of business that they could start to sustain their livelihood. Street business helped many people accumulate their funds for the further growing. In their goal of constantly improving local food to acquire more customers, Leshan' food culture prospered, becoming the resource that can be used for tourism development today. The process is more valuable for the result. It is active participation for people to show their understanding of space and negotiate to produce agreeable rules for everyone to follow in a space. It is within the ability of the people to solve their livelihood problem by efficiently using the resources they have instead of relying on the government's help.

Now the government has picked up the fruit of local people's cultivation, making local small food as a part of the tourism industry and following the strategy laid out in the

development context. It is a pity that the government only see the result. Because of the limitation of the economic development evaluation standard they used, they were not able to see the environment that cultivated the result. Furthermore, the formal context regarded these irrigated soils as the obstacle as it did not fit the formal context, which was formed after this cultivated environment had been created. Existing small food is more catered for tourist consumption and new local small foods are hard to appear because the neat streets for tourism make it hard for doing business on the street. “Food City” has become a new title for Leshan and it benefits the existed food but restricts the path for the future of local food culture evolving.

Currently, the food city title has not been shown much interest by the government. The official food street still kept some connection with local people, although this connection is decreasing, which means this characteristic has not totally been dragged into the government dominated context, but its future is uncertain.

In this developmental ideology, the government took over too much on themselves. They mainly focus on what they can create but forget to see what the city already has. In recent years’ in urban planning, there are two examples that can be useful in explaining this. The first one is government formed business incubator areas and the advocacy of public participation in planning process. There are more cities introducing the concept of business incubators and planning a specialized area for the industrial incubation. For example, Leshan created a street as a business incubator for graduated college students. However, it is essential to realize some city spaces already have this function. Although this people managed incubator is serving different types of citizens and generate different economic benefits from the government managed ones, there is no

need to destroy one and support the other. The other one is public participation. There are more and more planners and local governments realizing the importance of public participation. Some advanced cities encouraged citizens to participate in the planning process, but for Leshan, the local participation in the planning has not been encouraged yet. Nevertheless, current public participation is conducted through the Western public participation context. As in Leshan, people already participated in expressing their ideas for the city's construction through their practice of space use, but their expressions have been ignored since they were hard to be understood through the approach the government adopted.

Excepting for the governors' inability to see the existing resources the local city has, the economic evaluation standard also helps them create a bias on people's right to urban space. It acknowledged the space using that can generate higher economic benefit and illegalized the space using that are worthless to include in the formal context. This dichotomy narrows the grey space that used to live between the formalized and informal context and reduces the possibility for informal activities. In the end the government obtained more space to allocate their interests.

But no matter whether it is a healthy city, a civilized city, a tourist city, or a food city, they all are city brands that use a simple word to characterize Leshan for people to better memorize it. They are mostly used for the outsider and for chasing economic development. Behind these honorable city titles is the Leshan government's inability to understand locals' contribution to the city and their needs of city. It also further cut down the possibility for people to create local culture and indigenous understandings of the modernization and urbanization process.

The Value of the Space that the Government Want to Regulate

In the process of development, the value of old urban spaces has not been fully recognized. Government uses economic value to evaluate them and determine whether they view the space as out of date, ignoring any other value that might be gleaned.

The two streets studied in this thesis were important places for cultivating local culture during the first developmental period. Leading to the second period, the city government regarded these as places needing regulation and upgrading. The benefits of regulating those two streets to create a better city appearance and the commercial profits behind their valuable location have been noticed through the context of planning and city management, hence the changes are happening in these directions, but their real contributions to the city have not been realized.

Zhanggong Qiao Street had a successful redevelopment in the second period by redefining itself as a tourist site. By studying its change, it is obvious that only its commercial value has been noticed by the government. When economic development is the priority for modernization, the understanding of the city is limited within the economic value. The value of the food that is used as the attraction for the tourist has been noticed, but the government did not realize the ability for this street to cultivate such prospering food businesses and its influence on the food culture development in regard to the whole city of Leshan. There are many streets that have lots of restaurants like Zhanggong Qiao Street in Leshan, but why has only this one become so special that it finally could become the representative place for Leshan small food and why did Leshan small food become a tourist attraction without the support from the government. Their economic lens limited their ability to understand this value.

Modernization is a concept that helps Chinese people reshape their lifestyles. Yet, policies in the second stage seems to have used modernization as an excuse to deny or ignore the value that cannot directly generate economic benefit. The upgrading projects are not simply one of imposing the current modern standard on the urban space that was shaped in the past. The fast-changing and increasingly economy-oriented policies gave little chance for the government to build on the native values of communities and existing spaces, causing them to instead only harshly consider the monetary benefits behind it.

The loss of local culture and diversity of the street will not cause a direct loss for the city based on its system of calculation. The simplified functional street will make urban management more efficient, but the city will gradually lose its identity, getting lost in its own process of modernization. When Leshan's government are spending lots of money on using the Giant Buddha's image to decorate and to shape the city identity, they are also ignoring and demolishing the identity that shaped Leshan by its people with years of accumulation. It is a double-edged sword, but the economic benefits caused the government to do nothing to minimize the harm of the change. Economic development was the priority of the government.

With the so-called development of the city, many famed urban spaces of the past are disappearing. Their stories have vanished with their decaying physical appearance. From the viewpoint of city developers and leaders, these places disappear because they cannot satisfy the people's needs anymore. Hence, they should be replaced by more modern constructions. This replacing is mostly done by the city and not by the people. Many of the previously famous places in Leshan have faded away in the minds of the locals. Fewer and fewer people know of them. Only the articles of local media would

remind Leshan people that the city had these places before. They have become historical features.

However, these places should not be simply regarded as out of date. They were the elements of an era that had more local culture, locally grown, and less outside influence. They were heavily used by the local people and their spatial order was explored by the locals. The indigenous story within these spaces should not be ignored. These urban spaces should be regarded as an accumulation of the city's history and culture. Under the trend of global modernization, most Chinese cities are becoming homogenized. Standardized developments have made most of the cities lose their identity. If a city wants to develop with its own identity, then these places are the treasures that need to be seriously and critically considered.

The fast-moving history in the past hundred years made Chinese people lose time to build on and transform traditional culture and lifestyle into the modern world on local people's own terms. However, as people live their lives, culture is being created, just like the food culture created in the first development period. Space is a crucial component of this change and culture is central to the transformation of space by its subjects (Perera 2016). Hence, it is necessary to understand people's spatial practices and the indigenous culture that propels it. As the government leaders who develop Chinese cities are confused about how to break the homogeneity caused by modern development, the contemporary people's culture may help them walk through the confusion

CONCLUSIONS

This study has demonstrated the contribution and intervention of the ordinary people towards the transformation of Leshan as well as its various potential for modernization with Chinese characteristics. The advantages are evident in the higher-level government advocating for informal economy as a response to the post-pandemic economic downturn and the Leshan government, a middle-level city, employing the same to obtain resources to combat the urban issues it is facing. The post-COVID slump also highlighted the potential troubles that can be caused by creating a perfect formal context on the ground with no room for local interventions.

Leshan's modernization was and is produced under the central government's ideology of socialism with Chinese characteristics and by strong (local) government leadership like all the other cities in China. Studying the transformation of Leshan and taking a closer at the changes of two streets helps to understand how this abstract ideology influences the shaping of physical space in middle-level Chinese cities. More importantly, it reveals how this ideology is received and adapted at the local level and how people, including restaurant owners, tourists, customers, and vendors negotiate the spaces on the street as well as the definition of food.

The research revealed three phases of transformation of Leshan after the economic reform of 1979. The first phase of Leshan's transformation (1990-2012) was about ten years after the economic reform first happened in Shenzhen and gradually spread across the country. At the beginning of the economic reform in Leshan, people actively participated in the growth of the city. During that time, there were not many

rules or guidance provided by the government to instruct people's actions. Both the citizens and government of Leshan explored, through experimentation, how to improve the city under the new opportunities the reforms provided. They carried out the process of "modernization" based on their own understandings. It provided the opportunity for Leshan people to employ their views and express their voices in the development of the city.

In the second phase (2012-2020), the government opted to formalize and streamline change. The government, which pursued higher growth, categorized the action and the use of space by some people that were viewed as formal in the first phase as informal in the second and soon began to negate their voices. In this phase, the government grew in regard to its ability to control via urban planning, city management, and propaganda. It forced the people to follow new city orders which were dictated by the government. I argued that this was as an attempt to take back the control of space from the people.

The third phase (2020-) grew in the context of the pandemic. This change happened after China started to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and also after the Leshan government devoted lots of energy to restrict informal activities from the streets as part of the Two Title Application Movement of 2019. In the context of economic difficulties faced by the state as well as the citizens, the higher-level government officials changed their attitude towards the informal economy and made local governments bring back the informal activities. This transformation happened on the Leshan's streets in 2020. However, as it is seen as temporary, how long this situation will last is uncertain.

All three phases of change that occurred during the larger period of modernization that accompanied (or followed) the economic reform highlight the fact that, during the process, the Chinese leaders' understanding of modernization has been changing. During the past forty years, Chinese modernization was guided by the ideology of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Now, when China has achieved large economic growth and is preparing to move into a higher stage of development---especially economic growth---the central government has realized the importance of building on China's own values instead of relying on the ideology borrowed from the West. Regarding this, I have alluded to the idea of "cultural confidence" proposed by President Xi many times since 2014.

According to President Xi's account of "cultural confidence", the definition of Chinese culture is mostly limited within large-scale, long-term stories, like ancient Chinese knowledge, heritage, as well as the cultural creations produced under the dominance of the ruling class. Although this definition of Chinese culture is limited for excluding the diverse, broad, and deep Chinese culture created through normal Chinese people's daily practice, it indicates that the Chinese leaders have (or the leader has) changed the root-value of their thinking from the West to China itself.

In the past forty years, Chinese governments at different levels made great efforts to build a formalized context to regulate the process of modernization, suppressing the continuation of previously normal, but currently informal activities by the average citizen. I have argued that this approach blocks the people's active participation in the modernization of China. I refer to the people providing their own understandings of modernization to help the government adjust its modernization strategy to suit it more to

the Chinese society and to modernize themselves, thus keeping up with the rapidly modernized living environment. Some Chinese scholars have proposed the key element of Chinese modernization is Chinese people's modernization (Li, 2000; Pan & Zhang, 1997; Yin, 2020). The obstruction of people bringing out their voice is not beneficial for China's future.

By studying the transformation of Leshan's urban space through urban planning, city management, and the changes in people's attitudes towards space, I noticed how people's rights to space were gradually deprived by the local government and how people slowly accepted this deprivation by accepting the new order made by the government. This so-called informality created the contemporary Leshan street food culture and I have shown how it has been defamed in order for the government to take back, legally, the right to space the people used to possess. I also have shown how the local government has adopted Leshan street food as a new tourist attraction for tourism development, but evict the informal street-business to shape a better image for the tourist city of their imagination, especially to win the titles of National Healthy City and National Civilized City.

Leshan people did have richer lives by following the path of modernization, but at the same time made sacrifices by handing over their right to space to the government. The modernization tool taught the Chinese leaders how to grow the economy, but it did not provide a method for the local culture to prosper or for greater cultural development. It provided the local government an excuse to take back control of the space, restricting the growing space of indigenous culture.

In Leshan's thirty-year developing process, I observed how the local government built its formalized context and used administrative tools to regulate people's activity under the formalized context. The formation of the formalized context dichotomizes the actions in society into two antagonistic groups, formality and informality. Due to the uneven power between the government and local people, the informal was illegalized and connected with other negative consequences. However, the problem is that the government-created formalized context is unable to serve all citizens. It needs diversification to accommodate various groups of people and this room is created by informal activities.

The formalized context limited the administrators' attention to the resource provided by the national government and the aim of bringing about large economic growth. Hence, there is an unequal distribution of resources between the people living in formalized and informal contexts. Meanwhile, the administrators are unable to see and acknowledge the huge contributions made by ordinary people and by these informal practices, preventing their ability to utilize these resources to create benefits for Leshan. This ignorance will further influence the future growth of Leshan and the urban functions that have been taken over by informality. This situation not only affects Leshan, but it also influences the other cities with similar conditions of having benefited from informality.

It is only appropriate for the Leshan government to rethink its attitude on informality and the potential contributions by ordinary people. It needs to comprehensively analyze the potential of the informal activities for modernization and development as well as the disadvantage that can be caused by banning it. Even though,

under the current formalized context, it is impossible for this low-level government to change the framework of operation, it should realize the potential benefits it could generate through such cooperation.

This study has demonstrated the contribution of informality and the interventions of ordinary people in the past thirty years in the transformation of Leshan and its exploration of the potential of modernization with Chinese characteristics. The advantages are evident in the higher-level government advocating for informal economy as a response to the post-pandemic economy. As a middle-level city, Leshan government doing the same to obtain the resources needed to combat the urban issues it is facing. The post-COVID situation has also highlighted the potential troubles that can be caused by creating a perfect formal context on the ground.

In sum, the local government should realize that informality could be a resource to utilize for its modernization and the exploration of modernization with Leshan characteristics. It also will contribute to creating a better living environment for local people, including the powerless people who had normally been left out of consideration. I argue to cease regarding it as the obstacle of modernization and to rather embrace the communication path between the government and local people in an indigenous context. Cooperating with informality and ordinary citizens, or leaving some grey space for its growth, will likely create the room for future contributions made by ordinary people and informal activities for building a modern Leshan.

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