Production of Space in Traditional Towns and Villages against the Backdrop of "Chinese Characteristics": A Study of Rural Form Transformation in Huizhou

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Traditional towns and villages in China have experienced profound formal transformation in recent years as a result of national political policies promoting rural development. By analyzing how this new production of space reflects efforts to achieve "Socialism with Chinese characteristics," this report seeks to understand its underlying mechanisms and their relation to issues of tradition. Using the region of Huizhou in Anhui province as site for examination, the report examines forces driving change from a number of directions: from the "top-down" by government, by local people from the "bottom-up," and in terms of design-led interventions from the "middle." It concludes that the contextual production of space in Huizhou is being compromised, and that Huizhou building traditions are in decline, being inherited only in fragments. And it calls for a more active role by designers to nurture social awareness and raise the profile of design values in rural areas.

In China, areas outside of cities have witnessed considerable development over the past few decades, and they have recently become the focus of national policies aimed at revitalizing rural areas in pursuit of urban-rural integration.[1] This has brought a profound transformation of the physical form of traditional towns and villages (which will be referred to here as part of the rural areas of which they are a part).[2] This transformation has complicated issues of tradition, and it is crucial that architects and urban designers understand these changes in a more comprehensive way. However, within the design disciplines in China there is still only a relatively poor understanding of the formal transformation of rural areas.

In research on Chinese cities, knowledge on urban studies imported from the West has helped designers engage with sociology, while the introduction of systematic urban planning methods has contributed to the integration of this approach into design practice.[3] Yet, with regard to rural areas this engagement is minimal, and conventional approaches still predominate.[4] This report aims to fill this gap by taking the debate over changing rural forms as a point of departure, and by developing an analytical mode that seeks to understand the production of rural space as a result of "Socialism with Chinese characteristics." Using the region of Huizhou in Anhui province in eastern China as a point of reference, this will enable a better understanding of contextual form transformation and related issues of tradition. To support this discussion, two types of development will be examined in depth based on research incorporating firsthand examination of archival materials, in-depth interviews, and on-site observations.

THE RURAL FORM PROBLEM AND "CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS"

Since 1998 the Chinese government has enacted a series of policies supporting the development of rural areas, including "Building a New Socialist Countryside," "Construction of Beautiful Village," "New-Type Urbanization," and "Rural Revitalization."[5] These policies have aimed to break a dualistic structure in approaches to rural and urban development. On the one hand, the effort appears motivated by the central government's desire to "pay back" rural areas that had previously been exploited by industrialization.[6] But it has also been intended to alleviate the global and domestic economic crisis by using the resiliency of rural areas as a reservoir to absorb an over-accumulation of capital — for example, through the construction of new physical properties for rural tourism. Overall, it can also be interpreted as part of a stabilization strategy, intended to create opportunities and incentives for rural people to remain in towns and villages.[7] This strategy, however, has led to a huge increase in the construction of fixed capital assets, which is transforming the character of rural places (fig.1).[8]

The significance of this political campaign has also struck a chord with designers and other professionals who see it as a great opportunity to support rural areas through design. A growing number of them are thus focusing on the rural areas, even if their theoretical knowledge is often in conflict with local realities of space and form. This may be seen, for example, in their approaches to building configuration, settlement layout, and urban form.[9] These trends have placed a spotlight on the need for a better understanding of physical form in rural areas (referred to as "rural form" in this report).

Conventional approaches to "space and form" are often problematic, especially in China. Indeed, Chinese urban planning often emphasizes a macro, political view that relies on economics and political science. It thus serves primarily as a regulation-setting instrument, with little concern for detailed issues of urban form.[10] Architectural visions, meanwhile, are often overly individualized, leading to a formal anarchy that fails to respect authentic local voices.[11] Urban design as a discipline has also only recently been introduced, so that its position, significance and application within the system of Chinese planning is still contested, and its essence and value are often misunderstood.[12]

figure 1. *The shrinking traditional settlements and expanding modern residential districts of Huizhou. Google Earth image.*

Shifting design attention to rural areas makes this scenario even more challenging, because deep contradictions may surface between planning methods and existing local traditions. The divides between various stakeholders (local/central government, global/domestic capital, and the local population) are also typically wider than in urban areas. Designers may thus face unprecedented and complicated problems in rural areas navigating between local contexts and ingrained professional attitudes.

Rural contexts also cannot escape the impact of the larger national discourse of "Socialism with Chinese characteristics." Indeed, the ongoing transformation of rural form in China cannot be fully understood apart from it. "Socialism with Chinese characteristics" is an inclusive concept that was first formulated in the 1980s to guide the country's development and distinguish it both from "Capitalism from the West" and "Socialism from the Soviet Union."[13] But the concept has continually evolved and been modified to the present day.[14] Some scholars have thus described it as the "theoretical innovation and practical innovation of Marxism and scientific socialism" in response to evolving Chinese reality.[15]

In line with such a view, this report attempts to explain rural form transformation in Huizhou as a result of changing contextual realities of space production derived from the application of "Chinese characteristics." In rural areas, the cur-rent relevant realities of "Chinese characteristics" are, first, the institution of a socialist market economy and, second, new polices for revitalization and governance. All these factors highlight the new principal contradiction facing Chinese society: that between unbalanced and inadequate develop-ment and the people's ever-growing desire for a better life in keeping with a confidence in culture and tradition that is part of the national narrative.[16]

INVOLVEMENT OF THE DESIGN DISCIPLINES IN
PROBLEMS OF RURAL FORM

With regard to rural areas, classical architectural practice in China has typically adopted a descriptive approach. It has thus mainly focused on surveys, mapping, and the conserva-tion of vernacular architecture or settlements, as well as anal-yses of structural tectonics and environmental performance (fig.2).[17] New technologies such as digital construction have also been employed recently, but their use has generally been limited to the production of fashionable expressions.[18] In addition, some scholars have adopted an anthropological approach to underlying factors of rural form evolution, al-though their work has tended to focus on historical accounts, and has rarely addressed contemporary realities.[19] A few

上：结构轴测图
Upper:
下右：宅屋顶
Bellow Right: Roof
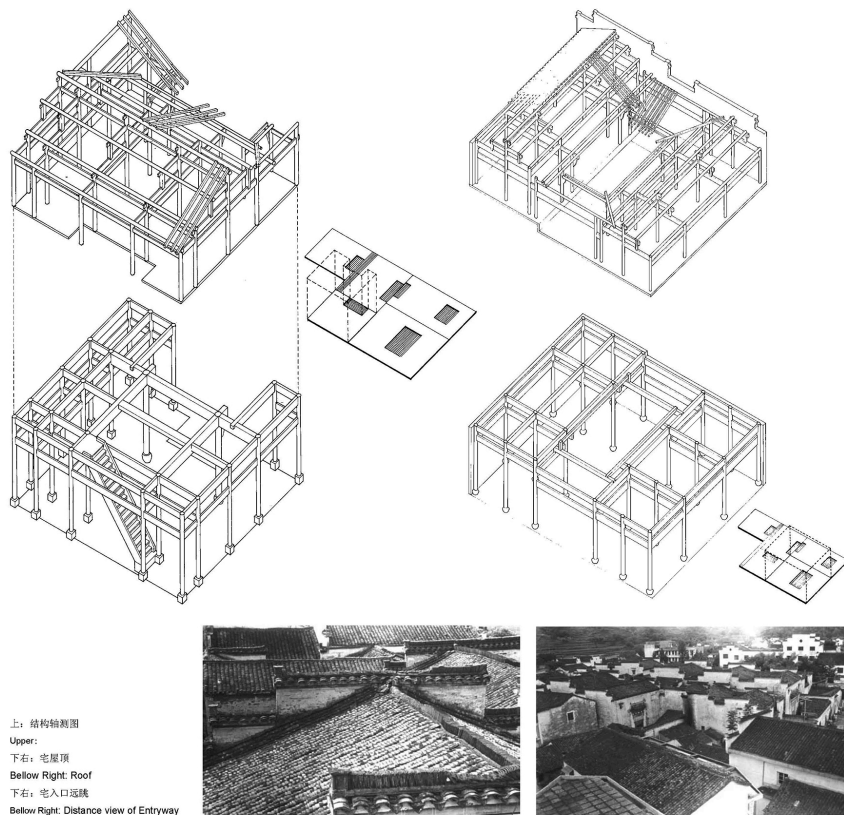下右：宅入口远眺
Bellow Right: Distance view of Entryway

figure 2. *A typological mapping of ancient Huizhou building techniques from the study by Southeast University. Drawings and photos courtesy of Gong Kai*

have, however, begun to explore contemporary conditions and sought to analyze rural construction processes as a way to interrogate the genuine meaning of changing local forms.[20]

From government regulatory and planning perspectives, the approach to issues of rural form is still largely defined by the macro view of "rural planning" identified in the 2007 "Urban and Rural Planning Law."[21] Compared to urban planning, the systems and procedures described there for rural planning are far less clear; indeed, they basically involve the transposition of urban planning methods to rural areas according to a top-down approach.[22] Fortunately, the role of the rural planner has recently been introduced and includes an admonition to listen to the "local voice." However, rural planning has also been incorporated into an emerging "National Territory Spatial Planning System," and its repositioning and even redefinition within this new overarching frame are still underway.[23] Rural planning is thus still primarily driven by a top-down approach, with little detailed, grounded formal design yet to be successfully achieved. This gap in practice is similar to that which it has long been hoped urban design would bridge in cities. However, the application of urban design methods to Chinese cities remains highly contested. What is the chance then that urban design methods will be successfully applied to the more complex circumstances of rural areas? Indeed, is there even a conceptual counterpart to urban design that can be applied to issues of rural form transformation in China?

In considerations of form transformation, issues of typology, urban morphology, and their derivatives typically provide a starting point, and as a method of analysis they have previously been introduced to China.[24] But in China their application has been limited largely to urban districts with relatively stable histories and continuous records of form evolution because the often random, external and deterministic influences upon Chinese rural areas limit the usefulness of these methods. Furthermore, their largely descriptive nature may not be helpful in addressing the fluidity of social and cultural factors.[25] A potential breakthrough can be seen in the pioneering work of a group of Chinese researchers who have sought to connect the problem of changing form to the paradigm of Chinese political economy by following the works of Marx, Lefebvre, and Harvey.[26] They have thus sought to describe form transformation as the result of the social production of space within a particularly Chinese political/economic context. Unfortunately, their work to date has solely focused on cities, and none of them has yet to develop a way to explain real mechanisms of spatial production in a way that can inspire design and decision-making processes.

Such solely professional and disciplinary approaches are also less influential when viewed against the entirety of the urbanization process, which involves the coexistence of many powerful stakeholders. This raises a number of crucial questions. What is the true big picture? If not design, what are the dominant forces driving rural form transformation? How are these forces working with and against each other? How does this create a multilayered structure of meaning? And how do these forces intersect with issues of tradition?

Confronting such issues will require that designers reform their operational epistemology. That is, they will need to break with stereotypes and radically engage with knowledge from outside. Before any design work commences, this means adopting an inclusive socio-spatial stance and recognizing rural form transformation as the outcome of the social production of space. Formal design is only one part in this process. A contextual analytical approach to the "production of space" is thus essential for designers, because it will help clarify how underlying mechanisms are driven by dynamic forces.

A CUSTOMIZED ANALYTICAL APPROACH TO THE "PRODUCTION OF SPACE"

The term "production of space" originated with Henri Lefebvre's criticisms of town planning theory. He argued that the lack of "an epistemology of planning" resulted in "peculiar divergencies in the elaboration and interpretation of facts." He thus called for a political understanding of space, one that recognized it as a social and political production.[27] Lefebvre argued that space is a fundamental component of the capitalist mode of production and social domination, not an innocent backdrop or neutral material substratum.[28] And he suggested that "the production of space can be likened to the production of any particular type of merchandise."[29]

To relate this view to rural areas of China and establish the "production of space" as an analytical mode requires understanding contextual processes and procedures. Taking into account the related stakeholders against the backdrop of "Chinese characteristics" and dissecting the interrelationships between them, this report assumes this process operates mainly in one direction. That is, it is directed by local government from the top down, with public funds, private capital, or sometimes a mix of the two being invested into the rural built environment. The result is the production and supply of physical space through the operation of "land finance" as a mechanism of the socialist market economy, or through other actions by local government to fulfill national political responsibilities such as rural revitalization.[30] From the bottom-up, local people then receive or consume the produced space, adjusting their everyday life to these top-down forces. The designer, meanwhile, is situated in the "middle," being either employed by a larger entity or self-employed, limited by regulatory frameworks or liberated to pursue an individual vision, and offering instrumental knowledge to the production process.

Interestingly, this structure responds fairly accurately to the dialectical relationship of social space articulated by Lefebvre. In this view, the top (logic) speaks of representation of space (conceived space); the bottom (people) inhabits representational space (lived space); and the middle (designers) are
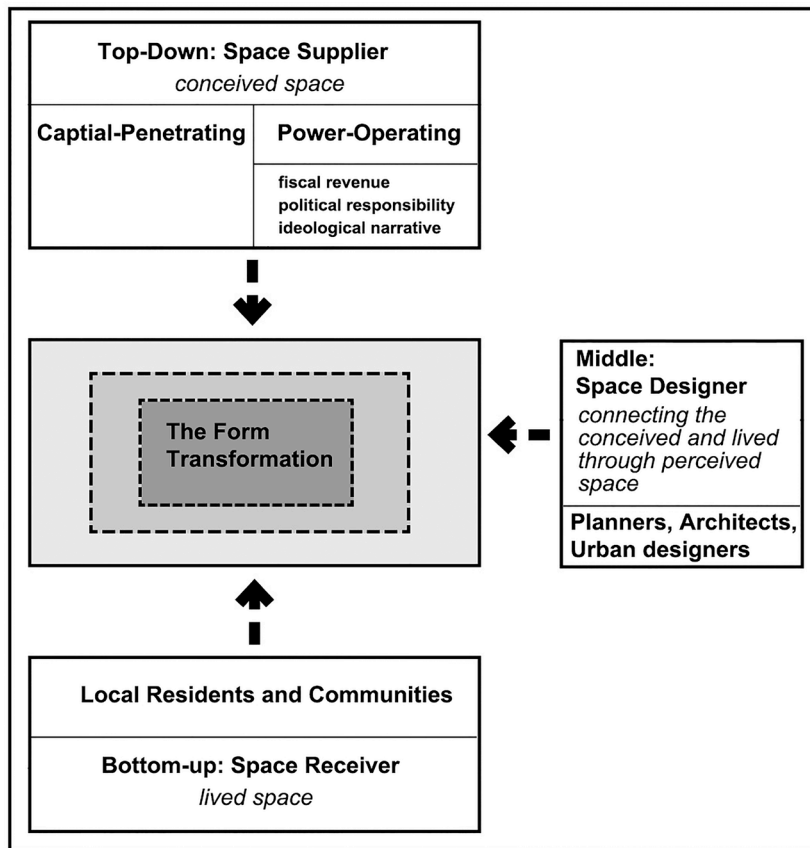
the negotiators, connecting the conceived and lived through spatial practice (perceived space).[31] As a result, an analytical mode with three levels can be constructed, with the top-down driving force as the *supplier* of space that is conceived, the bottom-up local community as the *receiver* and occupier of the conceived space, and the middle level as the *designer* of space that is first perceived, and also conceived and lived in (fig.3).

THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE IN HUIZHOU

Huizhou is located in southern Anhui province in east China (fig.4). It has been a distinct cultural region for more than a thousand years, and its people share a united and profound tradition and culture. Huizhou was also once a united administrative region, in which six traditional counties (She, Yi, Wuyuan, Qimen, Xiuning, and Jixi) formed a single state. However, the Huizhou region was administratively broken apart in modern era, and in 1987 the city of Huangshan established, largely incorporating the areas of ancient She, Yi, Qimen and Xiuning, while Jixi and Wuyuan were attached to other adjacent cities.

Nowadays, Huangshan City, which includes several UNESCO World Heritage sites, is famous for tourism.[32] For decades its local government motto has been "to better play Huangshan card, to better compose Huizhou literature," a

saying reputedly adapted from a comment by the former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping after he visited the area in 1979.[33] Its meaning is thus to celebrate the role of Huangshan Mountain and compose a strong Huizhou mentality, as reflected in local traditions and identities.

In the past forty years, while Huizhou has remained a cultural region with a strong sense of identity and tradition, like many other historic rural areas, it has experienced challenges in terms of development and the transformation of its physical settlement forms. These have been exacerbated by insensitive and often ill-conceived development projects and by conditions of history and geography (as a mountainous area Huizhou has limited developable land and weak rural industries). In contrast, other comparable areas, such as Suzhou — which has followed a different economic trajectory since 1980 (sometimes referred to as the Southern Jiangsu Model) — have seized opportunities to move beyond agriculture as a main driver of local GDP.[34] Today, however, the close proximity of Huizhou to the developed cities of the Yangtze River Delta has made it a prime target for new capital flows.[35] Changes in spatial production here thus present a fascinating and important case study of the changing rural environment at a time of political transition.

To analyze the changing formal structure of towns and villages in Huizhou and the forces behind it, this report focuses on two aspects of the local production of space. Both

figure 4. *The cultural region of Huizhou in China. Drawing by author.*

aspects relate to housing, the area of the built environment that has experienced the most fundamental change and had the most significant impact on people's lives. One involves the incremental development of new residential districts at the edges of Huizhou's larger towns; the other involves relocation and renovation activities that have altered the character of its existing inventory of residential structures across all levels of settlement. Admittedly, other aspects of form change, such as new industrial and commercial development, have also had an impact. But in rural areas like Huizhou these have not proven to be as significant drivers of change as they have been in cities.

NEW RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS — BUILDING CHANGE BY INCREMENTS

The incremental production of new residential districts in Huizhou has been driven by two population trends. One is a movement from rural settlements to apartment living, which has involved the relocation of people from traditional settlements to new gated communities composed of uniformly designed modern buildings. Most such districts have been built with the help of private capital on the outskirts of the central towns in each of Huizhou's counties, in a pattern similar to that evident in larger cities. The second trend is one of replacement as betterment, involving the replacement of older traditional houses in outlying towns and villages with modern terraced housing. This has created new regulated but nongated communities, most of which have been built with public funds.

Together, these two trends are creating a new regulated and monotonous settlement pattern that ignores the traditional environment and rejects continuity with the past. A number of social and physical constructs have contributed to the genealogy of this new model, among which are the neighborhood unit,

the Soviet *mikroyayon*, the work unit, the people's commune, the modern urban residential district, and the ideal of modernity and efficiency.[36] Most importantly, however, this genealogy reveals how problems relating to space within contemporary rural Huizhou have largely been inherited from cities.[37]

New gated communities began to appear in Huizhou after the housing system reform in 1998, with most being the direct result of efforts by local governments to pay for their operations using the mechanism of "land finance." The relatively weak status of rural industry in the area meant this was a better way to generate revenue, particularly as geographic conditions made easily developable land for new construction scarce. But this has now come to pose a challenge to shrinking traditional settlements potentially greater than the migration of rural residents to cities (fig.5).

By contrast, the development of nongated communities in outlying towns began under new rural policies after 2003. The political logic here has been more complex and mixed, despite the critique by some scholars that it is simply based on squeezing land quotas out of rural villages for commercial use by pushing for "replacement" homes.[38]

In Huizhou, the development of nongated communities has been supported politically using a shallow rhetoric of cultural tradition. A prime example can be seen in the town of "XG" in She county, where a new district of unified terraced houses was recently built (fig.6).[39] The aesthetic of the XG project attempted to reflect tradition, but this unfortunately took the largely superficial form of adapting the *matouqiang* (a tall wall used to prevent fire and theft) to modern buildings. The *matouqiang* is one of the most iconic symbols of Huizhou architecture and can be found in almost every residential district in this new context (fig.7). However, it has here been "copied" cosmetically as little more than a decorative feature that has undermined the value of local place and space.

figure 5. *A gated community in Huizhou showing the use of* matouqiang *as a roof decoration. Photo by author.*

The long, narrow community to the south of XG was developed on a piece of abandoned, nonarable land along the river.[40] It was intended for people from various backgrounds, including those from nearby mountain villages with extremely harsh living environments, those whose old houses had been demolished due to the expansion of the town, other local people who wanted to move to an improved living environment, and still others who were too poor to afford a house. According to Mr. H, a local governor who is still in charge of this project, there was great demand for the project. As he explained, "We had to develop something here by 'Building a New Socialist Countryside,' as XG had stood still for many years, and the local people were looking forward to it, and some badly needed to change."[41]
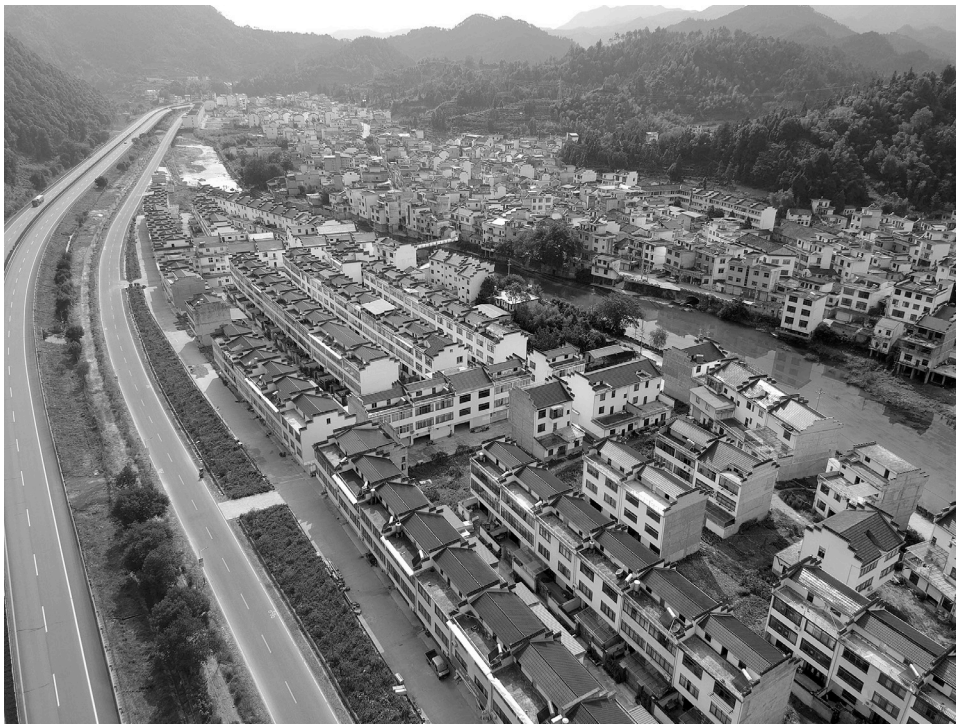

figure 6. *The regulated layout of the newly built district in the southern area of XG town. The buildings on the other side of river show the traditional layout of buildings in the town. Photo by author.*

figure 7. Matouqiang *on the roof of a regulated gated community in the town center. Photo by author.*

Ostensibly, because the sale of rural collective land is prohibited by law, the new XG community could not be a commercial, for-profit development. However, during the planning process Mr. H said several adjustments had to be made. "As we lacked funds, we had to introduce private investment. But this did not involve a sale, as the developer would only build basements, and then 'transfer' them to the locals by market rules. It was a subtle innovation, and it was approved by the superior leaders." To produce this increment of new housing the local government therefore had to strike a balance between obtaining funding for the project and following the letter of the law, all in pursuit of its underlying aim to retain people in the countryside and slow, or even reverse, the movement to big cities.

The success of this multifaceted relationship was also not indicative of the more general unreliability of local processes, in which uncertainty may be generated by technical errors and institutional inefficiencies. Indeed, the management of residential projects in rural areas like Huizhou has lagged far behind the management of similar projects in cities. For example, grey areas in the vague "meritocratic" mode of local public administration have allowed ambitious local leaders to make individual judgements that violate planning regulations.[42] Such decisions are typically driven by personal ambition for promotion, which is largely determined by assessments of local GDP. But the uncertainty that results has become a significant factor in the consistency of planning for rural development. In one case, the site of a proposed bus station was even moved suddenly in violation of a local planning decision, resulting in the failure of a residential and commercial development already under construction adjacent to the proposed station.

At a very grassroots level, however, such motivated leadership can have its advantages. Indeed, in the case of XG, Mr. H's years of work were greatly appreciated by the local people, who were given the opportunity to contribute democratically

to decisions. The local people had known H for a long time, and they trusted him. As he said, "Every decision was agreed by raising hands in household-level meetings."[43]

Access to capital has been another significant factor in the quality of rural incremental space production. Typically, investors in such projects are not as professional as they are in larger cities; considering their inexperience, naivete or greed has also often led to unexpected problems. One such investor, Mr. C, funded a local residential project with the proceeds of closing his local factory ten years earlier. As he recalled, "Before then I did not know the whole process at all, and I purchased some land with zero infrastructure, causing huge problems afterwards. Quick design without pertinent research also resulted in many unreasonable house types that were difficult to sell to the locals."[44]

Meanwhile, it is rare to find any investor willing to put money into a nongated community like the one at XG. One such investor signed on only after lobbying by local governors. But his financial interest in the project seemed questionable, and his position as head of a business association hinted that he might have been ready to sacrifice some profits in return for other considerations.

As the receivers of new development, the local people, however, have shown great willingness to accept changes in the physical environment. In most cases they see change as positive, contradicting the prevailing view that nostalgia for older patterns of settlement would leave them unsatisfied with the new places being created. Asked how they understood the reasons for what was being built, they tended to start their personal narratives by telling about their own choices rather than the reality that new housing types were being "imposed" on them. When asked about the role of government, they also suggested that "to develop" was a shared concept, and that "a place must develop, especially rural places like here."

Others commented that "the change is just the development," and that "my choice of moving just conforms to the rural development."[45] However, most did not even mention the "design" of the new housing, just as the significance of "design" as a variable was generally not well acknowledged. The local people instead seem benefit motivated, having made choices they believe fit their interests. And, in effect, this outcome has been realized through a largely socialist economy. Yet those who have chosen to move to commercial gated communities are clearly engaged in competitive consumption. And those who have moved to new, nongated public communities in villages have likewise engaged in a market-driven system. Indeed, in XG, there is a supplementary distribution method whose unofficial rule is that those who pay more receive a higher level of amenities.

As people have become more aware of the "unevenness" in living standards in China, a new mentality has appeared among the rural population, which now aspires to a "better life" similar to that of urban dwellers.[46] Moving to a new residential district in a nearby town is seen as one way to make this

possible. Interviews with residents also reveal they are satisfied with these new physical environments. Indeed, they now priortitize striving for conceptual "evenness" — for example, through better education, work, entertainment, etc. — something they could not previously have attained in rural settlements.

In the collective mind, quality of place thus has been temporarily replaced by position of place, allowing people to consciously or unconsciously adjust their everyday practices to new dwelling forms and the modified conditions of living that come with their new environments.[47] Examples of such activities include square-dancing organized in vacant lots, after-school clubs and night schools held in apartment rooms, urban farming on balconies and decks, additional parking areas created in unused spaces, e-shopping express stations, rented garages upgraded into homes for migrants, and even small sewing factories in unused ground-level shop spaces. The availability of public space, which designers often cite as a problem in cities, is also not an issue here due to the flexibility of residents in adapting any unused places to suit their needs. And being in a rural location, there is abundant open green space nearby. People thus seem to have unwittingly participated in the "urban design" process by creating their own public places.

Following the move to new types of settlement, acceptance, adjustment and modification appear to be the silent themes of everyday life. And conflicts between residents and migrants were not found to be as common in comparison to cities, as most of the population have a rural background, which enables a higher level of tolerance and understanding. Indeed, when asked about issues of tradition with regard to their changed living environment, most residents spoke of reconstructing elements of tradition in their imaginations.[48] Interestingly, some residents have actually also revived traditional

Huizhou settings inside their new apartment homes, in a process similar to what Duanfang Lu has called the "latency of tradition."[49] When questioned about whether they would eventually like to move back to a more rural area, most expressed a desire to do so, and some had even built new houses in their home villages. But their emotional attachment to traditional values is somewhat vague, and when questioned further, some indicated they may have been motivated by the increasing value of land as a consequence of ongoing rural revitalization.

For the designers of developments in these rural environments there are a number of significant challenges, including regulatory limitations, lower fees for their services, and a general lack of recognition and appreciation of their work. Indeed, in the design of gated communities around town centers, designers are largely confined by the statutory planning system, which presents them with detailed regulations covering all aspects of their work — from master planning (urban master plan), to development control (detailed development control plan), to construction details (detailed constuction plan). This is not dissimilar to the process governing comparable developments in cities.[50] Typically, urban planners are thus instructed by local governments to arrange new blocks to enable the expansion of town centers (fig.8). This leaves architects with the job of filling in the blanks, while limiting their design options through numerous rules and subjecting them to design changes from powerful political and financial interests.

This situation has improved somewhat recently in cities, as the importance of "urban design" has gradually come to be accepted. But it is still problematic to integrate urban design concepts such as public space, connectivity, neighborhoods, and sustainability into rural developments.[51] As such, residen-
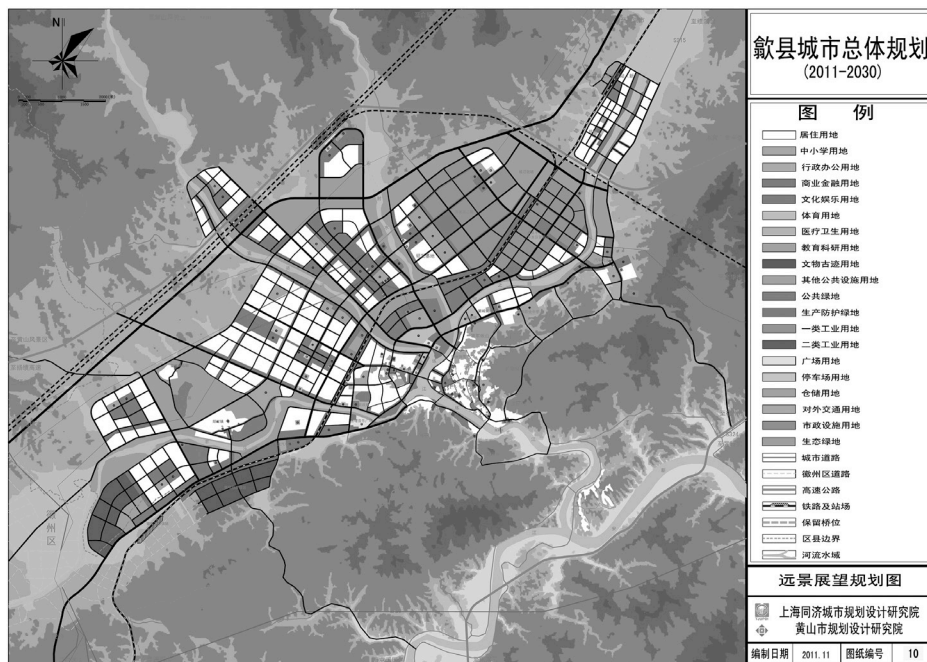

figure 8. *The prospect master plan of She county. The white blocks are all for residential districts. Courtesy of the construction committee of She county.*

figure 9. *The urban and rural planning system of China based on the 2007 Urban and Rural Planning Law. The areas outside cities (rural areas) defined in this paper include towns, townships and villages. Source: drawing by author.*
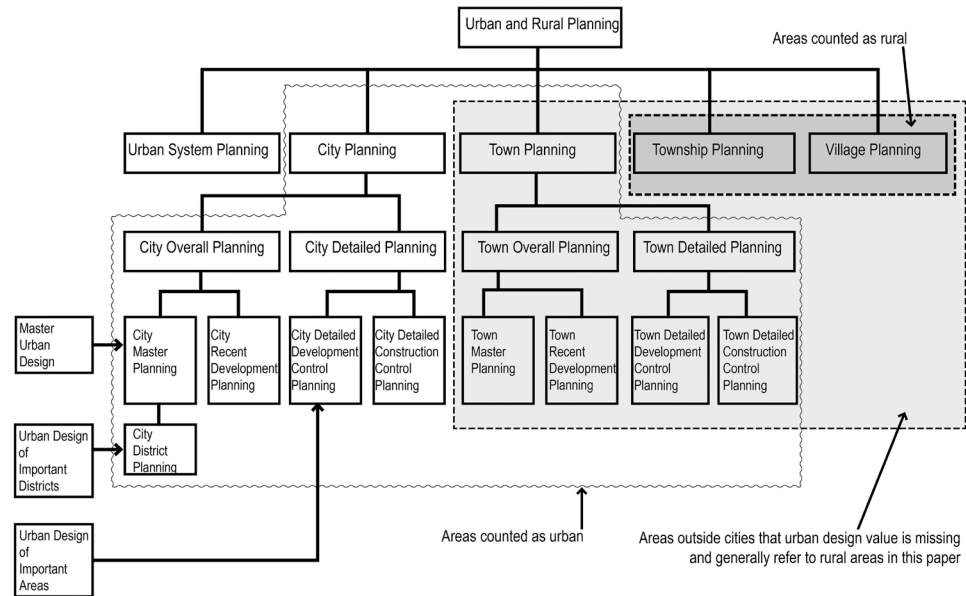
tial blocks are literally seen as blocks, with no consideration for the relationship between them and the spaces created around them. And to date there has been no integrated urban design consideration given to the larger issue of rural form transformation in Huizhou. Indeed, in the recently expired 2007 dual-track planning system, town centers were treated the same as cities, while the land around them was treated as a rural area, subject to entirely different regulations — thus creating a conflict with the very idea of urban-rural integration (fig.9).

Confinement by an overly strict system of regulations, however, cannot fully account for poor design outcomes. For example, in the case of XG, compared to town centers, there were much fewer planning regulations. This raises a key question: Why was it designed the way it was? Closer scrutiny reveals that the designers were treated more like an instrument than a consultant by the top-down forces behind its construction. Decisions about style and form were therefore largely out of their hands. As a result, "copy and paste" stereotypes of a superficial Hui style typically dominate the aesthetic of these new developments.[52]

RELOCATION AND RENOVATION — CHANGES TO THE EXISTING HOUSING INVENTORY

Compared to the production of space through the development of new residential districts, changes to the form and use of existing buildings and spaces in Huizhou has not been as evident. Despite the great amount of such work, such development has maintained a relatively low profile, despite creating significant changes in an evolutionary manner. These form changes have a number of common characteristics: they are slow in pace, cheap in terms of investment, unconcentrat-

ed in distribution, inconsistent in terms of process, un-unified in design, and focused on individual buildings and small districts. However, for these same reasons, the changes may have an effect that is more radical and thorough, because they have created an increasingly fragmented condition that looms over the traditional built environment.

Relocation and renovation are the two main themes driving these developments in Huizhou. Relocation has been seen as a way to conserve ancient buildings and traditional settlements, and it was pursued, particularly between 2009 and 2014, under the policy of "*Bai cun qian zhuang* [To protect one hundred villages and one thousand buildings]."[53] This effort was intended to provide a national model for how to use market forces to assist local governments in fulfilling their conservation responsibilities. Yet, even though the order to protect and conserve such structures was pushed from the top down, it was expected that funds would be raised locally from various public and private sources. According to this policy, buildings and settlements could be protected, leased or adopted in their original environments by new owners, or even relocated to other places (figs.10–11). Numerous problems have emerged as a result of this effort, with "relocation" being the most controversial.[54] For example, in the name of protection, single ancient buildings or groups of buildings have sometimes been relocated and reassembled into new "traditional settlements." One historic structure was even famously transplanted overseas, as a "unwitting cultural ambassador."[55]

By contrast, renovation has been more of a bottom-up process aimed at rebuilding and adapting rural buildings to new functions or to revitalize villages, closely following the national campaign of rural revitalization. However, in many such cases local governments have taken a back seat, without any direct participation in planning or implementation.

figure 10. *A newly built "traditional settlement" near Huangshan city center. Ancient buildings have been relocated from other places and assembled here. The development is located along a river, to the south of a gated community. Google Earth image.*
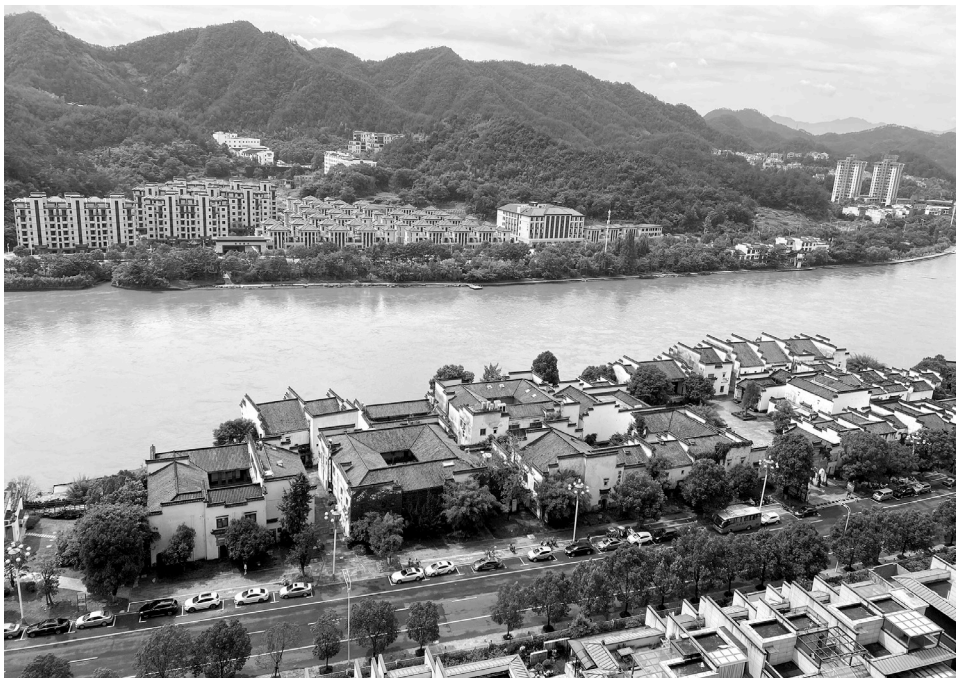

figure 11. *The bird's-eye view of the same newly built "traditional settlement" in Figure 10. Within the relocated ancient buildings there are shops, tea houses, restaurants, bars, hotels, etc. Photo courtesy of Du Wei.*

Instead, they have sought to control, manage, regulate and service such efforts merely by setting policies with regard to changes in the existing stock of built spaces.

Because Huizhou is a region with few strong industries apart from tourism, changes to the existing building inventory have also been fairly subtle. Nevertheless, the importance of creating a tourism brand has caused various form problems related to the desire to create a nostalgic image of Huizhou's traditions and culture. With this in mind outside designers have come to local villages with their own visions of change, and these have largely been supported by the local population, who see these projects as a great opportunity to make a fortune through development. As a result there has been a boom in the conversion of existing structures into rural inns, museums, studios, and clubs. But there have been few attempts coordinate such efforts through the application of holistic and systematic guidelines inspired by contextual urban design values. Furthermore, the overall quality of

space and its continued ability to sustain the needs of the local population have often been neglected.

"Land finance," or the need to generate revenue for lo- cal government directly from the development process, has also not been a key objective in these projects.[56] Instead, the ability of such new properties and ventures to generate tax revenue has become pivotal in local government policies and decision-making. Innovative market-oriented measures have also been manipulated to ensure financial benefits for local governments. Thus, in both relocation and renovation, funds and investments have been raised from diverse channels to support government policies at different levels. For example, the official act spelling out the national policy of "*Bai cun qian zhuang*" specifically mentions that an important principle of implementation is

> *. . . to insist on a combination of government leadership and market operation. . . . Meanwhile, market aware-ness and discipline should be enhanced, and market methods should be utilized to brand the project, to carry out investment attracting promotion, to highlight the main force of marketization.[57]*

Language setting out this same principle can also be found in the "Implementation Plan for Activating the Idle Houses and Related Land in She County":

> *. . . to support the collective economic organization or its individual members to make active the idle houses and lands by self-run, leasing, sharing and cooperation. To promote transformations as resources to properties, money to capital, villagers to shareholders . . . to support villagers returning from cities, people from cities, gradu-ates, veterans to develop rural tourist associations, rural cooperation bodies, family farms, rural guesthouses. . . .[58]*

The political role of local government in this program of space production is therefore both to protect the built environment and to revitalize the whole rural area. To fulfill mandated policies from the top down, local governments have thus tried to encourage multiple players to participate from the bottom up. And they have sought to do this by manipulating the meanings of rural land rights and by authorizing experimental exchanges of rights between the collective and private spheres.

As mentioned, this effort has dovetailed with a diversification of funding sources. The previous fixed single meaning of rural collective land rights has therefore been split into three: a right of ownership, a right of qualification, and a right of use.[59] Ownership of rural land must thus still be held by a collective organization, but the right of use has been liberated to be sold into the market. Meanwhile, the right of qualification still belongs to villagers to ensure their interests in the activation of rural land.

figure 12. *The nonsensical addition of* matouqiang *on the street side of buildings as the result of the* gai hui *policy. These buildings were not originally built in the Hui style. Photo by author.*

An associated ideology of tradition also remains tied to these projects. Yet, compared to the ability to oversee concentrated incremental form changes, it has been harder to create an official narrative of Huizhou identity through them because they are scattered and transient. Nevertheless, the local governments have tried to exert full control over the process. This contested situation can be best illustrated in the movement called *gai hui*, which means "changing to the Hui style."[60] In its application, *gai hui* requires that any building seen from a main road that is not in Hui style must be changed by adding *matouqiang* to its roof (fig. 12). This attempt to revive local identity only in terms of facade appear-ance lacks any sense of authentic purpose, and yet significant funding has been allocated to it, with often controversial re-sults. Interestingly, a retired local official involved in *gai hui* commented that:

> *It was totally a surface movement and to some extent only symbolic. The government paid a large bill, but the locals did not buy it, and corruptions and contra-dictions also happened, with the result being useless to the forming of Huizhou identity. We need to be more confident and honest to the tradition, as well as to the historical conditions. . . .[61]*

In contrast to conditions in more affluent and developed coastal regions, a lack of local government funds (due, as mentioned, to a lack of industrial and commercial activity) has certainly restricted opportunities and abilities for change in Huizhou. As such, policy implementation processes still operate like "separated local situated movements," aimed at fulfilling "the national movement." Overlaps and contradic-tions are thus common in the absence of an overarching platform for coordination. For example, the national "Con-struction of Beautiful Villages" campaign has focused on

rural infrastructure development and has included work to improve water systems, recycling efforts, and road networks. But construction related to these efforts has often been damaging to traditional landscapes and places cherished by "*Bai cun qian zhuang*."[62] Other policies are similarly vague, such as those governing relocation. Indeed, in cases where no clear criteria have been established for the selection of buildings to be moved, the result has often been the demolition of other valuable ancient buildings.[63]

In addition, social sustainability has not been well considered from the top down. For example, considerable discrepancies exist between the real needs of the local population and grand discourses and causes.[64] Meanwhile, design values have been oversimplified by governments at the same time that no comprehensive rural design guide has been produced to influence activities across the entire area.

The government's desire to secure capital from diverse channels has also made it possible for anyone to become an investor. From professionals to novices, from local people and collectives to outsiders and even solo designers, a great variety of people have seized the opportunity to "lead" projects. For example, a significant number of investors have been attracted to Xi Xi Nan, a township adjacent to the newly built Huangshan CRH high-speed rail station. Indeed, despite its situation next to the CRH, it has become a model for rural revitalization in Huizhou. Here, many locals have altered, rebuilt or extended houses into guesthouses, inns and cafes. Other ancient buildings have meanwhile been leased to outsiders, who have unsympathetically renovated them into private museums, studios, tea houses, etc. (f i g . **13**). In one case, an old office building, the town hall, and an old primary school have been packaged as "Turenscape Academy" by a landscape design group from Beijing. They operate the facility as a mixed business development of studios and academies, a rural inn, and catering outlets.[65] As Mr. L, the manager and designer of another boutique hotel nearby, cautioned:

> We were interior designers from big cities specialized in premium hotels. But around 2014, we felt our design business had touched the glass ceiling, so we tried to avoid the intensifying competition in cities and started to look for opportunities in villages. It is also a dream for us to escape the busy life for a while and to be our own client in such a beautiful place, and we later discovered our choice fits the national strategy of rural revitalization. . . . However, apart from our initial affection for the rural, profit logic and a long-term market plan is still the key for our sustainability.[66]

The meaning of "local people" is also often not what it appears to be. Some who make this claim are not local at all, and many real locals have been forced or tempted out of their original homes. Indeed, in "relocation" projects it is hard to find any real locals. Most new assembled traditional settlements are not even used for housing, and the new operators of their buildings may all be from outside the local area.

Even in renovation projects within traditional villages, original residents and outside investors may be co-residents. Interestingly, in such cases the practice of everyday life among the original inhabitants may be barely changed due to their relatively stable environment. However, the underlying meaning is no longer the same because there has also been a

figu r e **13**. *A boutique hotel in Xi Xi Nan, which was renovated from an idle, newly built house that was "oversupplied" as the result of "Building a New Socialist Countryside." This is a better case, as it was not renovated from ancient buildings. Photo courtesy of Li Song.*

figure 14. *A revived traditional ritual called "long table banquet" in Xu village in She county is held only for tourists in early summer. Photo courtesy of Dr. Jiang Hongyi.*

shift to cater to the tastes and expectations of tourists. Thus, in many Huizhou villages, local people still hold traditional rituals, but the events are often staged for "consumers," not themselves (fig.14). On ordinary days vendors may be seen walking around selling their wares to tourists. And while village elders may still gather and gossip in small open places, they immediately become ticket sellers or tour guides when visitors arrive.

Designers have been liberated or even indulged to produce their own fanciful visions in many such new developments. Thus, where "relocation" may confine them to a designated area, "renovation" within an existing village may offer a dreamland, free of effective restrictions.[67] Here, they can be client, investor and designer all at once, while simultaneously claiming to solve local problems. However, the result of their work is often to impose their experience from cities onto the rural setting without any consideration of local complexities and contradictions.[68]

Zhou Rong has concluded that there are three main possible streams of design activity in rural China.[69] Two of these are present in Huizhou. Culturally, filled with nostalgia, designers have looked back in their projects, endeavoring to echo all aspects of the Huizhou traditional architecture — from space, form, materials, and colors to construction details. But these fantastic dreams, which they could never build in cities, cannot often be appreciated by the local people. Meanwhile, technically, the use of local materials in ecological and tectonically appropriate ways has indeed been practical and sustainable. But an overemphasis on irrelevant, "low-tech" solutions sometimes deemphasizes real spatial qualities (fig.15).

The third approach to design, one that integrates social and spatial factors — and which might be the most appropriate approach to renovation as part of a campaign of rural revitalization — is almost entirely absent, however. Using this approach it might be possible for designers to reconstruct rural places by linking space design to emerging new social structures. But such an effort to reform and revitalize rural communities, and thereby nurture local identities and promote social sustainability, has yet to be extensively realized in Huizhou.[70]

figure 15. *An old primary school remodeled into a hotel in Xi Xi Nan. The classrooms were updated into hotel rooms, and a curtain of bamboo poles was added to the facade, which deteriorated after several years' usage. Photo by author.*

figure 16. *One continuous traditional place remains in the southern part of the central town of She county. But it is challenged by the rural form transformation. Photo courtesy of Dr. Jiang Hongyi.*

Efforts at replacement and renovation thus have placed too great a focus on single buildings, and this has resulted in a tendency to disregard the larger design value inherent to Huizhou's rural places. This design attitude is similar in many ways to that evident in Chinese cities, where singular attention to individual blocks and plots has failed to result in an integrated and contextually responsive environment. These traditional places, where form elements are continuous, where an understanding of typology and morphology could be usefully applied, are facing growing challenges, as the value of place and continuity has been disregarded in favor of a new and often anarchistic designs (fig.16).

CONCLUSION: A MORE ACTIVE ROLE FOR DESIGN

By adopting an analytical approach based on Henri Lefebvre's ideas concerning the "production of space," this report has sought to understand the mechanisms underlying the transformation of traditional rural form in Huizhou. Specifically, it has sought to illuminate rural form transformation on three levels — through the intentions of those on the supply side, through the reactions to new spaces by receivers, and through the situations faced by space designers. It has thus shown how local realities related to the implementation of "Socialism with Chinese characteristics" have largely compromised the former contextual production of space.

From the top-down, in promoting a logic of conceived space, economically, the power of government has sought above all to generate revenue from rural development. Early on, the effect and impact of "land finance" policies were strong in this regard, but other revenue-generation methods,

such as tax collection, have now become more important, reflecting a shift from form growth to form management.[71] Meanwhile, politically, local government has also had to comply with a series of national policies aimed at enhancing rural development and population stability. And, ideologically, a native Huizhou mentality has come into conflict with a national narrative of cultural confidence, creating anxiety within local government when it comes to finding a proper rhetoric of Huizhou tradition and identity.[72]

In terms of entrepreneurship, the role of local government has also deepened and intensified. Yet, at the same time, local government has often also lacked effective management to ensure consistent quality and sometimes been willing to accept the flawed outcomes of paternalistic leadership. Significantly, these weaknesses have tended to compromise design-side aspirations and resulted in questionable physical realities. The voice of capital has also been discordant, partly because it has been relatively easier for inexperienced investors and developers with inappropriate or shortsighted motivations to engage in spatial production than in urban areas.

From a bottom-up perspective, meanwhile, many locals have "voted with their feet" and accepted the move into new residential districts on the edges of Huizhou's larger towns. They have also willingly engaged in the spatial appropriation of new environments in villages. However, consciously or subconsciously, their everyday lives have been greatly changed as they have adopted and adapted to these new environments. Indeed, as Xin Liu has commented: "people know why they do this or that, they also know how to do this or that, but they do not know what they do does."[73]

At the middle level, designers have alternately been confined and ignored or liberated and indulged in the process of

space production in Huizhou. But as part of their discovery of new rural opportunities, they have tended to transfer forms and design approaches from cities without a thorough understanding of the complicated mechanisms in play. Unfortunately, this has too often resulted in the creation of places that lack true meaning (or even a sense of belonging) within their cultural context. And this condition has only been exacerbated by a lack of integrated design guidelines that describe and advocate for the specific characteristics of rural form.

In Huizhou, the reality today is that the various motivations and expectations of the three levels of stakeholders in the process of rural development are incredibly diverse — and yet they coexist in the same "production of space." This report has attempted to analyze and outline the intentions, dilemmas, and potential solutions inherent in this process from the perspective of each of these groups. And it has attempted to show how its outcome has been a compromised condition that also reflects the features of "Socialism with Chinese characteristics" — itself is a compromise between capitalism and socialism.

As a result of this compromised condition, the built traditions of Huizhou have clearly been diminished. Specifically, an overall sense of built tradition is being fragmented because the larger environment that enables the maintenance of a sense of authenticity is being changed discontinuously. In new residential districts, tradition has thus been both

interrupted and partially revived under new conditions.[74] In "relocation" projects, it has been "deliberately choreographed."[75] And in "renovation" efforts it has been deployed to cater to new patrons through manufactured objects of consumption.[76] As part of this process of spatial production, local governments have come to see tradition as a cultural symbol, while investors see it as a label and a brand. To the local population, the Huizhou tradition is more of a silent lifestyle. And for designers it provides conceptual justification for a broad range of personal, stylistic responses.

Confronted by this compromised situation, designers could and should play a stronger role by advocating solutions that are less superficial and self-referential. If designers were to return to a more traditional role as negotiators within a larger cultural process, they might, in Lefebvrian terms, help link conceived space to lived space by creating perceived space.[77] On the one hand, by creating high-quality rural places as environmental activators, they might help fix the problem of capital flow by promoting the appreciation of rural properties and improving local incomes and lives.[78] On the other, they might help promote sustainable contextual design values — for example, by filling the current void for systematic guides for rural design. Such a sensitive approach could nurture social awareness and raise the profile of design values in rural areas and make a significant difference to the quality of development in Huizhou.

REFERENCE NOTES

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2. Although traditional towns and villages outside cities are considered rural areas here for purposes of discussion, towns are treated administratively as urban areas under China's 2007 Urban and Rural Planning Law. See Figure 9.
3. See Fulong Wu's systematic work focusing on Chinese cities. Also see Z. Wu and X. Liu, "Gai ge kai fang si shi nian lai Zhong guo cheng xiang gui hua zhi shi wang luo yan jin [Evolution of knowledge network of urban-rural planning in China in four decades since the opening up in 1978]," *Cheng shi gui hua xue kan*, No.5 (September 2018), pp.11–18.
4. R. Zhou, "Xiang jian san ti [Three issues of rural constructions]," *Shi jie jian zhu*, No.2 (February 2015), pp.22–23; and Y. Sun and S. Zhang, "Wo guo xiang cun gui hua yan jiu ping shu yu zhan wang [Review and expectation of rural planning research in China]," *Cheng shi gui hua xue kan*, No.4 (July 2017), pp.74–80.

5. The first was introduced at the 3rd Plenary Session of the 15th Central Committee Meeting of the CCP in October 1998. See the report at http://news.cnr.cn/special/18sz/lj/201311/t20131113_514117760.shtml. The second was introduced at the 5th Plenary Session of the 16th Central Committee Meeting of the CCP in October 2005. Five requirements in building the socialist countryside were mentioned: development in industry, richness in life, civilization in custom, tidiness in landscape, democracy in management. Available at http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2005-10/11/content_76191.htm. The third was launched around 2013. It highlights the town level, seeing towns as a bridge to connect cities and villages, which thus concentrate, anchor and urbanize rural people, and optimize the distribution of resources in a regional level. See the *National Plan on New-Type Urbanization (2014–2020)* at: http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2014/0317/c1001-24649809.html. The fourth was introduced at the 19th National Congress of the CCP, October 2017. *Strategic Planning of Rural Revitalization (2018–2022)* was issued in September 2018. It is available at http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-09/26/c_1123487123.htm.

6. See Wen Tiejun's research focusing on rural problems of China: for example, X. Dong and T. Wen, *Qu yi fu: Zhong guo hua jie di yi ci jing ji wei ji de zhen shi jing yan, 1949–1952* [*Disaffiliation: The real experience from China's solution to the first economic crisis, 1949–1952*] (Beijing: Dong fang chu ban she, 2019), pp.1–22.
7. Ibid.
8. Mentioned by Yang Yuzhen, who sees the essence of urbanization as a spatial transfer of the economic crisis and calls it a form of "spatial therapy." See Y. Yang, *Zi ben kong jian hua: Zi ben ji lei, cheng zhen hua yu kong jian sheng chan* [*Spatialization of capital: Accumulation of capital, urbanization, and production of space*] (Nanjing: Dong nan da xue chu ban she, 2016), pp.47–48.
9. Zhou, "Xiang jian san ti," pp.22–23; and L. Ye and Y. Huang, "Dang dai xiang cun ying jian zhong 'she ji xia xiang' xing wei de biao zheng fen xi [Characterization and field interpretation of 'Design down-to-village' in contemporary rural construction]," *Jian zhu shi*, No.5 (October 2019), pp.97–102.
10. F. Wu, *Planning for Growth: Urban and Regional Planning in China* (New York: Routledge, 2015), p.51–77; D. Han, "Cheng shi xing tai xue zai cheng shi she ji zhong de di wei yu zuo yong [The meaning of urban morphology in the urban design],"

Jian zhu shi, No.4 (August 2014), pp.35–38; and F. Chen and K. Thwaites, *Chinese Urban Design: The Typomorphological Approach* (Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), pp.141–60.

11. Z. Wang et al., "Zou jin 'xiang jian zhen shi': Cong jian zao ben ti zou xiang ying jian ben ti [Looking for the reality of rural constructions: From building ontology to rural construction ontology]," *Shi dai jian zhu*, No.1 (January 2019), pp.6–7.

12. Chen and Thwaites, *Chinese Urban Design*, pp.141–160.

13. See X. Yu and J. Chen, "Zhong guo te se she hui zhu yi: Gai nian yan bian yu nei han sheng hua [Socialism with Chinese Characteristics: The evolution of the concept]," *Guang ming ri bao*, January 16, 2013. Also see Y. Choi, "The Evolution of 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics': Its Elliptical Structure of Socialist Principles and China's Realities," *Pacific Focus*, Vol. XXVI No.3 (December 2011), pp.385–404.

14. An updated explanation of the principle has been a part of every national congress of the CCP since the twelfth in 1982. For the most recent explanation, see the comments of General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party Xi Jinping from the 19th National Congress. J. Xi, "Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era," October 18, 2017, Section 3.

15. X. Wan and Q. Ye, "Zhongguo te se she hui zhu yi gai nian ji qi ji ben nei han [The concept of 'Socialism with Chinese characteristics' and its essence]," *Ling nan xue kan*, No.2 (March 2013), pp.5–9.

16. See Xi, "Secure a Decisive Victory," Sections 1 and 7.

17. The mapping of ancient buildings and settlements in Huizhou was mainly carried out by Southeast University during 1993–1999. For example, see K. Gong, ed., *Huizhou gu jian zhu cong shu: Zhan qi [Series of Ancient Architecture in Huizhou: Zhan Qi]* (Nanjing: Dong nan da xue chu ban she, 1996). Also see Shou Tao's work on tectonics and environmental issues: T. Shou, "Huizhou xiang tu jian zhu de jian gou ti xi yan jiu [The research of the tectonic system of Huizhou vernacular architecture]," Ph.D. diss., Southeast University, 2019.

18. See Yuan Feng's work, "*shui xi dong*," in Anren, Sichuan, which he described as human-machine collaboration towards a scenic ruralism. F. Yuan et al., "Ren ji xie zuo zou xiang mei li xiang cun: Sichuan Anreng OCT 'shui xi dong' lin pan wen hua jiao liu zhong xin she ji shi jian [Human-machine collaboration towards a scenic ruralism: Design of Inkstone house OCT linpan cultural center in Anren, Sichuan]," *Jian zhu xue bao*, No.4 (April 2019), pp.44–51.

19. See Chang Qing's work focusing on architectural anthropology in China: for example, Q. Chang, "Feng tu guan yu jian zhu ben tu hua: Feng tu jian zhu pu xi yan jiu gang yao [The vernacular doctrine and localization: A study on the pedigree of vernacular architecture]," *Shi dai jian zhu*, No.3 (May 2013), pp.1–9.

20. Huang Yinwu's work in Yunnan and Wang Zhu's work in Zhejiang are notable: for example, Wang et al., "Zou jin 'xiang jian zhen shi': Cong jian zao ben ti zou xiang ying jian ben ti."

21. In national urban planning efforts in China, this has recently been replaced by the emerging "National Territory Spatial Planning System."

22. C. Lei and M. Zhao, "'Xiang gui hua' ti xi jian gou ji yun zuo de ruo gan tan tao: Ru he luo shi cheng xiang gui hua fa zhong de 'xiang gui hua' [Establishment and operation of a township planning system]," *Cheng shi gui hua*, Vol.33 No.2 (February 2009), pp.9–14; and S. Zhang, "Cheng zhen hua yu gui hua ti xi zhuan xing: Ji yu xiang cun shi jiao de ren shi [Urbanization and transformation of the planning system: A rural perspective]," *Cheng shi gui hua xue kan*, No.6 (November 2013), pp.19–25.

23. This new overarching planning system was officially announced in 2019 and will be established by 2020. In the united name of "territory spatial planning," it incorporates all planning approaches related to space, which were divided before. These include, for example, urban and rural planning, land-use planning, environmental planning, conservation planning, and many other topic-related forms of planning. It calls for "a single blueprint system" for the whole nation's spatial planning. See T. Wu, "Guo tu kong jian gui hua ti xi zhong de cheng shi gui hua chu lun [A discussion on urban planning in spatial planning system]," *Cheng shi gui hua*, Vol.43 No.8 (August 2019), pp.9–17.

24. See Kai Gu's work introducing the study of urban morphology to China: for example, J.W.R. Whitehand and K. Gu, "Extending the Compass of Plan Analysis: A Chinese Exploration," *Urban Morphology*, Vol.11 No.2 (October 2007), pp.91–109. Also see Fei Chen's application of these principles to Suzhou: F. Chen and O. Romice, "Preserving the Cultural Identity of Chinese Cities in Urban Design through a Typomorphological Approach," *Urban Design International*, Vol.14 No.1 (April 2009), pp.36–54.

25. For a critical view of these efforts, see A. Madanipour, *Design of Urban Space: An Inquiry into a Socio-spatial Process* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 1996), pp.53–56. The currently limited value of these methods in China is evidenced by the fact that convincing applications of typology and urban morphology mostly aim at historical, stable, static urban districts rather than general urban or rural ones. For example, Suzhou (Fei Chen), Pingyao (Kai Gu), Zhouzhuang and Wuzhen (Jeffrey Wenji He and Mark Henwood). See the Zhouzhuang case at J.W. He and M. Henwood, "Understanding the Urban Form of China's Jiangnan Watertowns: Zhouzhuang and Wuzhen," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, Vol.XXVI No.II (2015), pp.73–85.

26. Among these scholars, Hsia Chu-joe, Duanfang Lu, and Yang Yuzhen are most representative. See C. Hsia and C. Wang, eds., *Kong Jian de wen hua xing shi yu she hui li lun du ben [A Reader in Cultural Forms and Social Theories of Space]* (Taipei: Ming Wen Book, 1993); D. Lu, *Remaking Chinese Urban Form: Modernity, Scarcity and Space, 1949–2005* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2006); and Y. Yang, *Zi ben kong jian hua*.

27. H. Lefebvre, "Spatial Planning: Reflections on the Politics of Space," in R. Peet, ed., *Radical Geography: Alternative Viewpoints on Contemporary Social Issues* (Chicago: Maaroufa Press, 1977), pp.339–52.

28. Lu, *Remaking Chinese Urban Form*, p.11.

29. Lefebvre, "Spatial Planning."

30. "Land finance" here refers to the generation of revenue by land leasing. This system has been widely adopted by local governments across China as an engine for development. Leasing state-owned land in cities and towns for the private commercial development of new housing areas is one important aspect of "land finance." For a comprehensive discussion, see Y. Zhao, "Guan yu tu di cai zhen de ji ge shuo ming [Explanations of land finance]," *Bei jing gui hua jian she*, No.1 (January 2011), pp.166–69; and Y. Zhao, "The Market Role of Local Governments in Urbanization," Ph.D. diss., Cardiff University, 2009, pp.30.

31. See H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, D.N. Smith, trans. (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), pp.38–116. For Lefebvre, spatial practice, or perceived space, provides a practical basis for interactions between daily reality and urban reality (p.38). Abstract depictions of space (representation of space), or conceived space, facilitate the rational view of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocrats and social engineers (p.38). And representational space, or lived space, is the space of "inhabitants" and "users," formed by everyday life (p.116). It is dominated and passively experienced, associated with images and symbols, with the inhabitants' imagination seeking to change and appropriate it (p.39). Lefebvre saw an antagonism between conceived space and lived space, pointing out how the latter has often been crushed by the former (p.51). But in this report we argue that lived space in this context is not purely what Lefebvre saw from everyday life. Indeed, Lefebvre suggested the leisure and liberty of everydayness escaped from bureaucratic

regimentation, and could be found in the "moments" of everyday life, like a festival with freedom, with nature, love, simple domestic pleasures, celebrations, desires and needs that could erode "any prospect of total, static systematization." See M. McLeod, "Henri Lefebvre's Critique of the Everyday: An Introduction," in S. Harris and D. Berke, eds., *Architecture of the Everyday* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), pp.13–16. Nevertheless, the lived space here is close to human agency, being formed in their silent response to the conceived space by acceptance, adjustment and modification. It is associated with experiences, reasons and meanings, which are created and limited by historical conditions and future expectations. With the antagonism not formally recognized by the inhabitants, but the lived space is not immediately crushed, it is actually reshaped in every possible place by everyday life.

32. Within Huangshan city, Huangshan mountain is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage-Mixed Property, and two traditional villages (Xidi and Hongcun) are listed as UNESCO World Heritage-Cultural Properties, making them the pride of the local tourism industry.

33. In 1979, Deng Xiaoping visited then Huizhou region and climbed Huangshan mountain. He encouraged the local government to promote tourism. His original words can be translated as ". . . to be more ambitious, to throw out Huangshan card. . . ."

34. South Jiangsu Mode or Sunan Mode generally refers to successful rural development that does not rely on agriculture. Starting in the 1980s, it created a push to establish rural industries, which happened in towns and villages in southern Jiangsu province, like Suzhou, Changzhou, Nantong, etc. See X. Chenge and Z. Xie, *Su nan mo shi shan bian chuang xin cheng shi fa zhan* [*Evolution of southern jiang su mode the development of innovative city*] (Beijing: Zhong guo jing ji chu ban she, 2014). For a discussion of Sunan Mode and the form evolution of rural settlements, see L. Li, *Xiang cun ju luo: Xing tai, lei xing yu yan bian: Yi jiang nan di qu wei li* [*Rural settlements: Form, type and evolution: Taking regions in south of Yangtze river as examples*] (Nanjing: Dong nan da xue chu ban she, 2007).

35. In many official discourses, Huangshan city and the Huizhou region are described as the "backyard" of nearby cities (Shanghai, Nanjing, Hangzhou, etc.) in the Yangtze River Delta due to the many ties between them. See http://news.sina.com.cn/o/2003-08-25/0214625879s.shtml.

36. Comprehensive discussions can be seen in the works of Duanfang Lu and David Bray. See D. Lu, "Building the Chinese Work Unit: Modernity, Scarcity and Space, 1949–2000," Ph.D. diss., University of

California, Berkeley, 2003; and D. Bray, *Social Space and Governance in Urban China: The Danwei System, from Origins to Reform* (California: Stanford University Press, 2015).

37. For a critical view, see M. Xu, "Gated Communities in China: Urban Design Concerns," Ph.D. diss., Cardiff University, 2009.

38. Some scholars see replacement as the main result of a policy called "Cheng xiang jian she yong di zeng jian gua gou [Linking the increase with decrease in land use for urban and rural construction]." This is intended to optimize land use across urban and rural areas by moving villagers out of scattered and dilapidated houses to new, concentrated housing districts, thus allowing the old housing areas to be converted to arable land. In turn, the same quota of construction land can be created based on the increase quota of arable land. See an example in D.F. Lu and R.D. An, "New Villages on the Urban Fringe: Spatial Planning, Lifestyle Changes, and Health Implications," in L. Mu and F.W. Yang, eds., *Urbanization and Public Health in China* (London: Imperial College Press 2016), p.199. But in Huizhou the move to construct replacement housing is not mainly a result of this.

39. The real name of the town has been replaced.

40. Interview with a relevant local governor of XG on August 13, 2019.

41. Interview with a local governor who has been in charge of the project for more than ten years on August 19, 2019. The real surname has been replaced.

42. Daniel A. Bell has described the Chinese political system as a meritocracy. See D.A. Bell, *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015).

43. Interview with the same local governor as in note 40 on August 19, 2019.

44. Interview with a local developer of a commercial housing project in She county, in Huizhou, on August 1, 2019. The real surname has been replaced.

45. Interview with twelve residents of the new residential districts between July 14 and August 2, 2019.

46. This was earlier mentioned as the principal contradiction facing Chinese society. It is also described in Xi, "Secure a Decisive Victory," Section 1.

47. From personal observations in the largest residential districts in one county of Huizhou and the XG project, August 20–24, 2019.

48. Interview with the same residents as in note 45 between July 14 and August 2, 2019.

49. Duanfang Lu has described the subtle reappearance of tradition in new guises in modern contexts as involving the "latency of tradition." See Lu, *Remaking Chinese Urban Form*, pp.124–42.

50. Interview with designers from the She county design institute, August 13, 2019.

51. Wang Jianguo has provided a comprehensive introduction to and summary of the idea of "urban design." See J. Wang, *Cheng shi she ji* [*Urban design*], 3rd ed. (Nanjing: Dong nan da xue chu ban she, 2011).

52. Many monotonous texts on the design of residential districts can prove this. They are the product of the She county design institute and other relevant design companies.

53. A local policy launched in 2009 and ended in 2014, it called for an investment of 5.5 billion yuan over five years, targeting 101 villages and 1,065 ancient buildings for the purposes of conservation.

54. Local scholars have discussed this in their work. See L. Fang and W. Wang, *Yuan de shou wang: Huizhou wen hua sheng tai bao hu yan jiu* [*On watching the origin: Research on conserving the ecology of Huizhou culture*] (Beijing: Zhongguo she hui ke xue chu ban she, 2015), pp.138–62.

55. These "new settlements," mainly for commercial use, are like collages of traditional environments. At least ten such places can be found in Huizhou. The overseas case is the moving of "Yin Yu Tang." See Han Li's detailed documentation of the process with a deep discussion of this "unwitting cultural ambassador." H. Li, "'Transplanting' Yin Yu Tang to America: Preservation, Value, and Cultural Heritage," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, Vol.XXV No.II (2014), pp.53–64.

56. Unlike some urban land, which can be leased, rural land is strictly controlled as part of a national strategy to protect the supply of land for agriculture. It is thus prohibited to lease it. See the Law of the People's Republic of China on Land Administration (revised on August 26, 2019).

57. Huangshan Municipal Party Committee and Municipal Government, *Huangshan shi "bai cun qian zhuang" gu min ju bao hu li yong gong cheng shi shi fang an* [*The implementation act of conservation and utilization of ancient dwelling houses in "one hundred villages and one thousand buildings"*], Huangshan, November 5, 2009.

58. She County Government, *She xian nong cun xian zhi zhai ji di he xian zhi zhu zhai pan huo li yong shi dian shi fan shi shi fang an* [*Implementation plan of activating the idle houses and related land in She county*], May 26, 2020.

59. For a further discussion, see X. Sun, "Tui jin nong di san quan fen zhi jing ying mo shi de li fa yan jiu [Advancing legislative research into the operational model of farmland subject to division of three rights]," *Zhongguo she hui ke xue*, No.7 (July 2016), pp.145–63.

60. See Yuan Yulin's article in the Huangshan daily. Y. Yuan, "Gai hui jian hui: Rang xiang cun jin xian wan feng wan yun [Change to Hui and Build as Hui: Let the countryside greatly show Anhui style and Huizhou charm]," *Huang shan ri bao*, December 6, 2013.

61. Interview with a retired local governor who was involved in the *gai hui* movement on July 21, 2019.

62. Y. Yao, Z. Na, and Q. Cai, "Huangshan shi 'bai cun qian zhuang' bao hu gong cheng zheng ce ji shi shi fen xi [The analysis on the policy and implementation of 'bai cun qian zhuang' in Huangshan city]," *Chong qing shan di cheng xiang gui hua*, No.3 (2016), pp.17–22.

63. Ibid.

64. See Li, "'Transplanting' Yin Yu Tang to America."

65. See the website of the academy of "Turenscape": http://www.turenscapeacademy.com/index.jsp.

66. The interview took place on August 6, 2019.

67. Zhou, "Xiang jian san ti," pp.22–23.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. Similar to Xie Yingjun's social approach to design in rural areas, mainly in Taiwan. For a summary of his work, see S. Huang, "San zhong mai luo, san ge ban fa: xie yingjun jian zhu de she hui xing [Three contexts, three methods: the sociality of hsieh ying-chun's architexture]," *Xin jian zhu*, No.1 (February 2014), pp.4–9.

71. For a further discussion of the shift, see Y. Zhao, "Cheng shi gui hua de xia yi ge san shi nian [The next 30 years of urban planning]," *Bei jing gui hua jian she*, No.1 (January 2014), pp.168–70.

72. For the narrative of cultural confidence, See Xi, "Secure a Decisive Victory," Section 7.

73. X. Liu, *In One's Own Shadow: An Ethnographic Account of the Condition of Post-Reform Rural China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p.xii.

74. See Lu, *Remaking Chinese Urban Form*, p.125.

75. See Li, "'Transplanting' Yin Yu Tang to America," p.60.

76. N. AlSayyad, "Global Norms and Urban Forms in the Age of Tourism: Manufacturing Heritage, Consuming Tradition," in N. AlSayyad ed., *Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage: Global Norms and Urban Forms in the Age of Tourism* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

77. Zhao Yanjing has systematically discussed the bigger picture of the new planning system and the role of planner and designer in it. See Y. Zhao, "Lun guo tu kong jian gui hua de ji ben jia gou [On the underlying infrastructure of the spatial planning]," *Cheng shi gui hua*, Vol.42 No.12 (December 2019), pp.17–25.

78. Ibid.