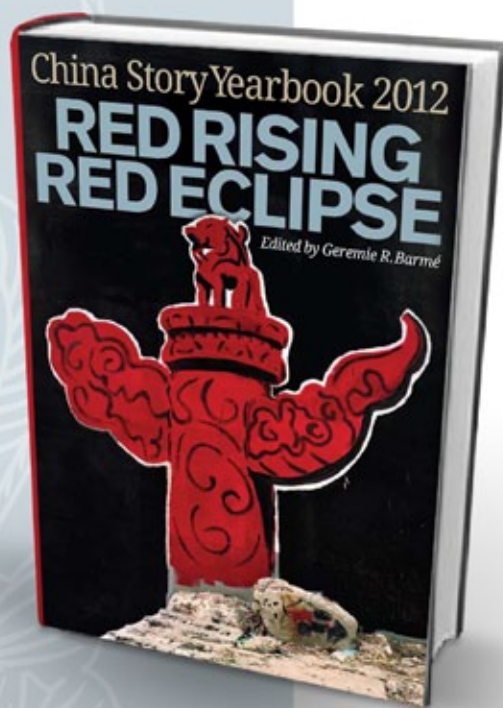


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SYMBOLIC CITIES AND THE 'CAKE DEBATE'

Carolyn Cartier and Luigi Tomba

Excerpt from
CHINA STORY YEARBOOK 2012

RED RISING RED ECLIPSE

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Australian Centre on China in the World
中华全球研究中心 / 中華全球研究中心



ANU College of Asia & the Pacific
Canberra, Australia



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ISBN 978-0-9873655-0-7

First published in August 2012
THIS PUBLICATION IS NOT FOR SALE


Published by:
Australian Centre on China in the World
The Australian National University

Edited, typeset and illustrated by Markuz Wernli Design Works
Printed by Blue Star Print Canberra, Australia

The Australian Centre on China in the World is an initiative of the Commonwealth Government of Australia and The Australian National University

SYMBOLIC CITIES AND THE 'CAKE DEBATE'

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A stylized illustration of a fan-shaped plant, possibly a ginkgo leaf, rendered in a light blue color with a dotted pattern. The plant is positioned on the left side of the page, extending from the bottom towards the top. It has a central stem that branches out into several fan-shaped leaves. The leaves are filled with a fine, dotted pattern. The illustration is set against a solid blue background that occupies the left half of the page.

CITIES PROVIDE the most spectacular evidence of China's transformation. New urban landscapes punctuated by landmark skyscrapers proclaim the country's rapid development and modernisation. Since 1978, over 500 new cities have been built and constructing them has been a major social and political achievement as well as a major driver of economic growth. The process has also dispossessed millions of rural landholders without due or sufficient compensation, resulting in tens of thousands of protests in recent years. In historic cities, displacement of long-established residents and the replacement of socialist-era housing and factories by sleek office buildings and shopping malls also demonstrate the changing economic functions of the city and throw up new social and economic issues. Moreover, the design and development of cities is a highly competitive process. Key Communist Party officials stake their careers on the 'quality' of urban development in the cities in which they govern. They do so not only as a matter of governance but also to manipulate the symbolic significance of the cities in their charge for the sake of their own political advancement, as a kind of personal exercise in 'branding'.

Two cities were at the forefront of debates over national directions in social and economic development in China during 2010-2012: Chongqing in west China and Guangzhou on the south coast. Both cities are centres of massive conurbations and urbanizing regions – large and growing metropolitan areas comprising groups of cities with complex governments and diversified economies that serve major planning and development goals. Guangzhou is the provincial capital of Guangdong province and the regional capital of the Pearl River Delta region, which led China's opening to the world economy in the 1980s based on export manufacturing and



Map 1: Guangzhou, Guangdong Province
Source: Multimedia Services, ANU College of Asia & the Pacific

capital inflows from adjacent Hong Kong. [Map 1] Chongqing is China's newest major city and at the forefront of the current national focus to develop the vast inland region of western China. [Map 2] The prominence of these two cities in national development has been driven by extensive 'image engineering', a process that focuses on their supposedly outstanding characteristics. This is done to attract domestic and international capital, bolster the loyalty and civic pride of their residents, and promote their relatively leading roles in national economic development.

These two cities potentially define different national trajectories. Guangzhou (formerly known in English as Canton) is an historic trading city that boasts an early liberal tradition. It is a city that, in recent decades, has been a place where local officials have been innovators both economically and in the area of politics. Its local media, led by the South-

The Chongqing Model and the Guangdong Model

The Chongqing Model and the Guangdong Model are terms that have been popularized in the media and occasionally in official communications. They refer to two political-economic approaches variously promoted by Bo Xilai during his tenure as Party Secretary of the city of Chongqing (2007-2012), and by Wang Yang, Party Secretary of Guangdong province since 2007. Chongqing is China's biggest urban administrative district with a population of nearly thirty million, while Guangdong is home to about eighty million people and is China's richest province as measured by GDP.

The Guangdong Model promotes a more liberal interpretation of the market economy, especially for private enterprise, and prioritizes economic growth. The Chongqing Model, by contrast, emphasizes a renewed role for the state in urban and economic planning, including improving the urban environment, addressing social and economic inequalities, and aggressively supporting government-backed industrial enterprises.

In February 2012, a long-standing grievance between the government and residents of the village of Wukan in Guangdong was successfully settled with an apparently democratic election of new village officials. Some commentators saw this as a victory for the Guangdong Model, and a possible sign that liberal ideas and political reform may still have a future within the Communist Party.

The Chongqing Model was closely associated with Bo Xilai's highly visible 'Sing Red, Strike Black' (*changhong dahei* 唱红打黑) campaign: vigorous communist propaganda reminiscent of the Mao era, and a sustained crackdown on 'black societies' or organized crime. Various advocates of broad social justice, including leftists, neo-Maoists such as the Utopia group (whose popular website was silenced by state censorship), and many citizens of Chongqing (if some media reports are to be believed), continued to support the Chongqing Model. Bo's ouster as Party Secretary in mid March 2012 cast doubt on the viability of a Chongqing Model.

ern Media Group, has a national reputation for quality reporting and investigative journalism. In contrast, Chongqing represents an entirely different set of characteristics that relate to the history of Sichuan province, from which it was administratively severed to become a provincial-level municipality (like Beijing and Shanghai) in 1997. Like Chengdu, the provincial capital of Sichuan province, Chongqing is part of the Chinese heartland and a major center of Mao-era defence industries. During 2010-



Map 2: Chongqing
Source: Multimedia Services, ANU College of Asia & the Pacific

2011, Chongqing's national image continued to draw boldly on its 'red' past – 'red culture', 'red politics' and the socialist organisation of production – to present a neo-socialist vision of urban modernity. Before he was sensationally removed in March 2012, Bo Xilai, the Party Secretary of Chongqing, had built the image of the city on the color-coded twin campaign, 'Sing Red, Strike Black' (*changhong dahei* 唱红打黑). This included literal singing, including mass choral renditions of popular Maoist-era patriotic and political songs, as well as the study of 'red classics' (films, books and stories about the country's revolutionary past). 'Strike Black' referred to a far-reaching police campaign aimed at tackling the city's notorious organised crime.



Ginkgo trees on the streets of Chongqing.
Source: Chongqing Morning Post, 2 December 2009

Turning Red Chongqing Green

The removal of Bo Xilai from his position as Party Secretary of Chongqing in March 2012 saw the national media hastily declare the end of the 'Chongqing Model'. Yet both the idea and the reality of the model had always been more complex than the media coverage suggested. The idea of the Chongqing Model as a set of economic and policy conditions emerged as a symbolic discourse employed by the Chongqing government in association with writings produced by scholars affiliated with New Left political interests. The use of the word 'model' in China historically connotes good and correct government. In fact, some social and economic policies associated with the model were not unique to Chongqing and had been established in Chongqing before Bo took office, by central government plans; these included the low-cost housing program and the extension of household registration (*hukou* 户口) permits to migrant workers from rural areas.

In 2010, Chongqing announced plans to build ten million low-income rental and subsidised apartments, followed in 2011 by a plan to build enough public rental housing to accommodate two million more low and middle income people, or thirty to forty percent of urban residents, to be allocated by a lottery in response to demand. Both schemes are part of the national plan, first announced in 2007, to implement affordable housing funds in the four provincial-level municipalities and major cities in fifteen provinces. The housing schemes complemented household registration reform to encourage rural-urban integration as a basis for energizing the consumer economy. The multi-national manufacturer Foxconn – a Taiwan company that has in recent years weathered highly publicized labor disputes in its Pearl River Delta factories – predictably endorsed Chongqing for its commitment to treating migrants like other urban residents, providing them access to housing, local healthcare and schools.

In 1997, the central government established Chongqing as China's fourth provincial-level municipality (along with Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai). A river port at a major confluence of the Yangtze River, Chongqing is the trans-shipment hub between the upper reaches of the Yangtze in western China and the Lower Yangtze Valley in the east. In 2010, the central government named it one of five 'national central cities' responsible for coordinating the Great Western Development plan aimed at extending the benefits of the economic boom inland, as well as managing the water reservoir behind the Three Gorges Dam.

In central China, summer continental air masses make Chongqing one of China's 'furnaces' or 'oven cities' and great banyans (*Ficus la-cora*) have for years been the city's most common shade tree. In 1986,



A city logo promoted on Chongqing municipal government websites during Bo Xilai's rule.
Source: cq.gov.cn

the banyan was named the official tree of the city. The official website of Chongqing features a page devoted to the City Flower and the City Tree. The official flower, the camellia (*Camilla sinensis*), known to gardeners worldwide, is indigenous to western China. The website cites the fifth-century text *Commentary on the Classics of the Waterways* which mentions the banyan tree. Following the decision in Beijing to establish Chongqing as a new city-region in 1997, swathes of urban buildings were demolished and the historic banyan fell victim to a spate of road widening. The web page featuring the banyan as the City Tree, however, was not updated after 2007. That was the year that the Communist Party Central Organisation Committee named Bo Xilai, former Mayor of Dalian city, governor of Liaoning province, and Minister of Commerce, the incoming Party Secretary of Chongqing. With Bo's arrival in Chongqing the banyan fell into abeyance and was replaced by a new arboreal favourite: the ginkgo.

Household Registration

(*hukou* 户口 or *hujū* 户籍)

The *hukou* is a residency permit or household registration. A form of family registration was used in pre-modern times, and the *hukou* system, which is a modernized and socialist reformulation of the practice, is still in use in the People's Republic today. A person's *hukou* is usually registered soon after birth, based on the mother's residential status. A *hukou* is necessary to receive social benefits, and for the individual to apply for documents such as ID cards and passports. Before the 1980s, the *hukou* system restricted people's ability to move to another city, get married, change jobs or even get housing. Although this is no longer the case, migrants who want to live away from the place of their *hukou* still face extreme difficulties getting their children into school and obtaining medical care and other social benefits. Critics argue that the *hukou* system is both unfair and unsuited to an economy that is powered by migrant workers and graduates who move away from home to start their careers.

In 2003, Sun Zhigang, a young migrant graphic designer, was beaten to death in a Guangzhou police-operated repatriation station, an office empowered to send migrants without proper documentation back to the area of residence specified on their *hukou* documents. The incident, reported by the influential *Southern Weekly* newspaper, led to a vigorous debate about whether China should abandon the *hukou* system entirely. There has since been some loosening of controls, but with 'stability maintenance' being a top priority of the government in recent times (see Chapter 3), it is unlikely that the *hukou* will be abolished in the near future.



On 2 March 2012, *The Chongqing Evening News* published a front-page story about a speech Bo Xilai gave to a group of doctors on the 'spirit of communism'. Bo reportedly spoke about the PLA martyr Lei Feng, and also reeled off by heart passages from 'In Memory of Norman Bethune', a famous essay by Mao Zedong. Source: *Chongqing Evening News*

During his previous tenure as Mayor of the northeastern city of Dalian, Bo Xilai remodeled the city's landscape in a process that included an ambitious greening program of the business district. As a result, the environment of the city garnered international attention for its improvement. For the Communist Party the modern appearance of Chinese cities is an indicator of successful urban management, and Bo's high marks for the transformation of Dalian prompted his appointment as Party Secretary of Chongqing, the new city of west China, to which he took his strategy of creating an urban landscape aimed to impress – 'investors look at a city and judge it by how it looks', he declared. He undertook

an aggressive re-landscaping of China's most famous 'hill city'. Today, Chongqing's motorways are lined with ginkgo trees, now described as a 'unique characteristic' of the local environment. Such audacious urban afforestation came at a price: in 2010 alone ten billion *yuan* (US\$1.5 billion) was spent on the city's new trees. By contrast, that year the budget for renovating rural schools in the greater Chongqing area – a priority after the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake, was a mere 150 million *yuan*.

Bo's rhetoric bore the hallmarks of a Maoist-era political campaign or voluntarist movement: Chongqing should plant 'ten years' worth of trees in one year, 100 years' worth of trees in ten years.' Other similarities included an emphasis on the participation of large numbers of people and policies

City Branding and City Slogans

The Chinese language readily allows for verbal and written contractions and lends itself to the formulation of pithy slogans. Communist Party propaganda has featured slogans and shorthand expressions since being founded in Shanghai in the early 1920s. In recent decades, companies have used contraction-style slogans for advertising (the Beijing-based Snow-bright Glasses company, *Xueliang yanjing* 雪亮眼镜, for example, took its name from a famous Mao slogan: 'The eyes of the masses are as bright as snow' *qunzhongde yanjing shi xueliangde* 群众的眼睛是雪亮的), while many cities and local governments have adopted slogans for ideological purposes and as tag lines to encourage everything from tourism to general urban development and 'civilized' lifestyles.

In 2010, *Oriental Outlook* magazine (*Dongfang Liaowang Zhoukan* 瞭望东方周刊) observed facetiously that dozens of Chinese cities were branding themselves the 'Oriental Geneva' (*Dongfang Rineiwa* 东方日内瓦), among them Shijiazhuang, Qinhuangdao, Zhaoqing, Kunming, Dali, Chaozhou and Wuxi.

The same article noted that in March 2010, Yichun, in Jiangxi province 江西宜春, adopted the slogan 'A City Called Spring' (*Yizuo jiao chunde chengshi* 一座叫春的城市), referring to the character 'chun' 春 in the city name, which means 'spring'. The creators of this clever slogan were seemingly oblivious to the fact that 'to call spring' (*jiao chun* 叫春) is a colloquial expression for the sounds women make during sex. This effectively rendered their slogan as meaning, 'City of Amorous Groans'.

In the last months of 2011, Beijing introduced its own city slogan, one that was more in keeping with the sober tone of traditional Party propaganda. According to official reports, 2.9 million Beijingers voted on a range of appropriate and uplifting words, leading to the choice of four words to epitomize the 'Beijing Spirit' (*Beijing jingshen* 北京精神): Patriotism, Innovation, Inclusiveness and Virtue (*aiguo, chuangxin, baorong, houde* 爱国、创新、包容、厚德).

As of early 2012, Beijing Spirit messages were ubiquitous in the capital: in subway stations, roadside billboards and posters hung up by neighbourhood committees.

Other city slogans that have been used in China in the last few years include:

Shanghai: Wonderful everyday
(*Jingcai meiyitian* 精彩每一天)

Chongqing: Although Chongqing was branded 'Red City' (*Hongse zhi du* 红色之都) that was never officially used by the Chongqing government, which promoted the slogans: If you've never been to Chongqing, you don't know China (*Mei daoguo Chongqing, bu liaojie Zhongguo* 没到过重庆, 不了解中国) World's Chongqing, Everlasting Three Gorges (*Shijiede Chongqing, yongyuande Sanxia* 世界的重庆 永远的三峡)

Other city slogans include:

Rizhao, Shandong: Blue skies, Emerald seas, Golden beaches (*Lantian bihai jinshatan* 蓝天碧海金沙滩)

Kunming, Yunnan: Every day is Spring
(*Kunming tiantian shi chuntian* 昆明天天是春天)

Guangzhou, Guangdong: In one day you understand two thousand years
(*Yiri dudong liangqian nian* 一日读懂两千年)

Chengdu, Sichuan: Capital of success, Capital of colour, Capital of cuisine
(*Chenggong zhi du, Duocai zhi du, Meishi zhi du* 成功之都、多彩之都、美食之都)

Dongguan, Guangdong: Let fresh splendour blossom every day!
(*Meitian zhanfang xin jingcai!* 每天绽放新精彩!)

Ningbo, Zhejiang: Honest, Pragmatic, Open-minded, Innovative
(*Chengxin, shiwu, kaifang, chuangxin* 诚信、务实、开放、创新)

Hangzhou, Zhejiang: Exquisite and harmonious, magnanimous and open-minded (*Jingzhi hexie, daqi kaifang* 精致谐、大气开放)

of uniform implementation. The sheer number of trees required led to a feverish nationwide buy-up of ginkgos. The sudden appearance of mature trees with forty-fifty centimetre trunks on major thoroughfares of the city indicated that 50-100 years old trees were being traded, reportedly at the cost of some 300,000 *yuan* each (one-hundred times the monthly income of a taxi driver). The mass planting of ginkgos was a sign that Bo Xilai and the city had entered an age of conspicuous urban consumption.

The maidenhair-fern-shaped leaves of this delicate-looking tree turn an imperial yellow in autumn. Its ancestry is unassailable. The subtle symbolism was not lost on the Chinese: Bo Xilai was widely known as a 'princeling', a descendant of one of the founders of the People's Republic. In terms of ecosystem planning the ginkgo was a showy but questionable choice. Ginkgos are highly tolerant of sulphur dioxide and resistant to insects. However, they are deciduous and their canopy is relatively small; they provide fewer places for birds to nest and offer less shade during the punishing heat of Chongqing's summer compared to the historic banyans.

Empowered to develop the city in the national interest, Bo Xilai promoted highly visible urban policies such as the mass planting of ginkgos, an apt symbol for what in this volume we call 'red rising'. His unprecedented flair for using the media to boost Chongqing and his agenda led to regular coverage about his leadership in the national and international press and helped fuel the idea of a 'Chongqing Model' that was unique to the city and with relevance for the rest of the country. Other campaigns drew on the 'red practices' of the Maoist era, including the 'Sing Red' campaign of staging mass songfests in work places and public parks. The highly publicised crackdown on corruption and organised crime during 2009-2010, the so-called 'Strike Black' campaign, meanwhile resulted in the restructuring of police



Ginkgo saplings ready for transplanting.
Source: Website of 'Chongqing Professionals Cooperative with Day of Ginkgo', a company that provides trees and landscaping services



Concrete spikes installed underneath freeway bridges in the city of Guangzhou, apparently intended to deter homeless people from taking up residence.
Source: QQ.com/Southern Metropolis Daily

services. Police and traffic control platforms were put up all over the city and thousands of extra police officers were deployed on the streets. Local citizens praised the moves for increasing their sense of safety, while the crackdown on organised crime led to over 3,000 arrests and convictions of high-ranking officials.

The Chongqing Model also emphasised the restructuring of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) with the aim of making them more competi-

and profitable. After 1949, Chongqing was one of several places in the central and western regions of the country to which crucial industrial and military infrastructure was relocated as part of a national defensive strategy, what was called China's 'Third Front' (the other fronts being coastal and in the north). Rather than dismantling and privatizing state companies, common elsewhere during the country's economic reforms in the 1980s and early 1990s, Chongqing redeveloped state-owned military enterprises as a base for contemporary manufacturing. The leading state-owned enterprise in Chongqing is Chang'an Auto, the Chinese partner of the US Ford Motor Company. It is the third largest manufacturer of automobiles in China and is globally distinctive for locating industrial design, parts manufacture and auto assembly all in one place.

Chongqing has also coordinated investment from international manufacturing firms in a designated technology district, the Liangjiang New Zone. Chongqing Mayor Huang Qifan had previously been the director of Shanghai's Economic Committee (1995-2001) and an economic architect of industrial planning in that city's famous Pudong New Zone. Huang became Vice-mayor of Chongqing in 2001 and Deputy Party Secretary in 2009, then Mayor of the city in 2010. During 2009-2010, the US electronics and computing firm

Hewlett-Packard, the Taiwanese semi-conductor manufacturer Foxconn, and the German chemical producer BASF all set up operations in Chongqing's Liangjiang New Zone. In these ways, like Shanghai's Pudong, the city's economy grew to encompass a range of state-owned and multinational manufacturing concerns. In June 2011, Henry Kissinger visited Chongqing and met with executives from leading firms among a reported 500 US companies operating there (Kissinger also took part in one of Bo Xilai's mass 'Sing Red' choral events and praised the city's achievements). Chongqing's largest heavy industry SOE is the Chongqing Iron and Steel Group. Established in 1890 as the Hanyang Iron Plant in Wuhan, the major city on the central plain of the Yangtze River, it was relocated to Chongqing in the 1930s. In 2010, this state-run corporation established the Chonggang Minerals Development Investment Ltd, a joint venture with the Chongqing Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation Group. It secured supplies of iron ore by purchasing a majority interest in SINOM Ltd, a Hong Kong-listed company which through its subsidiary Asia Steel Holdings owns a sixty percent stake in the Extension Hill Magnetite Project in Western Australia. Such complex corporate structures were supported by China's emerging financial services industries. They illustrate how Chinese companies have retooled historic industries using state and semi-private capital to take advantage of global production chains.

Major new investment and the relocation of production capacities in central China may appear counterintuitive: China's export industries have flourished largely in the country's coastal areas, in particular the Pearl River Delta and Shanghai. However, new rail capacity has overcome the 'tyranny of distance'. In July 2011, a Eurasian rail service opened with a line linking Chongqing to Duisburg, Germany. The first freight train carrying laptops and LCD screens from Chongqing to Duisburg traveled 11,179 kilometres in just thirteen days, cutting by more than half the average container shipping time between China and Europe and giving Chongqing a competitive advantage over the coastal hubs. As Henry Kissinger learned during his tour, one out of three laptops being manufactured in the world is now assembled in Chongqing.

Red Roofing in Guangzhou

In the summer of 2010, the Guangzhou city government suddenly informed residents in several areas of the city that the roofs of their apartment buildings had to be renovated. Flat roofs would be augmented with PVC boards so that passers-by would be given the illusion that they were sloped, red-tiled roofs. Part of an unprecedented beautification project, they were designed to impress the hundreds of thousands of international visitors expected to flock into the city for the Asian Games later that year. The move reminded flabbergasted residents, who in some cases protested by occupying their rooftops (although to no avail), that neither middle-class status nor the city's image as open and urbane had diminished the capacity of the government to intervene in their lives, as it had in the Mao era.

Like Chongqing, the Pearl River Delta, funnelling through the heart of Guangdong province, and its provincial capital, Guangzhou, has been at the centre of debates surrounding Chinese urbanization and nation building. As the first region to open to the outside world, the delta has also been a testing ground for new political and economic models. The region is also notorious for showcasing the darker side of the economic boom: sprawling urbanisation, a highly mobile migrant population, labour conflicts, conflicts over land use and development, and woeful air and water quality.

Today, the Pearl River Delta contains nine major cities, all of which have little in common with the riverine rural society of the past. The cities of Guangzhou and Shenzhen are among the wealthiest in the country and nearby Dongguan and Foshan are rapidly becoming key provincial manufacturing centres. To urban planners the integration of these cities seems



In the summer of 2010, the Guangzhou municipal government augmented the flat roofs of old apartment buildings with PVC boards so that passers-by would be given the illusion that they were sloped, red-tiled roofs.
Source: Singsupplies.com



Guangzhou's new central business district.
Source: flickr/Arkiben

like an ideal way to increase efficiencies and boost the regional economy. Since the 1980s, economic growth has relied on rapid urbanization; both local and national planners envisage the whole area becoming one vast conurbation: a mega-city of forty-plus million people. There have been modest attempts to integrate service networks in healthcare, transportation and communication across the disparate metropolitan areas; for the most part they remain concentrated in the cities. Large areas of the region remain at least administratively rural.

Cities of national significance like Guangzhou lobby to be included in rankings and lists compiled by the central government to acknowledge their relative standing in the national urban modernization project. Guangzhou was named a 'National Central City' in 2010 and a 'National Civilized City' in 2011. Such labels have limited practical significance. But they reveal the expectation of the central government that urban areas and local administrations will guide and direct modern city life in the name of 'civilization' (*wenming* 文明), a concept with a complex history in East Asia.

As in Chongqing, 'image engineering' is taken very seriously by the government of Guangzhou. In 2010, Guangzhou issued a 'thirty-two word slogan' to encapsulate the 'special characteristics' of the 'Guangzhou way'. The Guangzhou advertising-cum-propaganda push conceptualized the region's particular culture and traditions in terms of 'Lingnan culture', a metonym for the lands south of the Lingnan mountain range, the traditional geographical divide of north and

Constructing Civilization

(*wenming jianshe* 文明建设)

Introduced into the Chinese language from Japan following the Meiji restoration in the nineteenth century, the word 'civilization' (*wenming* or *bunmei* in Japanese) has a range of meanings in China, from civilized to civilization, as well as compliant and restrained; it is sometimes used merely to mean 'polite'.

Ye Jianying (d. 1986), former Vice-president of the People's Republic and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, first used the expression 'Building Socialist Spiritual Civilization' (*shehuizhuyi jingshen wenming jianshe* 社会主义精神文明建设 – often shortened to *wenming jianshe* 文明建设) in a speech at an official gathering commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic in 1979.

The speech was highly significant. Delivered when the country was still struggling to recover from the devastations of the Cultural Revolution, the speech, approved by other senior leaders including Deng Xiaoping, noted the importance of economic goals, but it stressed the need to foster a 'socialist spiritual civilization' to match China's material achievements. Party ideologists called the concept a significant development of orthodox Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. In 1986, the government formally launched a program to 'build spiritual civilization', the core elements of which included patriotism, socialist moral codes (fidelity to the Party, its goals and rules and regulations) and basic civility. In the 1930s, the then-ruling Nationalist Party had pursued a similar campaign under the rubric of the 'New Life Movement'.

Since the 1980s, Chinese officialdom has used the word 'civilization'/*wenming* in a variety of political contexts, ranging from rhetorical statements about Marxism to campaigns to create 'civilized cities' (*wenming chengshi* 文明城市) in which everything from littering and spitting in public to all forms of anti-social behavior are policed and outlawed. In 2006, China's Internet regulatory authorities ordered websites to censor objectionable content and 'build websites in a civilized way' (*wenming banwang* 文明办网).

south. The list of special characteristics notes that Guangzhou was China's first international port; it even boasts a mosque dating from the seventh century, and merchants have used the place as a base for trade throughout Asia. The list also refers to more contemporary ambitions to improve the city's ecology and environment. To achieve these 'civilising goals', but more importantly to accommodate increased residential density and reduce its environmental footprint, the city was to be re-oriented along two new axes that cut against the original layout of Guangzhou. The plans support high-rise buildings; predictably, Guangzhou is planning a series of buildings aimed at being among China's tallest. Among them is the Canton Tower designed by the Dutch architects Mark Hemel and Barbara Kuit of Information Based Architecture together with Arup. Its observation deck, spectral night lighting, and curvilinear design have turned what is little more than a giant TV antenna into a local and, it is hoped, international icon.

In contrast to Chongqing, the greening of Guangzhou has adopted a somewhat more democratic edge. Local authorities invited residents to help select plants from a list of one hundred specimens to be used for urban landscaping. In 2010, the city spent nearly 160 million *yuan* on potted plants and flowers for the decoration of roads and highways. The pots were interspersed with kapok trees (*Ceiba pentandra*), the striking orange-red blooms of which are the official city flower – despite not being native to China. The kapok tree, named after its fibrous seedpods, arrived in the era of the early trans-Pacific trade generated by the colonisation of South America. It eventually became the local 'hero tree' for its red color, the symbol of revolutionary Guangzhou in the 1920s when the Communists and the Nationalists constituted a united front against local warlords. In 2011, Guangzhou announced a plan to plant 1,400 kapok trees at key points around the city.

Behind all of these grand, cosmetic gestures, the 'civilising' of the Pearl River Delta has also relied on massive land grabs, forced dispossessions and the demolition of large tracts of old housing stock. For years the

Hong Kong Dogs (*Xianggang gou* 香港狗)

versus Mainland Locusts (*Dalu huangchong* 大陆蝗虫)

On 15 January 2012, a young Mandarin-speaking girl dropped some snack noodles on the floor of a carriage in a Hong Kong mass-transport subway train. In poor Mandarin, a local Cantonese speaker protested about the mess to the girl's family, who argued back, drawing more passengers to join in. In the middle of the quarrel, a Hong Kong woman shouted: 'No use trying to reason with mainlanders, they are always like that.'

The incident, recorded on a mobile phone and uploaded online, generated heated discussion among mainland Chinese and Hong Kong people alike. Are mainlanders all uncouth slobs? Why are Hong Kong people so snobbish? Commenting on an Internet video program, Kong Qingdong, a professor of Chinese at Peking University, said that some people in the former British colony were nothing but 'dogs' with the mindset of a colonised people.

Contributing to the mutual antagonism is what some Hong Kong people perceive as being the abuse by mainlanders of the former British colony's relatively plentiful resources and well-managed amenities. Every year, tens of thousands of pregnant women cross the border from the mainland to give birth in Hong Kong's hospitals in order to take advantage of its superior and publicly-funded health care and to give their children permanent residency in Hong Kong. Mainlanders also go to Hong Kong to shop for luxury and common goods alike, attracted by both the guarantee of quality and lower prices. Some Hong Kong shops have offered mainlanders special treatment: in January 2012, about a thousand Hong Kong residents protested in front of a Dolce & Gabbana store, accusing the owners of discriminating against locals by banning them from taking photos in front of the store while allowing heavy-spending mainlanders free rein with their cameras. A 2008 powdered milk scandal in the mainland that caused infant sickness and some deaths, continues to fuel powdered milk buy-ups by mainlanders in Hong Kong, resulting in shortages. The visible presence of such 'bulk buyers' on the MTR trains, returning to the mainland, contributes to tensions. On 1 February 2012, some Hong Kong citizens paid for a full-page advertisement in a local newspaper complaining about 'locusts', a derogatory reference to the Hong Kong-visiting mainland mothers.

Guangzhou government has been at odds with rural landowners whose farms have been surrounded and forcibly absorbed into the expanded cities. Dozens of 'villages in the city' (*chengzhong cun* 城中村) dot the map. These 'villages' are enclaves of rural land that the villagers sometimes still own collectively. They consist for the most part of substandard apartment buildings that provide cheap rental housing to migrant workers. With narrow alleys and poor sanitation, they appear as holdouts against the modern city. Evictions by developers are not always successful and well-organized opposition from the original inhabitants has meant that large payouts have been made to some villagers, including cash and flats or houses in the new developments. In Guangzhou alone, fifty-two out of 138 urban villages are scheduled for 'redevelopment' during 2011-2015.

A major challenge to plans for the integration of the Pearl River Delta remains the physical fragmentation of the region. Different from London or Tokyo and more like Los Angeles, the delta is an urban area with multiple centres, where localities compete as much as they collaborate, and where many of the metropolitan areas are themselves geographically fragmented. The creation of a mega-city is not merely a matter of reshaping roofs or lining trees with potted plants. Travelling around the region it is easy to appreciate that anything more than the rationalisation of local services can only be achieved through provincial-level government action.

South China's growing mega-city welds the core areas of the Pearl River Delta discussed above with the Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative regions. The proposed integration of the former British and Portuguese colonies into mainland China's communications and transport networks are particularly controversial in Hong Kong. Local activists and others are wary of seeing Hong Kong incorporated into a vast national project. Shortly after moving from his earlier administrative position in Chongqing, the present Guangdong provincial Party Secretary, Wang Yang, suggested that Guangdong should become China's 'shop' while the hinterland could be the country's 'factory'; Guangdong would to all intents and purposes usurp the role of Hong Kong. Transportation is the key



Front page of *The Dongguan Times* featuring Guangdong Provincial Party Secretary Wang Yang. Source: *Dongguan Times*, 21 June 2012

to these integrative moves. As Jeremy Goldkorn notes in Chapter 7 of this book, the national railway project was set back by the Wenzhou rail disaster in mid 2011. After the head of China's railways was sacked for corruption in 2011, the Hong Kong government continued to guarantee high-speed rail services across the delta by funding the most expensive railway in the world, a tunnel line that will, when it opens in 2015, cover the twenty-six kilometres between Hong Kong and Shenzhen at the border with China in twelve minutes.

With large areas of land still controlled by local governments and village collectives, large-scale planning entails complex negotiations. The municipal government is often able to carry out its plans only at a very high cost, or after reaching compromises with and effectively strengthening local power-holding elites. Local party cadres often debate about whether integration is really possible. For instance, an expensive cross-township bike rental system was scrapped because the two cities could not come to an agreement on the kind of locks that were to be used to safeguard the bikes. Some locals insist that integration will only be a reality when a unified mobile telephone network replaces the numerous local networks that frustrate easy telecommunication.

In late 2011, local disputes over land seizures in the delta made international headlines when the villagers of Wukan protested against local Party developers who had been involved in the illegal sale of collective land without recompense. The villagers forced the provincial authorities to launch an inquiry and promise to return some of the appropriated

Little Yueyue 小悦悦

In October 2011, three-year-old Wang Yue, nicknamed Yueyue, wandered out of her house in Foshan, Guangdong province. She walked into the street next to a neighbouring market and was run over by a van. A few minutes later she was run over again by another vehicle. By the time a woman stopped to help the girl, eighteen other passers-by had ignored the critically injured toddler. Once in hospital Yueyue was put on life support but died soon after.

Footage from a surveillance camera that caught the whole incident was uploaded to the Internet, causing nationwide outrage, and soul searching: How could eighteen people ignore an injured child? A heated debate broke out in the media and online about why people in China avoid doing good deeds. Fear of being a good Samaritan in China is rampant as there have been many reported cases of victims extorting money from those who have helped them or accusing them of causing the accident.

land. The conflict also culminated in the election of the protest leader as the new village head. This episode, one of many such conflicts around the country that otherwise seldom reach the headlines, was hailed by international and domestic media as a sign that Guangdong was adopting a more liberal attitude towards the protection of the rights of its farmers. Like the concerns in Wukan, most conflicts over rural 'land grabs' are about illegal dispossession and unjust compensation.

As in dynastic times, provincial and regional military leaders are rotated between posts in order to reduce their ability to build up local power bases. The system also guarantees that leaders have experiences running different parts of the country before being promoted to national positions. For an ambitious party leader, a successful stint running the delta can be a stepping-stone to a national political role. Wang Yang is regarded as being aligned with the faction around Party General Secretary Hu Jintao. Wang Yang, like Bo Xilai, was able to use his city as a kind of urban spectacle by which he promoted his ideas (and by association himself) on the national arena.

The 'Cake Debate'

Chongqing and Guangzhou have loomed large in the national debate about the future of China. At stake in the contest between Chongqing and Guangdong were strategies for urban development as well as approaches to ruling the country as a whole. In 2011, the symbolic politics of the two places inspired what was dubbed the 'cake debate'. It was the first time Communist Party leaders used the media to air contesting visions of regional development. In Chongqing, Bo Xilai advocated a more equitable distribution of the wealth generated by the county's economic boom – 'dividing the cake' among the deserving and needy, whereas Wang Yang, the Party Secretary of Guangdong province, promoted continued economic growth in the Pearl River Delta region – 'making an even bigger

cake'. Bo's formulation drew on historic socialist ideals and the way they intersect with contemporary concerns about increasing income inequality, a problem that had become so serious that the government stopped publicizing statistics about the distribution of wealth. Bo proposed the redistribution of wealth through government funding of programs for the public good including the provision of low-cost housing for migrant workers. Referring to Deng Xiaoping's pragmatic acknowledgement that in a market economy some people will become rich first, in July 2011 Bo said: 'some people in China have indeed become rich first, so we must seek the realisation of common prosperity.' A week later Wang Yang responded that: 'division of the cake is not a priority right now. The priority is to make the cake bigger.' This in essence was the 'cake debate'.

The clash of models and the 'cake debate' saw an unprecedented media-fueled conjuncture of national politics, urban planning and contending regional visions in the lead up to the 2012-2013 power transition. While Wang Yang in Guangdong called for continued growth while warning about the limits of self-promotion, Bo Xilai spotlighted the extremes of inequality in Chongqing and the need for greater social equity. In July 2011, the Party Committee of Chongqing adopted a resolution to reduce inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient from 0.45 to 0.35 and highlighted the serious 0.65 figure in Guangdong. Bo also invited members of the Politburo Standing Committee which rules China to Chongqing to witness his achievements.

The 'cake debate' that featured Bo as a champion of egalitarianism and Wang as the paladin of liberalisation camouflaged the important contribution that national-level city planners and thinkers have made to China's overall economic and social innovation. The clash of visions

The 'Cake Debate' (*dangao lun* 蛋糕论)

The 'cake debate' was one public aspect of the competition between the Chongqing and Guangdong models that played out in the Chinese and international media. Where Guangdong Party leader Wang Yang would uphold the liberal aspects of Deng Xiaoping's reform strategy, making the economic cake as big as possible, the Chongqing Model focused on how to divide the cake (allocate the profits of rapid growth more equitably). The contrasting views reflect a central dilemma of China's economy: is it more important to distribute wealth or to grow the economy at any cost?

and regional plans show how regional Party leaders project their power through real and symbolic projects. Yet whether in Chongqing or Guangdong, part of what makes a fascinating challenge to our understanding of China is the economic processes unfolding in the country's new cities. By contrast to the economic path followed by advanced industrial economies in which agriculture gave way to manufacturing followed by services industries, the speed of development in China has meant that agriculture, mining, manufacturing and services industries often develop simultaneously and intertwine in ways that have significant implications for social change.

The 'cake debate' was also significant because it unfolded far beyond the traditional halls of power in Beijing, and it was widely discussed in the media. Many observers in China and overseas praised the openness of this 'city competition' in which two governing styles and economic alternatives have been allowed to present such different models for development. Wang became the spokesman for what was loosely termed a 'liberal camp' and Bo the champion of a form of re-jigged socialism. Yet even as the debate suggested possible future directions for other regions and even the country as a whole, it failed to identify clearly political and economic challenges or proffer effective solutions. Nor did it invite different, dissenting or even more nuanced views. Ultimately, the debate gave the 'Chongqing Model' an edge since it appeared to trump the Pearl River Delta with its uneven development and increasing income inequality. It was also effectively a critique of Wang Yang, since Wang was Bo Xilai's predecessor in Chongqing.

In February 2012, the Chongqing chief of public security Wang Lijun, who had previously led the 'Strike Black' anti-crime campaign, turned up at the US Consulate in Chengdu for a highly unusual visit. Wang ultimately left the consulate 'on his own volition'. He was ushered off to the capital to undergo what the official media initially described as 'vacation-style therapy' on grounds that he had suffered some kind of nervous collapse brought on by overwork. The spectacle of the



Guangzhou city centre as viewed from Hua'n'an bridge.
Source: flickr/Sam Gao

event – dozens of Chinese security vehicles had surrounded the US Consulate – spread rapidly on the Internet and via mobile phone microblogs and SMS messaging. Reports on both sides of the Pacific suggested that Wang had considered seeking asylum. Some reports claimed that he deposited incriminating documents with US consular staff. As a result Wang Lijun emerged as a pivotal figure in the unfolding drama of the 2012–2013 Dragon Year of political transition. Shortly before his visit to the US Consulate Wang had been dramatically removed from his post as public security chief and reassigned, allegedly as the result of having confronted Bo Xilai with evidence that Bo's wife, Gu Kailai, was

involved in the death of the British businessman Neil Heywood. Wang had previously come under official investigation for corruption in an earlier position in a different city. While Wang disappeared into Party-imposed 'therapy', the media revealed Bo Xilai vacationing in a different way, in Kunming, Yunnan province – the base of the Yunnan military region established during the Sino-Japanese War by Bo Yibo, his exalted father, on whom his legacy has depended. In such incidents the historic landscape comes to life and underscores how cities transmit significant, complex symbolic meanings in China's critically decisive national debates.

Soon a terse official statement announced that Bo himself had been relieved of his duties and put under investigation. Government-organized mass singing events were cancelled and whatever had been 'red' in Chongqing began to fade. In 2011, Chongqing Satellite TV had been taken over by the local government, turned into a public interest channel and been forced to drop commercial advertising. In the wake of Bo Xilai's fall, the station quietly returned to its former advertising-supported format. In the following weeks, international media followed up the multiple strands of the mysterious, lurid story involving Bo, Gu, Wang, Heywood and, tangentially, Bo and Gu's 'playboy' son, Harvard University student Bo Guagua. Journalists traced leads between China, the UK and the US in pursuit of the truth behind this deadly Chinese Communist soap opera.

Meanwhile, domestic reports on Chongqing's massive security apparatus hinted at allegations that officials had wiretapped the phones of members of China's national leadership while they were in the city, including President Hu Jintao. Reports of deep fault-lines in 'red Chongqing' began to emerge, including accounts that lower level officials had disagreed vehemently with Bo's policies and shocking allegations of abuses of authoritarian power by Bo and his followers.

The central government appointed as Bo's interim successor Zhang Dejiang, a Vice-premier and Politburo member who had preceded Wang Yang as Party Secretary in Guangdong. On 16 March, the Chongqing People's Congress approved an additional thirty billion *yuan* investment for the city's automobile industry in a signal of confident support for the economy-as-usual. By May, the Chongqing government began to erase all evidence of Bo-era slogans and campaigns, and the Chongqing Urban Planning Exhibition Hall, the largest in the country, closed an entire floor showcasing the 'Chongqing Model'.

