

Out of an old ruin: urbanization with the predominance of nation

Abstract: This article aims to discuss the form of urbanization under governmental predominance, it's based on the field work of 5·12 earthquake disaster area—Sichuan Nanba. The reconstruction of this area depends on the national government's guidance, however, the effect of urbanization in the nation vision is different from local urbanization expression. Thus, on one hand, the article characters the top-down form of urbanization triggered by post-disaster reconstruction; on the other hand, it explores the interaction between the populace and the government, and how the populace response the nation's urbanization construction in the bottom-up resisting and adapting way

Key word: reconstruction governmental urbanization

REBORN FROM THE RUNIS: SPECIAL “URANIZATION”

“The earthquake makes my hometown moving forward for fifty years at least.” A resident from Nanba said. When I first came into Nanba in July 2012, this town has been rebuilt less than a year. I saw a new neat fine designed community with straight cement streets which have row upon row of three-story buildings densely arranged on both sides. Because of the government's unified planning, the buildings look exactly the same, white walls, launched into the eaves of the four corners; and the roofs were covered with the same gray glazed tile. Just like other ordinary cities, there are street lamps of every 15meters on both sides of the main street, and under the street lamps, there are classification garbage can painted with green and yellow. The whole town is clearly divided into different functional zones: residential areas, commercial areas, leisure square and Sightseeing Avenue etc; the residential area has houses arranged in order and there are rectangular nurseries around every house; the commercial area full of every kinds of shops and stores which are all constructed similar to antique buildings, and it even has a pedestrian street with length of about 500meters; the leisure square covers an area of about 1200 square meters, has a particular space for outdoor fitness equipment; the sightseeing road outspread along the river, and the asphalt road which leading to the outside world is so flat and neat. These entire things make Nanba seem to be the “new rural construction” model which has a typical urbanization trend. The traditional Chinese rural scenes have no trace to be found in here.

Nanba town is located in southeast of Pingwu County, Sichuan province. It is the intersection point of Jiuhuan road and Chengqing road and the junction of Fujiang river and Shikan river. Nanba was the location of antique Longzhou county in South Song dynasty, and it has been called “ancient Lingzhou” or “ancient Jiangyou barrier.” The administrative area of Nanba is 326 square kilometers. There are 26 administrative villages, 1 community in Nanba, and the population is 23.5 thousand. Nanba is the second largest bureau of Pingwu County. This town has 1 middle school, 3 central primary school, 2 kindergarten and 1 health center. The mineral resources in this area are abundant, Manganese ore and quartz ore are huge reserved, these make Nanba as an important industrial base of Pingwu. The main crops in Nanba are corn, rice wheat and potatoes and economic trees are mainly walnut, silkworm, ginkgo and biloba. Nanba is also a famous walnut base in Pingwu. Before the earthquake happened in 5.12, 2008, Nanba is an economic center and a commodity distributing center because it has convenient transportation and rich agricultural products and mineral resources. The main economic source in Nanba is divided into two parts, and the dominant industry is Mining especially the production and processing for manganese powder, the other source of income from the production of agricultural products. Nanba is surrounded by mountains, and lack of peddy fields. After returning farmland to forest just depending on the governmental suggestion, people`s income from agricultural production has reduced, and the proportion of commercial circulation increased.

Economy in Nnaba before the earthquake has already no longer relied solely on the value of agricultural production. The development of industry, economic crops and the commercial circulation indicated that Nanba has already in a stage of urbanization. From the existing images and interviews, we can see what the daily life Nanba people used to live before the earthquake: most residents in Nanba lived in house in wooden structure with a small courtyard, and the township was in a transition gradually from the market to the business district while the public infrastructures such as street lights, rubbish can has not put into the street yet. In summary, residents in Nanba lived a life which is slightly closed but leisurely.

however, the astonishing earthquake known as Wenchuan earthquake happened in may 12 ,2008 destroyed everything. Nanba belonging to one of the most severely affected areas, 1343 people died, missing 1 person. The houses were almost all damaged. Enterprises all collapsed and inundated in subsequent mudslides. Nanba turned to a veritable ruin.

Nanba`s reconstruction was completely depended on the planning and organization of national government. Pingwu County invited Urban Planning and Design Institute of Chongqing University to develop a plan for the reconstruction and development of Nanba. In the project proposal named of < Reconstruction plan for Nanba (2008-2015)> positioned the target of Nanba reconstruction is to develop this town to a place of historical interest and a trade center in the southeast Pingwu. The economic development would base on agroforestry and lead by industrial concentration area, take advantage of the rich mineral resources. Nanba would speed up industrial development, increase the level of industrialization; While township need to focus on the development of cultural tourism, dig deeper into the historical and cultural heritage, speed up the development of tourism; increase the intensity of urban construction, further improving the urban planning; accelerate the development of characteristic agriculture by seize the advantage of walnut producing. The specific project of Nanba reconstruction has overall charged by Tangshan City, Hebei Province which was the counterparts reconstruction units appointed by nation government for Nanba.

Analyzed for above development plan, the expectation to Nanba`s urbanization form national government is very clear: Build up a wholly new tourist town while taking the original advantages to develop industrial center, and eventually reach the prosperity of market economy. Obviously, the reconstruction of the Nanba with such plan would present obvious characteristics of city. In fact, four years later, Nanba looks just like the perfect presentation of the original planning, everything is so advanced and full of modern flavor, there is no wonder the local residents would statement like the very beginning of this article.

However, for Nanba, urbanization was a natural slow social change process and

broken by the earthquake as a mutation. In the process of reconstruction, from planning to implementation, Nanba was totally under control of national government. In terms of the local residents, they need to face a place which is as familiar as their homeland and also as strange as a whole new city. Lack of natural change makes Nanba experienced a special course of urbanization. From anthropology perspective, urbanization refers to the interaction of urban and rural society, closely linked to modernisation and industrialisation. In this process, rural culture and urban culture fusion contact with each other, resulting in the ideal of an integrated society which contains the ingredients of the rural civilization and the ingredients of city civilization.

For Nanba, the new town built up on the ruins is a result of special urbanization leading by the national government; its infrastructure, public space, as well as regional industrial have undergone tremendous change during the 4 years reconstruction. In this period of time, the local residents have just recovered from the trauma of the earthquake and began to lead a normal life. Their lifestyle, the way of thinking, are impossible adapt to the new environment immediately, therefore, a process of debugging from bottom to top would appear in Nanba. The rest of this article presents from the change of private space which is most closely associated with individuals` lifestyle, further to elaborated the situation that Nanba residents to adjust and adapt to new public space, as well as how regional industrial restructuring related to the local social and cultural environment.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE PRIVETE SPACE

Anthropologists are accustomed to depict society through studying the family in it. Life experience of individual and the change of family often indicate the change of society, and private space is so important to the family, a imperceptible change of private space could also present the change of family`s daily life. Thus, the transformation of private space in Nanba after reconstruction directly presents the influence to the local society form the “sudden” urbanization. For Nanba which experienced destruction of the earthquake and the reconstruction under governmental planning, changed of family life before and after the earthquake affect every

individual, and has thus indicate social changes in details.

Changes in private living space are the most significant change in the daily life for the residents in Nanba. House in Nanba before the earthquake are experiencing the transformation from wooden structure to the storied building, some richer families have just built up two or three---storied building while most families still lived in the wooden flat house with a little yard. The residents considered that storied building was a symbol of modernization and a mark of better life while the wooden structure of the house was a symbol of tradition and poverty. Most Nanba families have own a small yard which often have poultry livestock fences, toilets, warehouses, etc., and some families planted a bit of fruit trees or corn in the yard. In the reconstruction plan made by national government, the buildings in Nanba were unified to three—storied with the same color tiles, doors and windows. This kind of residence is full of modernity, live in the buildings without yard , all the daily life need to be done inside the house, This kind of lifestyle in the city seem to take for granted, but need adaptation process for people in Nanba.

In fact, on one hand, compared with the past, most of residents think their residence are more “modern” and “lavish”, on the other hand, they could not fully adapt the life inside the building. In this situation, they adjusted in various ways to solve this “inappropriate.” There is a very interesting case in my survey: Ms Tang lived in Houping village, near the center of the town, construct her own three -storied house in the three years after the earthquake. She likes to keep house clean and neat and her new house is really meet her need with more sealed structure, However, Ms Tang who really cannot tolerate the toilet turned out in the interior of the house even it has a complete sewer system. Ms Tang felt unable to adapt this settlement pattern, therefore, she shut down the toilet inside the house and established a new one on a little space outside the house. “How can people use the toilet inside the house? It `s so dirty and smelly.” Tang said. With the gradually loosen up to the deregulate house construction in this year, many families in Nanba began to open up a small courtyard to plant fruit trees and maize, and there are lots of people built kitchen and toilet beside their house, separated with the main living area.

The change of residence also makes the local family relationship occur to change, which is mainly reflected in the allocation of living space. As noted earlier in this article, the original local residence is mostly bungalow with courtyard; most of families are the nuclear families, usually, sons after married would separate from their parents and built up their own house. There are also appeared the situation that married children live with their parents, the open courtyard bungalows could be able to retain relatively independent space for parents and married children, and even be able to achieve “live in together, not cook together.”

After the earthquake, the major change in this regard is: with expensive cost of the new house, family members often needed to chip in to build the house, and parents often put their own governmental grants to subsidize their children, and move to live with them, thus, most nuclear family changed into expand family. The original expand families are also experienced the change due to the residence changed from the open courtyard to closed house, the narrowing living space makes elderly and young generation hardly accustomed to the new lifestyle after earthquake. The relation between intergenerations are come to intensify. During my research, there is a case:

“Mr Zeng is about 60 years old, I first met him in Hejiaba village, not far from the township, he was watering vegetables on a small piece of farmland, besides the farmland there was a shelter covered with plastic shack. I was curious about the living conditions of this old man, and then went to interview, I did not expect he talked with reddening eyes and choked voice. He said his daughter-in-law had a bad heart, and his only son was a coward and never protect his old father. Before the earthquake, Mr Zeng and his son lived in the courtyard and separated in living space, it had no difficult to get along with his daughter-in-law. After the earthquake, the loan was only enough for his son to built house, and Mr Zeng needed to live with his son and the daughter-in-law, because of the closed, narrowing space, the conflict between him and his daughter in law is increasingly intensified. He opened up a small vegetable plot in the original land of his own home which now a empty land and trying to stay in the shelter during the day.”

Although the case is just an extreme example, this phenomenon is very common in

today's Nanba, many of my informants revealed that family relationship has changed after the earthquake which due to the change of residence. The change of relationship is not necessarily the intensification of conflicts on intergenerational relationships; some informants felt the family members became more intimate after the earthquake because of the closed residence.

The change of private residence is the transition from the open courtyard to enclosed buildings is indeed a sign of rural urbanization, private space changes came too suddenly and lack of natural process to change for Nanba. For most of families in Nanba, the residence changed directly from courtyard to building while lifestyle are not able to changed directly from countryside to city, so people spontaneous adjustment living space. Due to changes in residence, the changing relationships of family is also the reaction of people for a psychologically suited to lifestyle changes. People need to make adjustments in their personal lives to accommodate private space changed from the rural mode to the urban mode. The expectation from national government to the affection of urbanization can be reflected in the private residential, but people also need to bear some of the byproducts of this particular way of urbanization and made the adjustment.

In Nanba, some public facilities have never been used. The streetlamps are the first thing that reminded the author of this. In the first night in Nanba, I went out for a walk accompanied by a local reporter. I felt that everything there was quiet and beautiful, just like an ordinary rural area. I did not notice until I almost returned to my dwelling place that the whole town was in darkness, and the well-designed streetlamps seen in the daytime did not work. "No streetlamp is needed here. Unlike your city with night life, people here would watch TV or play mah-jongg at 7:00 or 8:00 at night, and no one would go out, so the streetlamps are useless." My reporter explained, in the subsequent work, local residents were not found to express any dissatisfaction with this and generally thought, "We have been used to a town without streetlamps for many years and can live without them." Of course, the streetlamps are not used not only because they are not needed, but also because the local government would spend considerable electricity and maintenance costs on the streetlamps if they were put into use, thereby posing a certain financial pressure for Nanba that has not been rehabilitated economically after the earthquake. I have heard a similar statement in the interview with a government official, "This is not a city and few people go out at night. There is only one street here and a flashlight is enough. We are all used to living without streetlamps." The leisure square is treated as indifferently as the streetlamps. For a city, a square is a place for public gathering,

recreation and leisure, and an essential place to a sophisticated and complete city. The leisure square here is large, and provided with parking spaces, stone benches and tables, and an outdoor fitness space. However, except large publicity activities held occasionally by the government, the square and outdoor fitness apparatus have been rarely used by residents, and no public activity has been organized voluntarily. My reporter's attitude to the square is, "This square was built in memory of the May 12 earthquake. Everyone has work to do in the daytime and play mah-jongg at night. Moreover, there are fountains, stalls and rich activities (dancing, etc.) on city squares, while there is even no lamp on this square." Compared to city squares, the square in Nanba is obviously functioning as intended.

Not all new public facilities are useless. Public spaces in Nanba are clean and tidy, domestic waste is not dumped disorderly, and sorted waste bins on road sides have been fully utilized. After the earthquake, Nanba has been constructed as a city, and domestic waste has been disposed of properly. In particular, after construction helpers from Hebei Province have donated a waste collection vehicle, the local government has built a landfill in a remote place to destroy waste centrally with its own investment. Local residents strongly welcome such new things as the waste collection vehicle and waste bins. The waste collection vehicle works twice a weekly, and would run through the residential area from 7:00 in the morning of every Tuesday and Friday. At every road crossing, residents who have heard its music would bring out domestic waste and dump it onto the vehicle. Local residents have a strong sense of public health maintenance, and disorderly waste dumping is rarely seen. In addition, a cleaner has been employed after the earthquake, who is responsible for cleaning the large, cleaner leisure square, while the commercial street and residential area is cleaned by residents themselves. When talking about people's sense of public health, my reporter said, "I think that our town is much cleaner after the earthquake, because the state has planned our town properly, so no one will dump waste on such a beautiful new street, and we have known from the earthquake that bad hygiene would affect people's health, and we were afraid of the dissemination of any plague then. Today, all people are paying attention to this."

The public infrastructure of Nanba is already sophisticated, because the state has planned this earthquake-hit town as a city. For local residents, though this leapfrog development has brought a modern, advanced feel, this does not mean that they can be fully integrated into this "strange" urban environment. As for the use of public facilities, the streetlamps and leisure square will not be treated like this forever. The author believes that with the economic development and urbanization of Nanba, they will finally work. In today's Nanba, public spaces are still understood from the perspective of public infrastructure construction, but actually, a city's public spaces should also include community organizations and public activities, and have spiritual and mental implications. Currently, local residents do not have such an idea yet. This will change with time.

I. Local industry restructuring

There are many criteria for “urbanization”, such as the proportion of agricultural population and change of lifestyle. However, the most essential criterion is the change of production pattern, namely from one focused on agriculture to a more advanced and efficient one. “The change in production pattern is the radical driver of the birth of cities and rapid urbanization.”¹ The post-disaster reconstruction plan for Nanba specifically proposes the development of characteristic agriculture, intensive industry and tourism. All of these three industries are characterized by urbanization, and will certainly promote regional economic development and urbanization.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, Nanba’s industry and characteristic agriculture already reached a certain scale before the earthquake. However, such industries relied on the local natural environment and were formed in the long process of social development without systematic government planning. After the earthquake, there have been definite, complete development plans for industry and tourism, such as industrial zone design and antique architectural design. Under state planning, Nanba looks vigorous in industry restructuring and suitable for tourism development. However, it is still unknown if Nanba will adapt to the regional industry restructuring dominated by the state and how people will face such sudden change in production pattern.

As one of the few industrial parks in Pingwu County, Nanba Industrial Park has always drawn much attention in Pingwu County and even Mianyang City. The Wenchuan earthquake in 2008 has changed this park dramatically. Before the earthquake, all the 12 enterprises in Nanba were located in Shikan Industrial Zone; after the earthquake, the town government cancelled Shikan Industrial Zone and planned two new ones—Wenjiaba and Tongziliang Industrial Zones, in which Wenjiaba Industrial Zone has accepted the three remaining enterprises in Shikan Industrial Zone after the earthquake—Sichuan Hanyuan Manganese Ore Industry Co., Ltd. Nanba Metallurgical Plant, Hongjian Wood Co., Ltd. and Pingwu Manganese Industry (Group) Co., Ltd., and Tongziliang Industrial Zone will be built into a new industrial park with focus on local characteristic farm products, but has not begun to solicit investors.

These well planned industrial zones have encountered many practical problems after the earthquake. First, after thorough destruction in the earthquake, local enterprises are in a slow restoration process and need government assistance badly. However, due to the shortage of government assistance, no timely and effective support has been available, deepening the conflict between enterprises and the government, and resulting in the underdevelopment of the industrial park. For example, Pingwu Manganese Industry (Group) Co., Ltd. has been unable to obtain a loan from the government so that its new plant has not broken ground yet. Second, there are also many conflicts between enterprises and residents. The planning of the new industrial zones has render existing Shikan Industrial Zone backward, and many local residents are faced with the risk of unemployment. On the other hand, most residents in the existing industrial zone have many grievances due to the acquisition of land for industrial zone construction. Finally, all enterprises feature high

¹ Wang Ying, *Urban Sociology* [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Sanlian Bookstore, 2005. p101.

consumption and pollution in the industrial zones, resulting in such bad consequences as unsound industry mix, unbalanced development, environmental pollution and higher social costs inevitably. To date, there are still many problems in the construction of the industrial zones in Nanba, and several companies have not entered the regular production stage.

Tourism planning is something new for Nanba after the earthquake. Based on the original idea of the local government, a tourism brand with focus on the culture of the Three Kingdoms will be built in Nanba, so the market town will be constructed in an antique architectural style, the streets are planned orderly, and the tourism infrastructure is sound. The government plans to attract visitors with this brand and other characteristic attractions. However, this idea has not been fully turned into reality, many attractions have not been completed or have been suspended of construction due to the lack of subsequent investment, and some completed attractions have not functioned as expected. In Nanba, there are a limited number of visitors and their amount of consumption is low, so the town has not received considerable return on tourism.

Both industry and tourism are the main drivers of Nanba's urbanization planned by the government. The government wishes to make local residents no longer rely on agricultural development and earn greater economic interests through the development of the above two industries. As a result, the whole area will certainly develop faster and be further modernized, thereby realizing rural urbanization radically. However, the industry restructuring after the earthquake relies entirely on state planning, which has failed to fully match local conditions due to the lack of experience of the local government. For Nanba, there is still a long way to go, and industry restructuring based on government planning must be adapted to local conditions to be truly effective.

V. How can a city “falling from the sky” be sustainable?

In Nanba, we see a well planned and highly urbanized small town. However, the long-term fieldwork has told us an opposite fact—people's thinking and the town's actual development level are not sufficient to match the level of government planning, and the practical performance of urbanization dominated by the government is not as expected by the government. At the planning and implementation stages of post-disaster reconstruction of Nanba, due to the urgency of construction tasks, local residents have to accept everything happening on their land passively. However, such “passivity” is not entirely negative. We must see that local people are satisfied with the living environment after the earthquake. The urbanization process dominated by the state is full of “suddenness” other than a “natural” social development process. For local society, only the completion of post-disaster reconstruction signifies the beginning of local people's daily lives and that urbanization begins to take effect. A city may fall from the sky, while people's mental change and regional development have to take place step by step. Seeing today's Nanba, we are likely to think of the statement at the beginning of this article. However, can an earthquake truly make a place move forward for at least fifty years?

