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Leisure as Governable Space: Transcultural Leisure and Governmentality in Urban China

Abstract This chapter explores transcultural leisure development in contemporary China through the analytical lens of government. Drawing on research conducted in small cities and towns in Guizhou Province, the chapter focuses on the conception, construction, and use of new urban leisure spaces, and suggests that we view these as part of the state's spatial apparatus of social ordering. Leisure is thus viewed as part of a suite of governing technologies designed to shape the conduct of China's citizens in particular ways and toward particular normative goals of the state. The chapter explores the transcultural production of leisure in China under these circumstances, and finds that the governmentality of leisure derives from both Chinese and non-Chinese experiences, histories, and discourses of leisure. However, while leisure is promoted in China as a form of social ordering, actual practices of governing through leisure produce effects and outcomes that are both unintended and unpredictable from the perspective of planners, designers, and other governmental agents. These outcomes reveal a tension between the promotion of leisure as a new kind of 'active' citizenship and leisure as an instrument of social control on the part of the state. Viewed as 'governable spaces', then, leisure spaces are anything but straightforward sites for the reproduction of dominant modes of power. Instead, urban leisure spaces are also claimed by urban residents as constitutive of collective urban identities.

Keywords governmentality, governable space, leisure space, urban development, citizenship

Introduction

In his book *Leisure Theory*, Chris Rojek argues that leisure has emerged from its earlier theorization as "a segmented realm of human experience magically insulated from the rest of life," to being viewed as a central component of our daily social lives.[1] We can no longer view leisure, he argues, as a compartmentalized or segregated form of life. "On the contrary, it is in our leisure time that we are exposed to information and policy options regarding the appropriate rights and responsibilities of active citizenship and also to news about the infringement of these conditions."[2] Rojek's effort to resituate leisure from the margins of a social model based on paid employment to a central component of a "post-work" sociology reflects the fact that we now view recreation and leisure as *the* primary area of social life in which central values of care, preservation, and justice are propagated. He thus calls for an equation of leisure with "active citizenship."[3] That is, leisure should play a central role in redefining social inclusion, distributive justice, and empowerment. Instead of a "right to leisure" hinging on one's paid employment status,[4] then, we must "break the work ethic's long association between leisure, hedonism, and the reward for work. A revitalized model of leisure and the community is required, built around the principle of leisure as a primary source of social capital, and voluntary activity in generating and defending social capital as a source of self-worth and distinction."[5] This ultimately means redefining the "model citizen" as constituted through leisure rather than labor.

Rojek's constitution of citizenship through leisure aligns in some interesting ways with contemporary Chinese urban planning, where designs for transforming China's post-socialist urban built environment seem fixated on an exemplary model of an "active leisure citizen" as the ideal urban subject. Not only has leisure become central to the planning and reconstruction of urban space in China, but leisure has also become central to new models of citizenship there as well. Given China's history of appropriating and adapting transcultural approaches to shaping and regulating leisure, such an alignment may not be that far-fetched. In 2010, a Chinese translation of *Leisure Theory* was published by China Tourism Press, joining a rapidly growing body of work in Chinese leisure studies.[6] In fact, however, Rojek's visions of leisure as active citizenship differs in significant

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1 Chris Rojek, *Leisure Theory: Principles and Practices* (London: Palgrave, 2005), 3.
2 Rojek, *Leisure Theory*, 4.
3 Rojek, *Leisure Theory*, 2.
4 The "right to leisure" was at the heart of the *Charter for Leisure* adopted in 2000 by the World Leisure and Recreation Association without, however, explicitly addressing the existing inequalities in access to leisure pursuits. Rojek, *Leisure Theory*, 197.
5 Rojek, *Leisure Theory*, 205.
6 Luojieke 羅傑克 [Rojek], *Xiuxian lilun yuanli yu shixian* 休閒理論原理與實踐 [Leisure theory: Principles and practices], trans. Zhang Lingyun 張凌雲 (Beijing: Zhongguo lüyou chubanshe, 2010).

ways from China, where leisure is approached more as a kind of governing instrument. Although Rojek seeks to firmly establish contemporary leisure within a civil society framework capable of challenging the power of the state and of capital, this potentially subversive transcultural vision of active citizenship is somewhat lost in translation when viewed in the context of Chinese urban planning. Leisure has indeed been valorized in China as a new model of citizenship, but one primarily defined by orderliness and governability. In this, China has also drawn on the transcultural dimensions of leisure, but in this case as a form of social ordering and regulation more than autonomous and self-governing citizenship.

This chapter therefore sets out to apply an analytic of government to the study of leisure development in contemporary China. I am particularly interested, in this endeavor, in examining the obvious tension between Rojek's vision of a socially inclusive, justice-seeking, empowered leisure citizen and what we might conveniently think of as the Chinese state's vision of an orderly, consuming, "harmonious", and above all governable leisure citizen. In viewing leisure—and, in particular, urban leisure space—as a practice of government geared towards regulating the anomic potential of leisure discussed in the "Theoretical Essay" and in the study by Catherine V. Yeh in this volume, I hope to demonstrate how the Chinese state's promotion of leisure consumption, tourism, and recreation can be interpreted as a form of governmentality. That is, the chapter argues that leisure is part of a governmental apparatus designed to shape the conduct of China's citizens in particular ways and toward particular normative goals of the state. The chapter explores the transcultural production of leisure in China under these circumstances, and finds that the governmentality of leisure derives from both Chinese and non-Chinese experiences, histories, and discourses of leisure. However, while leisure is promoted in China as a form of social ordering, actual practices of governing through leisure produce effects and outcomes that are both unintended and unpredictable from the perspective of planners, designers, and other governmental agents. Whether these effects are capable of constituting Rojek's "active citizens," particularly given recent constraints on civic organizations in China,[7] remains to be seen.

Urban leisure space in China

While it may be true that "leisure creates its space" as the "Theoretical Essay" argues, the Chinese state has nevertheless been busy creating spaces for leisure as well. Since the early 2000s, leisure has been built into China's urban landscape in a way that has shifted away from the demarcated tourism and shopping zones of the 1990s to comprehensive plans in which

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7   Andrew Jacobs and Chris Buckley, "In China, Civic Groups' Freedom, and Followers, are Vanishing," *New York Times*, February 26, 2015, A4.

leisure space is a fundamental feature of the urban environment. This shift can be situated within a more general process of cultural development in China in which the state began to recognize the economic power and governmental utility of cultural and leisure production and consumption.[8] The national tourism and leisure planning outline for 2013–2020 called for a comprehensive orientation toward leisure spaces and activities in both urban and rural development.[9] And in 2014, the *People's Daily* claimed that with leisure becoming central to urban and rural infrastructure construction, China had entered a new stage of national development.[10] The vast—and in many ways alienating—public spaces of state socialism (think Tiananmen Square) have given way to consumable spaces of leisure.[11] As Miao and others have pointed out, many of these new leisure spaces serve as little more than window dressing for mayors and governors—referred to in China as *mianzi gongcheng* ("face projects")—that fail to serve the needs of ordinary citizens.[12] Many of these are only quasi-public spaces,[13] serving primarily private commercial interests as extensions of larger gentrification projects.[14]

While much scholarly attention has been directed toward major urban centers like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, China's urbanization push has—at least from a policy perspective—concentrated on the country's thousands of towns and small cities. Mayors of such lower-tier urban centers, as well as district leaders and provincial governors, are eager to demonstrate their urbanization credentials by creating highly visible landscapes that symbolize progress, modernity, and prosperity. Thus, China has recently witnessed a spate of spectacular urban redevelopments in relatively minor towns and cities that represent little more than a lavish waste of public funds in the eyes of many residents. Public squares and refurbished shopping districts are two of the most common elements of these

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8   See Tim Oakes, "Cultural Strategies of Development: Implications for Village Governance in China," *Pacific Review* 19, no. 1 (2006): 13–37; Guo, Yingjie, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary China: The Search for National Identity under Reform* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004); and Jing Wang, "Culture as Leisure and Culture as Capital," *Positions* 9, no. 1 (2001): 69–104.

9   Guowuyuan bangongting 國務院辦公廳 [China State Council], "*Guomin Lüyou Xiuxian Gangyao* (2013–2020 nian) de tongzhi 國民旅遊休閒綱要 (2013–2020 年) 的通知 [Notification on the *National Tourism and Leisure Outline* (2013–2020)]," *Guoban fa* 國辦發 10, 2013, accessed October 2, 2014, http://baike.baidu.com/view/2275169.htm.

10 Liu, Jia 劉佳, "Zhongguo xiuxian fanzhan jinru xin jieduan: guomin xiuxian tixi zheng zhubu xingcheng 中國休閒發展進入新階段 國民休閒體係正逐步形成 [China's leisure development enters a new stage as the national leisure recreation system gradually takes shape]," *Renmin ribao*, October 9, 2014, accessed October 10, 2014, http://travel.people.com.cn/.

11 Piper Gaubatz, "New Public Space in Urban China," *China Perspectives* 4 (2008): 72–83.

12 Pu Miao, "Brave New City: Three Problems in Chinese Urban Public Space since the 1980s," *Journal of Urban Design* 16, no. 2 (2011): 179–207.

13 Weiping Wu and Piper Gaubatz, *The Chinese City* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 243.

14 Miao, "Brave New City," 188–195.

image engineering projects. However, while such "face projects" might be viewed as largely irrelevant to residents' daily leisure lives, planners do tend to imbue their planning with governance objectives of improving population quality and encouraging a more self-determining and autonomous citizenry.[15]

Thus, while there is a significant and growing demand for public leisure space among urban residents in China, and while the state has recognized, responded to, and in many ways guided and even cultivated this demand, many of the country's spectacular new public and quasi-public spaces fail to meet the basic leisure needs of many ordinary people. Throughout urban China, people lay claim to all sorts of spaces, both formal and informal alike, for their leisure practices. While many spaces designed for orderly leisure are indeed actively used, many others are avoided. Why do certain spaces work as public leisure spaces, while others clearly do not? In what ways do people claim spaces for leisure? How do such claims relate to the governance objectives of leisure development? To what extent, in short, do leisure practices in urban China reinforce or subvert the social ordering objectives that the state has defined for leisure development? These questions, and others, were central to research I conducted in Guizhou, in collaboration with local colleagues, between 2012 and 2014. Fieldwork consisted of informal interviews, surveys, and participant-observation among public space users in two urban sites. This chapter focuses primarily on results from one of those two sites.

Danjiang is the seat of Leishan County in Southeast Guizhou's Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture. The town underwent a massive renovation between 2008 and 2012, with two new public squares as dual centerpieces of the new urban plan. Nearly all of the town's buildings were refaced with Miao ethnic motifs, marking a significant shift in the ideological role the townscape has played as a model of urban modernity for the surrounding countryside (Fig. 1). Dating to the eighteenth century, when Qing general Ortai established a garrison during his campaign to suppress the Miao and enforce direct imperial administration, Danjiang was a Han Chinese outpost deep within Miao territory. During the Mao era, it was built over in the typical style of functional modernism: a cluster of unremarkable low-rise cement block buildings. As such, Danjiang, like similar towns throughout Guizhou's ethnic countryside, rendered visible the new modernity of state socialism. It was a space where the rural Miao could literally enter modernity, a space where they would eventually lose their ethnic cultural distinctiveness and give up traditional dress, where they would join the Han and march toward China's bright socialist future.

Leisure was never a deliberate part of this socialist space (which is not to say that there were not plenty of collective leisure activities for residents

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15 Luigi Tomba, *The Government Next Door: Neighborhood Politics in Urban China* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 42, 179.

Figure 1: Original Danjiang house, with dressed-up apartment building behind.

to engage in). But that began to change during post-Mao reforms with the introduction of ethnic tourism throughout the region. Tourism transformed nearby Miao and Dong villages into leisure spaces first for foreigners, and then for urban Chinese tourists. By the mid-2000s, local governments were hoping to capture more tourism revenue by also turning towns and cities throughout the region into leisure spaces. At the same time, planners also began to see leisure not simply as a revenue generating tool, but also as a new technology for the governance of urban populations themselves.

Danjiang's huge makeover project illustrates both of these trends: an effort to turn the town into the branded center of Miao ethnic tourism in the region, and an effort to create a new (leisure) environment for a new kind of (consumer) citizen. One town planner in Danjiang explained to me that development is not just about economic growth, but also includes developing the environment and people's thinking. "We've created a new environment," he said. "It has a big influence on people. If people live in a nice environment, their thinking changes, their quality improves; the environment can create more civilization." He also explained that the reason this had not happened during the Mao era was that the local people could not understand the modernist environment of the socialist city. "The environment needs to come from the local culture," he said. "Otherwise, people cannot relate to it and it won't have the same influence on their thinking. They'll think they don't belong there, like it's a foreign place." Thus, Danjiang's ethnic theming was not merely a branding ploy or face project, in his eyes, but a deliberate project of social engineering. Indeed, while the prefectural government had been advocating a plan to refurbish all the

towns in the region in symbolic ethnic styles in order to promote tourism, Danjiang's efforts were being articulated in much more governmentalized ways. Most significantly, though, the town's social ordering project was being enacted through leisure; that is, through the transformation of the town itself into a single leisure space.

Leisure as ordering: transcultural dimensions

What are the transcultural precedents underlying Danjiang's transformation and its leaders' vision of social ordering through the production of leisure space? To address this question, we must first consider the concept of leisure itself, and how it emerged within a context of what we might think of as nineteenth-century middle-class anxieties over working class idleness. Conventional definitions of leisure tend to reflect this, relying on its separation from labour, and viewing it in normative terms, as a reward for fulfilling one's obligations to society. Joffre Dumazedier, for instance, conceived of leisure as "the time whose content is oriented towards self-fulfillment as an ultimate end. This time is granted to the individual by society, when he has complied with his occupational, family, socio-spiritual and socio-political obligations."[16] This approach relegates leisure to the margins of social inquiry and categorizes it as the residual effect of more fundamental (work-related) social processes and relations. But such an approach also makes leisure potentially transgressive and subversive. As Rojek put it in *Decentering Leisure*:

> Leisure, with its time-worn associations with pleasure and freedom, was welcomed as the reward for work. But an excess of leisure was feared as undermining society. Leisure was always treated as secondary. The Romantic argument that it is only through leisure that we truly enrich ourselves and society was treated as a threat to society precisely because it encouraged a disrespect for the inflexible, time-tabled existence favored by the ruling order.[17]

In this way, leisure is entwined with the social reproduction of capital and is thus critical to contesting that social reproduction. Leisure cannot but be viewed as a constitutive element of social ordering because leisure must remain in good order if society is to function. It is thus a fundamentally contested terrain of social order.

In industrializing Britain, for example, leisure served as part of the mode of regulation that maintained the highly uneven regime of accumulation of industrial capitalism. Leisure time provided a normative institution that

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16 Joffre Dumazedier, *The Sociology of Leisure* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1974), 71.
17 Chris Rojek, *Decentering Leisure: Rethinking Leisure Theory* (London: Sage, 1995), 57.

reinforced dominant bourgeois ideals of civility. Leisure enabled a normative process of naturalization, where individual choice and self-determination (how one used his/her free time) aligned with the needs of a particular social order. One prominent example explored by Rojek is the mid-nineteenth century's Rational Recreation Movement, in which "middle-class fears of moral decay and physical contagion resulted in campaigns to clean up the leisure activities of deserving workers and to instill in them habits of thrift, industry, and self-improvement."[18] Included in the movement were art galleries for the working class, promotion of sport and exercise, parks, and youth organizations. In the United States, the movement with its link to "muscular Christianity" helped spawn the establishment of the YMCA as an institution shaping healthy and moral leisure conduct. The movement promoted what could be called a governmentalized approach to leisure, one in which the conduct of the working class might be "improved," thereby improving the broader social order and stability.[19] Leisurely reading was similarly targeted for the governing of moral conduct, perhaps most prominently by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge and their *Penny Magazine*.

Such self-improvement was in many ways embraced by the working class itself. The moral regulation of leisure, in other words, emanated from multiple agents and sources of power, rather than from a simple top-down application of class power. As E. P. Thompson has pointed out, improvement was something that the working class did to itself as much as was done to it.[20] Pressure for orderly moral conduct among the working class came not only from the factory and the church, but was also exerted by various working class social organizations (such as friendly societies, trade unions, mutual aid associations, and civic organizations) upon themselves. Thompson emphasizes the self-disciplining role of such organizations as fundamental to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century working class formation, and this included the disciplining of working class leisure time. Such discipline included temperance, rules against

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18 Rojek, *Decentering Leisure*, 15.
19 This is not to suggest that the Rational Recreation Movement was a government-sponsored project in any official sense. The movement's primary agents were non-state charitable institutions, not government agencies. It was a governmentalized movement, however, in the sense of government articulated by Rose as "all endeavors to shape, guide, direct the conduct of others, whether these be the crew of a ship, the members of a household, the employees of a boss, the children of a family or the inhabitants of a territory, " see Nikolas Rose, *The Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3. Since the late eighteenth century, the government, properly speaking, had increased its efforts to police urban leisure activities that were deemed criminal and likely to undermine the social order, such as gambling. It did so by developing an urban police force that would be able to enforce regulations that had already been in place. The "Theoretical Essay" at the end of this volume references Henry Fielding's work in this context.
20 Edward Palmer Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966): 401–429.

gambling, and various rules against traditional amusements on Sundays and other free periods.

The social ordering role of leisure was also evident in the spectacular exhibition spaces of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, in which orderly leisure activity was purposefully modeled and displayed. The City Beautiful movement, which reached its apogee at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, sought to quell the chaotic and unseemly merriment of boisterous city life. The Exposition was heralded in contemporary accounts as a landscape that cultivated civilized conduct among its patrons. As one visitor exclaimed, "No great multitude of people ever showed more love of order. The restraint and discipline were remarkable."[21] Half a century earlier, Charlotte Brontë had a similar impression during her visit to the Crystal Palace at the Great Exhibition of 1850: "the multitude seems ruled and subdued by some invisible influence."[22] Disneyland was conceived with a similar inspiration. It was Walt Disney's middle-class "answer to the rowdiness, dirt, and threat of social chaos and bodily excess that afflict amusement arcades and parks in decay—egregiously, Coney Island."[23] These were exemplary spaces upon which the common masses were to model their behavior.

Thompson's account makes clear that leisure was constitutive of class. In pointing to disciplined leisure as a feature promoted by trade unions to distinguish a self-respecting working class from the so-called mob that consistently plagued bourgeois fears of working class movements, Thompson's account also makes clear how the ever-present threat of social *disorder* necessitated viewing leisure as an ordering project. For leisure was rife with many unhealthy practices, such as excessive drinking, gambling, prostitution, fighting and other forms of social aggression, hooliganism, petty crime, vulgar exuberance, and other expressions of discontent with the standard hierarchies by which social order is maintained. The point here is simply this: that viewing leisure as a project of social ordering requires that we remain focused on the fact that such projects are never complete and emerge along multiple valences of social power. Social ordering projects require continual maintenance and even innovation.

Leisure as ordering in China

The ambiguity with which leisure was typically viewed by nineteenth-century Euro-American elites—as both a pathway to moral degeneracy and a resource for social harmony and individual improvement—suggests

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21 Michael Sorkin, ed., *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 230.

22 Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park*, 231.

23 Yi-Fu Tuan and Steven D. Hoelscher, "Disneyland: Its Place in World Culture," in *Designing Disney's Theme Parks: the Architecture of Reassurance*, ed. Karel Ann Marling (Paris: Flammarion, 1997), 192–198.

its inherently contested qualities when called upon in the enactment of social reforms. For Chinese elites of the same era, leisure was viewed as a key instrument for the importation of Western science, modernity, and rationality. Here, the transcultural dimension of leisure practices served to legitimize the elite's modernizing agenda. Rather than undermining the state's moral economy, the importation of leisure practices from the West served to reinforce a cosmopolitan vision of New China in healthy competition with the West. Ever since the initial modernization and reform movements of the late Qing, the state in China has taken an interest in shaping and regulating leisure in order to modernize society and make it more governable. Chiang Kai-shek's "New Life Movement" of the 1930s is a case in point.[24]

It is helpful to consider the elite embrace of transcultural leisure as a governing tool in the context of China's broader encounter with the legal standard of civilization as it emerged in the nineteenth century. As laid out by Gong,[25] only states that could meet the legal standard of civilization could legitimately claim sovereignty within the emerging norms of international governance. States meeting this standard demonstrated that they could guarantee basic human rights, had a rationally organized political bureaucracy, adhered to accepted international laws, maintained an active diplomatic corps, and accepted the norms of civilized international society (as defined, of course, by Europe's colonial powers). Chinese elites, like their counterparts facing Europe's gunboat diplomacy throughout the world, were willing and eager to demonstrate their civilized status on Europe's own terms in order to secure the international legitimacy of their nation's sovereignty. At issue, principally, was the extraterritoriality of China's treaty ports. Significantly, it was from these key sites of transculturalism in China that new ideas of "civilized" public leisure activities emerged[26] and spread to other parts of China.[27]

Wang Di's work on early twentieth-century social reformers in Chengdu illustrates a familiar collection of anxieties on the part of elites regarding the leisure practices of the lower classes, similar to those driving the Rational Recreation Movement in the West. Wang notes that in pre-twentieth-century Chengdu, the lack of an overarching urban administration meant that all social classes enjoyed relatively equal access to most urban public spaces: "Commoners freely conducted all sorts of recreational and

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24 Jennifer Lee Oldstone-Moore, "The New Life Movement of Nationalist China: Confucianism, State Authority and Moral Formation" (PhD diss., University of Chicago Divinity School, 2000).

25 Gerrit W. Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984).

26 See the studies by Yu-chih Lai and Rudolf Wagner in this volume as well as further references there, both of which deal with leisure in the Shanghai International Settlement.

27 Wang Min 王敏, Wei Bingbing 魏兵兵, Jiang Wenjun 江文君, and Shao Jian 邵建, eds., *Jindai Shanghai chengshi gonggong kongjian* 近代上海城市公共空間 [Urban public space in modern Shanghai] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2011).

commercial activities on the street and in other shared spaces such as public squares, temple fronts, ends of bridges, and teahouses."[28] Indeed, commoners were the predominant occupants of urban public space, "which served as market, work site, stage, shelter, and social center for the lower classes."[29] By the twentieth century, many elites felt driven by a need to imbue such public spaces with a new moral order upon which a strengthened and civilized modern nation could be built.[30] The model for such a civilized modern nation was clearly the West, and was diffused throughout China via the extraterritorial spaces of treaty ports like Shanghai.[31] The standard of civilization thus translated into a transcultural discourse in which the commoner's *lack of*, and thus *need for*, improvement could be articulated, categorized, and made meaningful within the broader project of Western-style modernization and nation-building.

Leisure was a key realm within which such improvement could be carried out. In *My Country and My People*, Lin Yutang famously noted that it is only during a man's leisure time that we can see his true character: "We do not know a nation until we know its pleasures of life, just as we do not know a man until we know how he spends his leisure."[32] More often than not, that man's leisure time, and thus his "true character," was castigated by elites as indicative of China's weaknesses: the commoners had nothing better to do than "play cards and then get drunk."[33] Thus, popular fairs and festivals were targeted for reform, "bad" operas were purged and purified, new operas were written, and teahouses became particularly intense sites of reform, where it was important to display "healthy" leisure practices (such as bowling!), and encourage rational discussion of current affairs by making newspapers and magazines available for reading. These were meant to counter the temptation to resort to time-wasting diversions such as playing cards and gambling. By the early twentieth century, deviant leisure activities were being criminalized as part of the modernization of urban policing. This included the close regulation of public storytelling in teahouses. Wang notes that by 1902:

> [P]olice could investigate and even arrest anyone for a variety of vague offenses, including "bizarre speech," "unusual behavior," "weird clothing," or "evil and licentious talk." Singing purportedly "licentious" folk songs and gathering in public to "disturb the peace"

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28 Di Wang, *Street Culture in Chengdu: Public Space, Urban Commoners, and Local Politics, 1870–1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 23.

29 Wang, *Street Culture*, 69.

30 Mingzheng Shi, "From Imperial Gardens to Public Parks: The Transformation of Urban Space in Early Twentieth-Century Beijing," *Modern China* 24, no. 3 (1998): 219–254.

31 Wang Min et al., *Jindai Shanghai chengshi*.

32 Lin Yutang, *My Country and My People* (London: William Heinemann, 1936), 304.

33 Wang, *Street Culture*, 107. The hierarchy in leisure pursuits and the assessment articulated here, that the laboring people must get rid of their coarse leisure habits, echoes that of Fielding and the Rational Recreation Movement.

by shouting were forbidden. For the first time, regulations governed traffic, prostitution, gambling, and hygiene, as well as the behavior of specific groups of people, such as monks and nuns, second-hand item traders, and witch doctors.[34]

Healthy forms of leisure consumption were also promoted within the incipient realm of travel in early twentieth-century China, as has been argued by Dong in her study of Shanghai's *China Traveler* magazine.[35] Travel to relatively accessible destinations for leisure was promoted by the magazine as a healthy form of consumption, in contrast to the sorts of debauched consumer practices Shanghai had become infamous for by the 1930s. Dong observes that "leisure-time escapes to the Chinese countryside [were] not . . . a traditionally Chinese habit. Repeatedly [*China Traveler's*] pages highlighted the contrast between Europeans and Americans, who enjoyed traveling, and the Chinese, who tended to stay home."[36] In contrast to Germans who, for example, loved music, liked to go outdoors, and traveled to faraway places, the Chinese were said to like to "drink and play mahjong to kill time."[37] These were viewed as unhealthy leisure practices that exemplified China's colonial status as the so-called "sick man of Asia."

The desire to travel, and a sense of pleasure in travel, had to be cultivated. Leisure travel might be viewed, in other words, as a transcultural practice called on to produce a specific vision of modern social order and harmony in China. Indeed, it was the transcultural qualities of leisure travel that made this vision possible, for it constituted an exemplary Chinese consumer as a "citizen of the world," rather than, say, a Chinese nationalist. Shanghai elites in the 1930s tended to view leisure travel not as an extension of imperialism and colonialism, but as a "politically neutral and modern form of cosmopolitanism."[38] As such, leisure travel—along with other sanctioned forms of leisure practice—could be embraced and emulated as Western cultural practices by modern Chinese without fear of betraying their national loyalties.

Today, leisure remains central to elite Chinese visions of national self-strengthening. A "leisure ethic," as Rolandsen has recently called it,[39] continues to inform the state's moral economy discourse in China. Leisure studies have become a significant field of scholarship, and most of the work in this field conveys a normative, moralizing view of leisure as a form of nation-state pedagogy and a resource to be cultivated in China's

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34 Wang, *Street Culture*, 132.
35 Madeleine Yue Dong, "Shanghai's *China Traveler*," in *Everyday Modernity in China*, ed. Madeleine Dong and Joshua Goldstein (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 195–226. See also "The Chinese Wanderlust," *China Critic* 14, no. 6 (August, 1936): 128.
36 Dong, "Shanghai's *China Traveler*," 204.
37 Dong, "Shanghai's *China Traveler*," 205.
38 Dong, "Shanghai's *China Traveler*," 220.
39 Unn Målfrid H. Rolandsen, *Leisure and Power in Urban China: Everyday Life in a Chinese City* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 4.

global competitiveness.[40] As with their late-nineteenth-century forebears, many intellectuals today display anxiety over the Chinese people wasting time and using their leisure time for unproductive activities. Like any other precious national resource—land, energy, or water—leisure time should not be wasted. Quoting Sun Xiaoli,[41] Rolandsen puts it this way: "[. . .] in order to establish a scientific, healthy and civilized lifestyle," the Chinese masses must at least be educated in "modern concepts" such as scientific family planning, and a concept of consumption that does not encourage hedonism and the worship of money. They also need to adopt a concept of leisure where leisure is regarded as a resource "that must be governed in a scientific, civilized and cherishing manner."[42]

Festa has looked at contemporary Chinese leisure practices—specifically mahjong—and found a similar emphasis on leisure as a tool for moral regulation. Noticing a broader state-sponsored discourse that links leisure to population quality, Festa quotes Shi Ren's book *Nightlife*: "how people spend their leisure time is a direct qualitative expression of their personal nature and level of cultural attainment and civility."[43] He then turns to an extended reading of Sheng Qi's *Mahjong Studies*[44] to argue that Sheng's book situates mahjong within this broader discourse of leisure as quality. Sheng, in other words, articulates a discourse of social regulation in which mahjong enables a new kind of cultivation of the self.

With Sheng's project of rehabilitating mahjong, however, we see an effort to move away from earlier transcultural practices in which Western leisure influences were embraced in the early twentieth century. Sheng's Chinese self is no longer trying to meet the defunct pretensions of an international standard of civilization, but is instead drawing upon a national folk cultural tradition which is at once non-elite and essentially Chinese. Thus, for Festa, the recovery of mahjong in Chinese popular culture from its Mao-era and earlier[45] associations with gambling and other unhealthy and unproductive forms of (bourgeois) leisure is a result of state efforts to "discipline and control a consumption-driven mass culture without suppressing the diversity and heterogeneity of personal interests and desires

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40 See e.g. the collection of case studies in Zhang Jing'an 張景安 and Ma Huidi 馬惠娣, eds., *Zhongguo gongzhong xiuxian chuangkuang diaocha* 中國公眾休閒狀況調查 [Survey studies of the state of leisure life among the Chinese public] (Beijing: Zhongguo jingji chubanshe, 2004).

41 Sun Xiaoli 孫曉莉, "Jianli kexue, jiankang, wenming de shenghuo fangshi 建立科學、健康、文明的生活方式 [Establish a scientific, healthy, and civilized lifestyle]." In *Zhongguo gongzhong xiuxian chuangkuang diaocha* (Beijing: Zhongguo jingji chubanshe, 2004), 73–90.

42 Rolandsen, *Leisure and Power*, 88.

43 Shi, Ren 石人, *Ye shenghuo zonghengtan: dangqian xianxia wenhua tansuo* 夜生活縱橫談: 當前 閒暇 文化 探索 [Nightlife: An investigation of leisure culture in contemporary China] (Beijing: Zhongguo Wenlian Chubanshe, 1997). Paul Festa, "Mahjong Politics in Contemporary China: Civility, Chineseness, and Mass Culture," *positions: east asia cultures critique* 14, no. 1 (2006): 20.

44 Sheng, Qi 盛琦, *Majiang xue* 麻將學 [*Mahjong studies*] (Beijing: Tongxin, 1999).

45 See Edward Y. K. Kwong, "Mahjong, the Curse of a Nation," *China Critic* 15, no. 1 (October 1936): 15–17.

that the market thrives upon."[46] Mahjong is a mass cultural form, the manipulation of which, for Festa, allows the state to maintain its "grip on society."

Festa's approach seems to reproduce a somewhat state-centric and instrumental view of leisure. This is a criticism that might be applied to moral regulation theory in more general terms as well. As Rojek himself has pointed out, moral regulation theory tends not to emphasize the extent to which people negotiate this process of normalization, nor does it see regulation as an ongoing project. Moral regulation theory tends to assign to the state the pre-eminent role in ordering social life.[47] It seems, then, that there is still a need for an analysis of leisure in China that is not content to view it as just another tool at the state's disposal for the purpose of maintaining its grip on society. If anything, the state remains deeply conflicted and ambivalent over the healthiness of mahjong, the visible (public) playing of which has been prohibited among state officials. Public enthusiasm for the game has been cause for considerable moral and legal concern on the part of state and quasi-state actors, as recently noted by Wang.[48]

Rolandsen's analysis of leisure in Quanzhou begins by noting that leisure has been viewed as a case demonstrating "how the Communist party-state to a certain extent still seeks to dominate and control the everyday lives of the Chinese people."[49] But she finds that "the local population has considerable agency and room to maneuver in the local leisure space," and that the elite leisure ethic—perhaps not surprisingly—has little or no impact on how people actually spend their leisure time. Indeed, she finds that

> . . . not only is the discourse of healthy and chaotic leisure of little consequence for the actual leisure practices that take place in Quanzhou, but also that the policies of the local government towards the leisure market are not pursued with any consistency by the relevant government agencies . . . [O]fficially approved leisure activities, however healthy, receive little or no support from the local government.[50]

This official retreat from active state investment in guiding leisure is a partial result, she argues, of an official willingness to relinquish leisure to the market as a strategy for enhancing state revenue rather than regulating social order. It also reflects the increasingly neoliberal ideals of officials for whom reform tends to mean little more than marketization.

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46 Festa, "Mahjong Politics," 8.
47 Rojek, *Decentering Leisure*, 45.
48 Di Wang, "Mahjong and Urban Life: Individual Rights, Collective Interests, and the City Image in post-Mao China," *International Journal of Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (2014): 187–210.
49 Rolandsen, Leisure *and Power*, 3.
50 Rolandsen, *Leisure and Power*, 12–13.

Rolandsen's approach is to focus on the failure of the state to follow through with its own prescriptions for social ordering. Yet this tells us little about the ways leisure practices might actively contest or subvert those prescriptions themselves. Farquhar's study of the everyday park-going habits of contemporary Beijingers moves somewhat in this direction. She is interested in the continued practice of Mao-era collective activities of Beijing park-goers—fan dancing or group singing, for instance—and what type of politics such activities might constitute in hyper-marketized, capitalist-oriented post-reform China. Farquhar is careful not to overstate the political aspects of such leisure activities. She argues that "this is not a politics of rebellion or resistance." But she does point out that it nevertheless "advances a compliant civilizational nationalism with deep roots in China's revolutionary twentieth century," and that "even this quiet form of action must be appreciated for its political significance, [because] even compliance works on the dispositions of power in public."[51]

While I am unsure whether this differs appreciably from Festa's conclusion that leisure helps solidify the state's grip on power, Farquhar at least recognizes that the regulation of leisure practice is not a straightforward process of state social control. This is because she finds that going to the park actively subverts the overwhelming tide of privatization that now dominates everyday life in Beijing: "Rather than denounce the collective activity of an uncritical mainstream as compliant and quietist, and therefore not political at all, we should seek in the ordinary action of the people a form of collective assertion that creates a political space."[52] This political space is asserted not so much against the constraints of state power but against the neoliberalization of daily life, where everything is privatized and rendered marketable. In that context, the park is a space of "the good life" in central Beijing that has been lost to land speculation, development, and other forms of primitive accumulation that dominate urban China today.[53]

Like E. P. Thompson's working class, Farquhar's park-goers regulate their own leisure practices and spaces as a fundamental part of constituting themselves as a collective social body. In Beijing, they dress up for the park. "What would the city be," Farquhar asks, "if its spaces and times were not constantly made and remade in the daily rounds of its citizens? People told me, for example, that the achievement of a wholesome old age in public, in Beijing, is a service to the nation. It looks good, they said, and it shows off citizens' collective good health, to have ninety-year-olds in the neighborhoods and in the parks."[54] Here, then, is a clearer expression of leisure as social ordering: not simply as a state project of social control, but

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51 Judith Farquhar, "The Park Pass: Peopling and Civilizing a New Old Beijing," *Public Culture* 21, no. 3 (2009): 555.

52 Farquhar, "The Park Pass," 559.

53 You-tien Hsing, *The Great Urban Transformation: Politics of Land and Property in China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

54 Farquhar, "The Park Pass," 574.

as a realm within which multiple actors negotiate the projects of ordering with a variety of outcomes which, in turn, must be themselves subject to further projects of ordering.

Rather than being marginal or residual, leisure is thus embedded in everyday social activity, and is constitutive of social relations rather than an after-effect of those relations. We might productively treat leisure, as Festa does, as a lens through which to better understand the nuances of state power in contemporary China and its efforts to "govern from afar" as Zhang and Ong called it.[55] But it seems necessary to keep reminding ourselves that such governing strategies are best viewed as inherently incomplete, as demonstrated by Rolandsen,[56] and always productive of outcomes that emerge—in practice—from the particular constellations of discourse and space created by such ordering projects. In *The History of Sexuality,* Foucault referred to emergent hetero-sexualities as "instrument-effects,"[57] and this term can be usefully applied to any broader array of unintended outcomes that emerge from social engineering projects, as has been suggested by Ferguson.[58] A more deliberately spatial perspective can help appreciate such outcomes as more than the residuals of plans gone awry (or of plans never implemented in the first place). The idea of governable space may be a useful perspective from which to explore these ideas in ways that avoid the linear conception of power lurking behind Festa's mahjong games as well as help sort out just what kind of politics is going on in Farquhar's Beijing parks.

Leisure as governable space

The idea of governable space emerges initially from Foucault's late-1970s lectures at the Collège de France.[59] Foucault laid out a genealogy of modes of power as they emerged in Western Europe, culminating with the "apparatus" (*dispositive*) of security for which government has become the dominant ensemble of institutions. While there is obviously much to be said about the emergence of a governmentalized form of state power as a particularly distinguishing characteristic of modernity, what concerns me is the spatial expression of this governmentalized form of power. Indeed, as argued by Rose, by the 1990s governmentality studies, drawing from Foucault's broad analytic, began focusing less on (national) society as a discrete unit through which governmental power was territorialized,

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55 Li Zhang and Aihwa Ong, eds., *Privatizing China: Socialism from Afar* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).
56 Rolandsen, *Leisure and Power*, 106.
57 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 48.
58 James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
59 Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–78*, translated by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave, 2007).

and more on the micro-scale spatial expressions of that power, such as community.[60]

The most important thing to understand about the role of space in Foucault's formulation of the governmentalized state is that space—like the state itself—becomes a kind of *effect* of governmentalized power. Such governmentalized spaces—for example, administrative regions, cities, towns, zones of various kinds, ghettoes and other specially administered areas, colonies, and even extraterritorial spaces—emerge out of the territorialization of discrete populations, making them governable by authority and subject to state sovereignty. Such territorialized populations can be organized and articulated by a variety of other kinds of spaces as well: schools, factories, hospitals, prisons, museums, and even shopping malls as studied by Nancy Smith-Hefner in this volume, airports, or department stores.[61] These governable spaces are not merely settings within which the governance of populations happens; they are not simply stages upon which the techniques of calculation and categorization of populations are played out. Rather, they are socially constructed spaces that actively constitute subjects in new ways: "they make new kinds of experience possible, produce new modes of perception, invest percepts with affects, with dangers and opportunities, with saliences and attractions."[62] Such spaces realize our ideas and thoughts through material procedures and practices of inscription, calculation, and action.

In his discussion of governable space, Rose proposes the concept of "render[ing] visible" to identify one of the most important of these material procedures and practices that enable such spaces to "make new kinds of experience possible." Rose points out that governable space needs to be visible space; it needs to be clearly bounded and distinguished. In these terms, rendering visible is not just about looking. Governable space needs to be "re-presented in maps, charts, pictures, and other inscription devices. It is made visible, gridded, marked out, placed in two dimensions, scaled, populated with icons and so forth. In this process, and from the perspective of its government, salient features are identified and non-salient features rendered invisible."[63] Maps are perhaps the most obvious technique of rendering visible, as map-making serves as a kind of uber-inscription device. But inscription is also rhetorical. Rose calls it "a little machine for producing conviction in others,"[64] and making possible the extension of authority over that which is inscribed. Rendering visible thus involves a power relation between knowledge and its subjects—those objects made

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60 Nikolas Rose, "The Death of the Social? Re-figuring the Territory of Government," *Economy and Society* 25 (1996): 327–356. See also Tim Bunnell and Neil M. Coe, "Re-fragmenting the 'Political': Globalization, Governmentality and Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor," *Political Geography* 24 (2005): 831–849.
61 Nikolas Rose, *The Powers of Freedom*, 35.
62 Rose, *The Powers of Freedom*, 32.
63 Rose, *The Powers of Freedom*, 32, 36.
64 Rose, *The Powers of Freedom*, 37.

visible—and it is this question of power that lies at the heart of the concept. Governable space, then, is a way of thinking about the spatial nature of social ordering projects from a perspective that insists on a particular focus on power.

Working with some of these ideas in the context of urban China, Bray has explored the space of the community (*shequ*) as the basic unit of urban social, political, and administrative organization in China today. The *shequ*, Bray argues, were developed in a hybrid spatial strategy of urban governance combining "governmental intervention with the mobilization of local self-help".[65] As such, community building also implies raising the moral quality of urban citizens. This moral quality ultimately suggests a certain kind of autonomous and self-determining citizen. Boland and Zhu have similarly argued that one of the main goals of *shequ* development is to "increase public participation in community affairs."[66] Yet while the *shequ* is deliberately constructed as a space that puts into practice a certain ideal of self-governance, self-control, and self-determination, Heberer and Göbel point out that it is an "imposed community" that facilitates the reimposition of state power in response to contemporary urban social fragmentation.[67] Tomba, similarly, refers to *shequ* governance as a kind of "pastoral government" aimed at stabilizing society's weakest groups.[68]

The community, then, "no longer stands in opposition to the state, but instead is re-created as a willing partner in the government of itself."[69] The *shequ* is, in short, a governable space. Yet how effective are such spaces in producing social order? Are they merely enabling the state to keep its grip on power, as Festa argues that playing mahjong does? What seems needed is an approach to governable space that suggests less the inevitability of state or corporate power, but the spatial contingencies of power.[70] As Ghertner has argued in a different context, powerful state spaces may indeed offer normalized interpellations through which urban subjects come to inhabit space, but those spaces nevertheless "operate as a contested arena, allowing those subjects to fashion new political demands and visions."[71] Similarly, Lisa Hoffman has argued that "important questions

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65 David Bray, "Building 'Community': New Strategies of Governance in Urban China," in *China's Governmentalities: Governing Change, Changing Government*, ed. Elaine Jeffreys (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 89.

66 Alana Boland and Jiangang Zhu, "Public Participation in China's Green Communities: Mobilizing Memories and Structuring Incentives," Geoforum *43, no. 1 (2012):* 151.

67 Thomas Heberer and Christian Goebel, *The Politics of Community Building in Urban China* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 9–11.

68 Tomba, *The Government Next Door*, 49.

69 Bray, "Building 'Community'," 90.

70 For "ungovernable space" see Michael Watts, "Development and Governmentality," *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 24, no. 1 (2003): 6–34.

71 D. Asher Ghertner, "Rule by Aesthetics: World-class City Making in Delhi," in *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, ed. Ananya Roy and Aiwa Ong (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 281.

remain about how people negotiate the regulation and discipline inherent" in contemporary Chinese spaces of government.[72]

What does it mean, then, to think about leisure spaces as governable spaces? Two key issues readily present themselves: First, rendering leisure space visible would seemingly be a key technique or strategy in the broader project of governing populations through leisure. Second, understanding the nature of power in leisure as a project of social ordering also seems to be a necessary component of any interpretation. This does not simply mean the straightforward exercise of state authority over subjects, as Festa tends to see in the politics of mahjong. Rather, it means appreciating the unfinished and contingent nature of ordering projects.

Governing leisure space in Guizhou

How effective, then, has Danjiang's transformation into a governable leisure space been? While the town's residents have clearly embraced a new subjectivity as leisure consumers, they have constituted themselves as such through their own, often unintended and ungovernable practices and spatial productions. Most obviously, this could be seen from the palpable disavowal of ownership of the town's newly built environment on the part of many townspeople. Several residents told us that they felt the entire ethnic theming project was a huge waste of money. "There are many poor people in Leishan County," one said, reflecting the comments of many. "What will dressing these buildings up to look nice do to help them?" There was, for the most part, bemused skepticism among residents as to whether the makeover would affect or improve their lives in any way. The town's largest new public space, the Bronze Drum Square, was a vast void situated across from the lavish new county government complex and next to a new sports arena on the outskirts of the main town. It stood largely empty, day and night, and included all the design elements of the typical window dressing projects identified by Miao: extravagant size, depletion of former arable land, disconnect from retail and residential areas frequented by pedestrians, ornamental space dominated by a symmetrical and cold monumentalism meant to vaguely mimic the European plaza, and resulting in little more than a tourist attraction rather than a community space.[73] In this sense, the Bronze Drum Square was more of an ungovernable space, one which utterly failed in any kind of social ordering due to its sheer irrelevance to residents' daily lives as anything but the butt of jokes. Reinforcing this irony was the fact that the new government office complex next to the

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72 Lisa Hoffman, "Urban Modeling and Contemporary Technologies of City-Building in China: The Production of Regimes of Green Urbanisms," in *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, ed. Ananya Roy and Aiwa Ong (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 69.
73 Miao, "Brave New City," 181–185.

Figure 2: Early evening broadcast exercise session, Bronze Drum Square, Danjiang.

square ended up being auctioned off to the provincial tourism bureau and refitted as a luxury hotel when the county could no longer finance its construction (Fig. 2).

Yet there was almost universal praise and enthusiasm among the residents for the second public space created during the town's renovation: the Wooden Drum Square. This space was not part of the town's original plan, but emerged instead from the unexpected resistance of a group of residents facing the demolition of their neighborhood. The square now occupies the former site of a ramshackle ghetto of falling-down huts—the poorest, most squalid and depraved neighborhood in town. Other than those who lived there, few were sorry to see it go. But when the town proposed replacing the neighborhood with a new high-end apartment complex and shopping mall, the residents dug in their heels and refused to leave. County leaders eventually broke the stalemate between these "nail house" residents and the town by proposing a leisure space, rather than the revenue-generating real estate and retail space wanted by town leaders.[74] Indeed, residents throughout the town had already been actively calling for a new leisure space in the heart of the town; their support for the nail houses put the town in a difficult position. After two years, the town backed down and promised to build a public square instead. In effect, the Wooden Drum Square was a leisure space claimed by the residents of Danjiang even before it was built. It was the outcome of ungovernable action.

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74 "Nail house" (*dingzi hu* 釘子户) is a common term in China, referring to a house left standing in an otherwise demolished neighborhood due to residents refusing to vacate, typically in dispute over compensation.

Figure 3: Evening at the Wooden Drum Square, Danjiang.

And yet, ultimately, the Wooden Drum Square has become the most governable space in town, a space where a new kind of leisure citizen has been made real (Fig. 3).

On almost any given evening, but especially on weekend nights, the square is unmistakably experienced as a community leisure space. Over the course of our fieldwork during the summer months between 2012 and 2014, the square was consistently "hot and noisy" (*renao*) every evening. There were three bouncy castles, and several portable sandboxes with all sorts of playthings. An arcade along the side of the square featured balloon shooting, pottery painting, little electric cars for kids to drive around the square, in-line skate rentals (with glowing front wheels), and little portable fishing ponds with toys to catch (and real fish!). Children raced around the square at full tilt, having a great time as parents sat watching and chatting and enjoying the cool evening air. Three different areas of the square were turned over to different dancing groups, each with its own blaring sound system. Old men sat smoking in the pavilions, joking and telling stories. The whole square felt alive until late at night—and unlike those vast spaces of socialist modernity that passed for public space during the Mao era, the Wooden Drum Square really felt like a people's space. While the space was indeed rendered visible as governable space, with its clearly marked out leisure activity sites and Miao ethnic symbolism (wooden drums are displayed along one side of the square, and there are numerous other ethnic motifs on display here and there, including a huge stone flour mill), whatever social ordering was going on there was a project in which Danjiang's citizens were actively participating.

Governable spaces are fabricated to make new kinds of (in this case leisure) experience possible. That experience, Rojek tells us, is constitutive of a new kind of citizenship.[75] Danjiang's Wooden Drum Square, despite its origins in popular protest, is clearly inscribed as a certain kind of state space. And as noted by Rose earlier, such inscriptions can be viewed as "a little machine for producing conviction in others." Does it necessarily follow, then, that what is going on in here is an extension of (state) authority over that which is inscribed (in this case Miao culture)? Do the leisure activities there enable the state to maintain its grip on power? Perhaps. But as a governable space, the Wooden Drum Square remains more open than Rose's view of state authority would seem to allow. We are left with an unresolvable tension between leisure as active citizenship and leisure as social control.

This tension is perhaps more palpable in the city of Tongren, in northeastern Guizhou, where an urban redevelopment project based explicitly on returning this riverside city to a former "life of ease" (*youxian shenghuo*) has resulted in six new public squares, only one of which—a new square in front of the railway station—has been claimed by residents as a new space of leisure. There, amid large and prominent signs explicitly prohibiting disorderly conduct, as well as any kind of soliciting, hawking, or otherwise disturbing the peace within 50 meters of the square, dozens of people can be found doing just that. (Fig. 4) Each evening the square transforms into an informal market for cheap clothing, toys, CDs and electronics, fake iPhones, watches, and used books. The usual sand boxes, fishing ponds, and bouncy castles are there for the kids, and a cacophony of blaring dance music deafens the ears. Qigong charlatans push herbal packets on unsuspecting men (as I personally discovered), promising everything from harder erections to slower hair loss. The scene is not exactly one of complete chaos, but it is close to that, and it certainly does not conform to any norms of self-improvement that one might expect from China's elite leisure ethic. Yet residents praise the city government for its newfound commitment to scattering leisure spaces throughout the city, even though many of them remain relatively deserted. A new greenbelt of parks and gathering places along the river has, however, become popular for exercise, afternoon cards and mahjong, dancing, and even relatively discreet informal markets in antiques, books, and herbal medicines.

Both Danjiang and Tongren have followed explicit principles and models—many with genealogies that connect to nineteenth-century Euro-American movements like the Rational Recreation Movement mentioned earlier, Ebenezer Howard's "Garden City," or the City Beautiful Movement. The Garden City idea, in particular, has been influential throughout China, in part because of its ostentatious adoption in the 1970s by Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew, as well as Bo Xilai's more recent embrace of it in his urban

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75 Rojek, *Leisure Theory*, 2.

Figure 4: Informal evening clothing market, Railroad Station Square, Tongren.

redevelopment plans while mayor of Dalian[76] and Chongqing.[77] These models have been adopted as technologies of governable space, promising a government by community that speaks to the priorities of social harmony currently promoted at all levels by the Party-state: Ebenezer Howard was explicit, for instance, that "garden-city dwellers would perceive themselves as members of a cohesive community, bound together by shared moral and social values."[78] In Singapore, the greening of the city and construction of recreational spaces was understood "as an antidote to living in high-rise, high-density apartments" and as "a mechanism of community development."[79]

The "garden city" (*yuanlin chengshi*) is in fact a national certification campaign through which cities like Danjiang and Tongren compete for recognition, awards, and funding. Other campaigns that also play a significant role in shaping urban planning objectives and strategies include the "sanitary city" (*weisheng chengshi*) campaign, the "exemplary city" (*mofan xianjin chenghsi*), and the "green, low-carbon, smart city" (*lüse ditan zhihui chengshi*) campaign. Beyond the specifics of leisure space, Chinese urban planning has more broadly engaged with transcultural models aimed at

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76 Hoffman, "Urban Modeling," 60.
77 Carolyn Cartier and Luigi Tomba. "Symbolic Cities and the 'Cake Debate'," in *Red Rising, Red Eclipse: The China Story Yearbook 2012*, ed. Geremie Barmé, 2012, accessed April 24, 2017, http://www.thechinastory.org/yearbooks/yearbook-2012/chapter-2-symbolic-cities-and-the-cake-debate/.
78 Stanley Buder, *Visionaries and Planners: The Garden City Movement and the Modern Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 208.
79 Hoffman, "Urban Modeling," 67.

producing certain kinds of new citizen-subjectivities. In particular, transcultural models of the "creative city" and the "cultural city" have been embraced by urban authorities throughout China.[80] Miao has noted how China's new public spaces are vaguely modeled on the European idea of a central town plaza.[81] A vast library of scholarship has emerged in recent years on these transcultural dimensions of urban planning in China.[82]

While indicative of the adoption of transcultural ideas relating to global norms of good governance in urban settings, the efforts of Danjiang and Tongren planners have also sought to explicitly reject the global generic city model in which China's towns and cities tend to all start looking modern and civilized in the same way.[83] Rather, symbolic ethnic theming—more prominent in Danjiang than in Tongren—has been pursued in order to "humanize" (*renxinghua*) the city, rejecting the cold rational modernism of the earlier socialist built environment. In Danjiang, planners talk of using the value of traditional Miao culture to create a more civilized city. They note, for instance, that in the past, town residents went to nearby villages for leisure activities because Miao villages (unlike their Han counterparts) tend to have a central open space for rituals and ceremonies. These have become popular for hosting tourist-oriented performances, but also for more spontaneous leisure practices among nearby urban residents. "This is something that Miao culture can offer city people," said one town planner. "So we want the public space in town to remind people of a Miao village." This "villagizing" plan is part of a broader "style regulation" (*fengmao zhengzhi*) for Danjiang, which has sought to replace the chaotic landscape of the socialist past with a more uniform, but rural-looking, style of building. For example, the plan calls for limiting the height of buildings so that the town more resembles a village, while at the same time requiring some variation in height, to break up the modernist monotony of the older buildings. This has resulted in facades of varying height being added to buildings, along with additional rooftop structures to add visual diversity to the skyline.

Ironically, perhaps, one of the most noticeable aspects observed each evening at the Wooden Drum Square is the disconnect between the heavily ethnic symbolism through which Miao culture is rendered visible, and

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80 See Jun Wang, Tim Oakes, and Yang Yang, eds. *Making Cultural Cities in Asia: Mobility, Assemblage, and the Politics of Aspirational Urbanism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).; Yue Zhang, "Governing Arts Districts: State Control and Cultural Production in Contemporary China," *The China Quarterly* 219 (2014): 827–848; Jeroen de Kloet and Lena Scheen, eds., *Spectacle and the City: Chinese Urbanites in Art and Popular Culture* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2014).

81 Miao, "Brave New City," 182.

82 Lou et al., *Zhongguo chengshi xiuxian wenhua*; Wei Xiao'an 魏小安 and Li Ying 李瑩, "Chengshi xiuxian yu xiuxian chengshi 城市休閒與休閒城市 [Urban leisure and the leisure city]," *Lüyou xuekan* 旅遊學刊 22, no. 10 (2007): 71–76; Jiang Shuzhuo 將述桌, "Guangchang wenhua: chengshi wenhua de xin ziyuan 廣場文化: 城市文化的新資源 [Plaza culture: a new resource for urban culture]," *Guangdong shehuikexue* 4 (2003): 151–155.

83 Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau. *S,M,L,XL* (New York: Monacelli,1995), 1239–1264.

the actual leisure practices of the town's residents (who are, in fact, mostly Miao themselves). While the space of the square seems designed to inter-pellate a modern yet ethnically costumed leisure subject, the residents are determined to practice their leisure in the most un-ethnic ways possi-ble. Their dancing is Western and Han, and the recreational activities for children are of the same quality one might find at any evening carnival in small-town America. Wooden Drum Square, in practice then, remains a transcultural space of leisure, despite its obvious rendering of local and ethnic Miao culture.

Conclusion

As China's urban built environment increasingly functions as a space of lei-sure, it also effects a negotiation over transcultural vs local framings of that space. While new urban spaces are clearly being conceived as governable spaces according to a normative leisure ethic that equates leisure with a global, progressive, post-industrial modernity, their actual production and use (or avoidance altogether) suggest a more complicated set of practices on the part of residents and planners alike. In some cases, as in Danjiang's Wooden Drum Square, there appears to be some convergence between residential claiming of space and broader state goals of social ordering. Yet in other cases, the gap between these remains clearly evident. Such leisure spaces might suggest the grip of state power by their sheer monumental-ity, but that power is compromised and contingent when viewed from the perspective of the actual users (and thus reproducers) of those spaces.

When considering the transcultural dimensions of state efforts to shape leisure activity, we find that transculturalism plays perhaps its most signif-icant role not so much in providing the inevitable importations of new, possibly subversive leisure practices through which state cultural authority might be challenged, but rather in the transcultural models through which the state itself seeks to enact social ordering through the moral regulation of leisure. Yet these too remain limited as technologies of government, since state actors themselves, and residents engaged in leisure practices, fail to reproduce those models with any consistency.

This chapter has offered some preliminary thoughts on how we might view leisure space as a governance tool in China's broader social transfor-mations of citizenship and subjectivity. In urban China, the development of new leisure spaces appears aimed at turning residents into self-deter-mining and autonomous leisure-citizens whose sophisticated consump-tion practices represent a new model of consumer citizenship that enables broader state strategies of what Zhang and Ong called "governing from afar." Yet the outcomes of such governmental calculations reveal an ongo-ing tension between leisure as a new kind of 'active' citizenship and lei-sure as an instrument of social control on the part of either the state or the corporation (or a combination of these). I have tried to argue that

this tension between Rojek's ideal of leisure as active citizenship and leisure as a governmentalized effect of power is best revealed and explored through the lens of governable space. Viewed through this lens, leisure spaces are anything but straightforward sites for the reproduction of dominant modes of power. That urban leisure spaces are also claimed by urban residents as constitutive of collective urban identities suggests that there is still reason to believe that Rojek's idealism is perhaps not entirely unwarranted.

Figures

Fig. 1, 3: Photo by author, Danjiang, China, 2013.
Fig. 2:   Photo by author, Danjiang, China, 2014.
Fig. 4:   Photo by author, Tongren, China, 2013.

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