



## Critical junctures and city development: a brief retrospect of Chongqing's planning history, 1949-2010

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Southwest China's Chongqing is a city with unique development history which experienced critical junctures. This study collected and organized political, economic and cultural events in Chongqing from 1949 to 2010, and then analysed how its city planning responded to those critical junctures, and evaluate whether it was successful or not; furthermore, it traced the evolution of motive forces in Chongqing. The analysis has led us to the conclusion that critical junctures constituted pivotal motive forces in Chongqing's urbanization; generally, each version of Master Plans responded them effectively and timely, especially by giving the priority to natural geography and continually developing the polycentric structure at different scale. The result of this study shows that Chongqing has built a comprehensive development framework for settlement hierarchy structure, transportation, economy and ecology. For the future, it should pay more attention to improve its infrastructure, conserve its historic heritage, strengthen its identity as a city of mountain and river, and achieve more sustainable development both ecologically and socially. Moreover, besides making sure that politic and economic forces fulfil their role, decision makers should also value social forces, make multiple objectives, exercise public participation and achieve social justice in the policy making and implementing process.

**Keywords:** planning history, critical juncture, motive force, China

### Introduction

Chongqing, located in southwest China, is not only a beautiful city shaped by rivers and mountains, but also a famous historic city nourished by the long history of 3000 years. Presently, it is one of the 4 Municipalities directly under the Central Government (MCG)<sup>1</sup>, and also one of the first generation of National Central Cities<sup>2</sup>, playing an increasingly important role in China's development. In 2017, its GDP grew by 9.3 percent, hitting 1.95 trillion yuan, and constantly led the GDP growth nationwide since 2014.

Critical junctures have been considered to be one of the most important motive forces for modern Chongqing's development especially after 1890s. In this paper, critical junctures refer to major events happened in politic, economic, social and cultural areas, which shift cities' development and bring both negative and positive influence as one kind of motive forces. This study collected diverse critical junctures in Chongqing's development history mainly after 1949, then analysed how city planning responded to them. Finally, it went further to see the characteristics of motive forces for city development in Chongqing.

### Historical development before 1949

Chongqing's history can date back to 1000 BC when it was dominated by Ba Kingdom; the Ba people established Jiangzhou as their capital. Jiangzhou Castel, in present Jiangbei District, was built in 316 BC, while Liyan Castel, in present top of Yuzhong Peninsula, was built in Shuhan Dynasty 226 AD. Thereafter, Chongqing experienced a 2-castel period for more than 500 years till Tang Dynasty. Jiangzhou was renamed for many times; the current name Chongqing, literally meaning double celebrations, was given in 1189, during the Southern Song Dynasty<sup>3</sup>. In Ming Dynasty, city walls and 17 city gates based on Daoism culture were built in Yuzhong Peninsula. As the population grew, the Jiangzhou castle gradually collected more and more residents and became active again. In Qing Dynasty, the government center moved to Jiangzhou castle; therefore, the once lost 2-castle pattern officially turned back again.

Till now, Chongqing had been continuing to experience stable development, especially relying on its convenient location for water transportation. In 1890, Chongqing was forced to open up to foreign countries by *Sino-British Yantai Treaty* and became the gateway to enter inland China. This accelerated its urbanization and the development of manufacturing. Between 1900 and 1905, Chongqing's textile production contributed one third of the total produced in China. In 1928, Chongqing city was formally established (Figure 1).

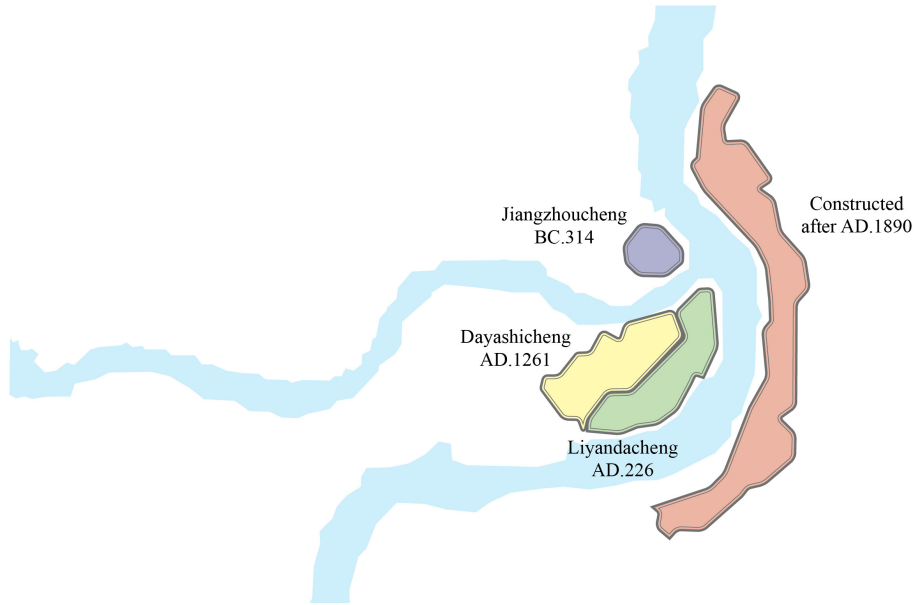


Figure 1: The development of Chongqing city from the ancient time

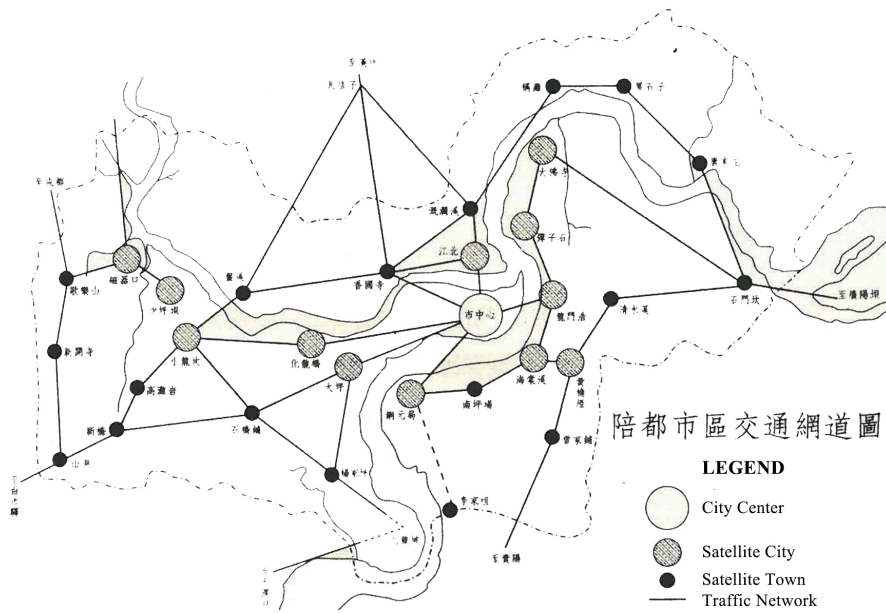


Figure 2: The development of Chongqing city from the ancient time

In 1937, after Nanjing was occupied by the Japanese, the Kuomintang (KMT) government moved to Chongqing and designated it as its wartime capital. Many factories were moved there from Shanghai, Wuhan and Tianjin; therefore, Chongqing jumped into a modern industrial city and played a pivotal role nationwide in policy, economy and manufacturing during the 1940s. In 1946, the KMT government released *Draft of Ten-Year Planning on the Construction of the Alternate Capital*. This was the first comprehensive city master plan of Chongqing, and also one of the most important representatives of the post-war city planning document. It was strongly influenced by western city theories and showed the characteristics of Modern Rationalism. Although it was not implemented due to historic reasons, many of its idea, especially Satellite Town, profoundly influenced following master plans in Chongqing (Figure 2).

#### 1949-1977: frustration and stagnation

After the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the nation experienced an initial phase of city planning for the first 8 years until 1957, during which China experienced the significant Socialist transformation.



One of the urgent missions then was to recover the economy. Later from 1958 to 1960, it experienced the Great Leap and People's Commune; the whole nation tried to achieve a rapid economy improvement however the result proved to be unsatisfactory. The the nation announced *no city planning for 3 years* in 1960 due to complicated international and national situations, thereafter city planning fell into stagnation.

However, Chongqing's development accelerated in the 1960s because of *Third Front Construction* policy carried out by the central government, although its city level was degraded from a municipality to a city under the jurisdiction of Sichuan provincial government in 1954. The policy invited a large number of defence-related state-owned enterprises to establish factories in and around Chongqing. With 46,000 workers migrating to the city and 200 key projects being established, the policy helped Chongqing build up its infrastructure and economic structure, and jump into the biggest industrial base in southwest China. Today, many of these military enterprises have converted to civil use, continuing to enhance Chongqing's industrial strength.

In terms of city planning, the government proposed *Chongqing Primary Plan* in 1960, concentrating on industrial distribution and improvement of transportation system, however, since the center government decided to stop the city plan as well as the following events, it was not implemented. In 1964, the *Third Front Construction Plan in Chongqing*, in response to *Third Front Construction*, helped Chongqing build up the hierarchic system of cities and towns (Figure 3). Nevertheless, as a large number of factories and workers moved in within a very short time, the construction was quite rapid; consequently, the urban distribution was found disorganized in the late 1970s. While the core urban area was too crowded as industrial and residential areas were mixed and restricted each other's development, new urban areas were dispersed and lacked of infrastructure for a long time. Moreover, the improper location made some factories yield poor economic output and resulted in severe pollution.

During these 30 years, stimulated by political, military and social forces, Chongqing dramatically shifted from a commercial center along Yangtze River to an important heavy industry base. It indeed brought prosperity, whereas it also relatively weakened other aspects of the city being a commercial center. Accordingly, those once formed superior functions such as transportation system, financial system, cultural accumulation did not have chance to perform better.

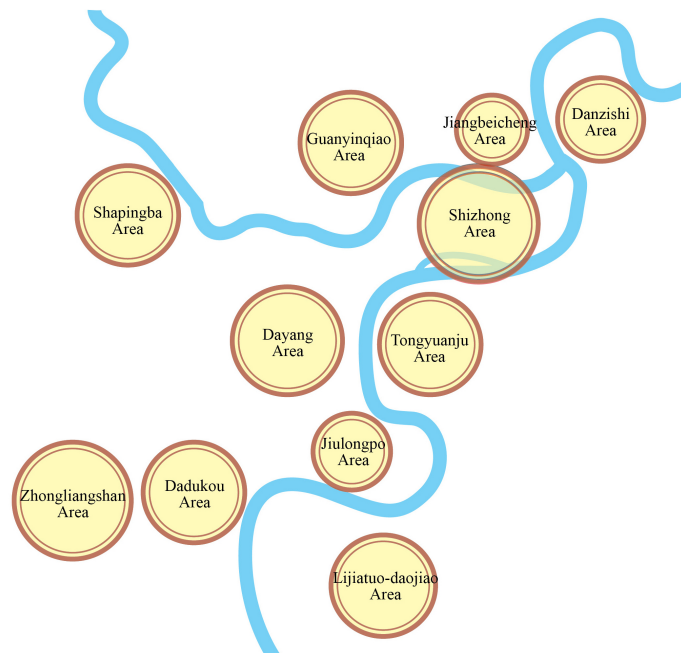


Figure 3: Dispersed Compact Groups, 1960

### 1978-1999: recovery and development

In 1978, Chinese government implemented the policy of Reform and Opening up, which later brought China rapid development. Significant system reforms concerning land system, household registration system, state-owned enterprise, etc., profoundly influenced the city development. As the city's pivotal role for economy development was gradually recognized and widely accepted, city construction received greater attention; after a 20-year stagnation, city planning work was finally picked up. In 1991, the urban housing system reform again greatly



promoted the city development by stimulating the real estate market and consumption; the housing sector became a significant part of economic activity and provided a sizable tax base.

In these 20 years, Chongqing also experienced an eventful history. In 1980, it was designated as one of the port cities opened for international trade along Yangtze River. In 1983, it became one of the comprehensive economy system reform pilot city. In 1984, it was listed as a separate unit under the state economic development plan so that Chongqing was able to enjoy the provincial-level right of economy management. In 1992, according to Comrade Deng Xiaoping's South Talk, Chongqing officially became a city of open economy. Hereafter, Chongqing gradually regained its importance and influence as being one of the commercial centers as well as a transportation hub along Yangtze River and southwest areas. Later in 1997, Chongqing was designated as the forth MCG with its area growing fourfold. The new municipality faced with 2 very tough problems, Three Gorges Dam project and the task to make center metropolitan areas drive the development of larger countryside areas. Therefore, although Chongqing did achieve significant achievement in metropolitan areas, with large undeveloped areas the general situation was soon found left behind coastal cities like Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen.

After the National City Planning Conference in 1980, the Chongqing government finished *The Master Plan* in 1983 and made some adjustment later in 1990. After an overall analysis, *The Master Plan (1983)* deemed that Chongqing is a commercial center in upper reaches of the Yangtze River, a water and land transportation hub and trade port, and an industrial city with both light and heavy industry (The adjustment in 1990 added that Chongqing is one of the National Famous Historical and Cultural Cities and an International Trade Port.); it has convenient transportation location, abundant natural resources and promising market for economy development.



Figure 4: The Constellation-like Urban System Structure Plan, 1983

Moreover, in response to the natural geography, the plan valued the current urban morphology which was generally dispersed with compact groups, and further decided to develop a polycentric structure with 14 groups. Each group should be as possible as compact, offer both working and residential places, and be divided with river, green belt, slopes and cliffs, and farmland. The Shizhong District (presently Yuzhong District) was the center for policy, business and finance, meanwhile it was planned to build 4 other sub-centers, focusing on business, technology, culture and relocation site for enterprises and institutions, respectively, to relieve the stress of the center area. Around 100 km away from the old city was planned to construct 4 satellite cities, 8 small towns, and more than 20 smaller industrial areas, forming a constellation-like urban system structure (Figure 4). This structure was very unique since it was different from common layout of satellite town in metropolitan areas, or the layout of high-density cities on big-medium size; it stemmed from Chongqing's unique natural geographical environment, long-term history and current social-economic conditions.

As Chongqing became a municipality in 1997 and the old version master plan failed to adapt new situation, a new master plan was released soon in 1998. Firstly, the new plan modified Chongqing's status to the biggest center for



economy, technology, culture and education in upper reaches of the Yangtze River and southwest areas, a national transportation and communication hub, and an important industrial city, showing that Chongqing had developed into a more comprehensive city with greater competitiveness.

Moreover, the municipality greatly changed Chongqing’s administrative regions from 23,114 km<sup>2</sup> to 82,403 km<sup>2</sup>, as well as the structure of its system of cities. Before municipality in the 1990s, in Bayu region, there was a big gap in the city scale in terms of population; the first-level city had the population over 1.6 million, while the second-level city’s population just dropped to only 0.25 million approximately. To deal with this situation, the *Master Plan 1996-2020 (1998)* proposed a new structure for system of cities according to the industrial distribution; this structure took metropolitan area as the center and the main transportation corridors as the development axis. It was planned to develop 3 regional central cities and create a networking system. In detail, there were 5 scales of cities, consisting of 1 megacity, 2 big cities, 9 medium cities, 33 small cities, 192 center towns and 517 general towns (Table 1). The plan divided Chongqing MCG into 4 big regions, consisting of center city and its surrounding dense areas, Wanzhou city group, Fuling city group and Qianjiang city group; the 5 city levels included center city of Chongqing MCG, center city of region and of county, center town and general town.

	Scale (10,000 people)	Amount	Population (10,000 people)
1	Megacity >100	1	500
2	Big City 50-100	2	52.5
3	Medium City 20-50	9	28.57
4	Small City 10-20	12	14.29
	5-10	21	5.75
5	Towns 1-5	192	1.30
	<1	517	0.38

Table 1: Structure for System of Cities in *Master Plan (1996-2020)*, 1983

From 1978 to 1990, Chongqing’s development was relatively steady because during this period, it did not get as much attention from the central government as before. *The Master Plan (1983)* proved to be successful especially by abiding and creatively developing the polycentric structure for Chongqing. After 1990, Chongqing gradually recovered its influence especially in economy as being designated as a city of open economy along Yangtze River, and later peaked as being designated as municipality, performing dramatic growth in GDP.

**2000-2010: rebuilding and transition**

Major progress has been registered in reform and opening up. After entering the 21<sup>th</sup> century, the industrialization and urbanization significantly accelerated. However, along with the fast urbanization emerged many issues. For instance, the growing gap between urban and rural areas, the deterioration of the ecological environment, uncoordinated development between urban and regional areas, etc. Moreover, as the reform and opening-up mainly focused on eastern coastal regions, the west has remarkably fallen behind the east. Accordingly, the *Great Western Development Strategy (GWDS)* was implemented in 2000 to enhance the economic and social development in the western region and consolidate the national defence by using superfluous capacity of economic development in the east coast areas. Later *the 11<sup>th</sup> Five-year Plan (2006-2010)* proposed the target to improve the environment, adjust industry structure and increase the tertiary industry, resulting a large scale of factories relocation from inner city to suburban areas.

Being as one of the most important cities in this policy, Chongqing got greater attention and enjoyed more preferential policies to develop into a growth pole in the Three Gorges area and southwest China. In 2005, Chongqing was designated as one of the national central cities along with other 4 cities<sup>4</sup>. Besides the positive influence of *GWDS*, Chongqing established Liangjiang New Area as the pilot area for urban-rural comprehensive reform in 2010. The different issue with Shanghai’s Pudong New Area and Tianjin’s Binhai New Area was that Liangjiang New Area need to build a better relationship between urban and rural areas. Moreover, as an industrial city, there were 31 state-owned industrial enterprises moved out of main urban areas, leaving lots of urban land with great potential to redevelopment.

Under this circumstance, the city planning objectives were to achieve urban-rural and regional integration, social justice, and maintain public benefit. It should practice urbanization in Chinese contexts, and develop a balanced settlement hierarchy from large cities to small villages. As some goals in 1998’s *Master Plan* had been achieved ahead of time, Chongqing released a new *Master Plan 2007-2020* in 2007. To improve the integration of urban and rural areas, the plan firstly specified the system of cities to 1 megacity, 6 big cities, 25 medium and small cities, 95 center towns and around 400 general towns. Secondly, an important concept for regional space structure, *One*

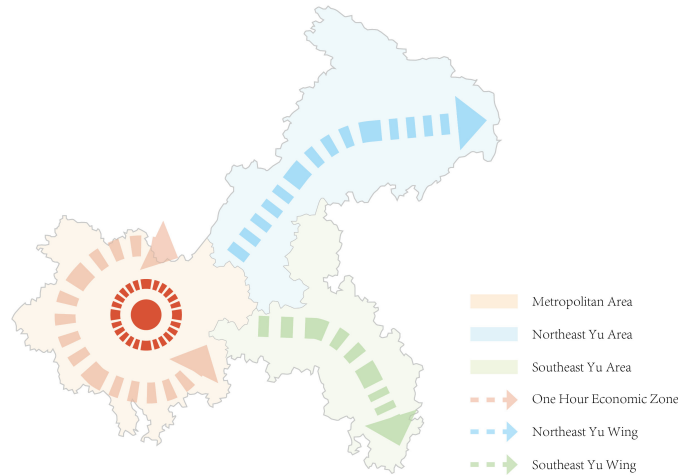


Figure 5: The One Center and Two Wings Structure, 2007

*Center and Two Wings*, was proposed; one center meant the one-hour economic center, consisting of 23 networking districts and counties, covering 2.87 km<sup>2</sup> and connected by diverse ways of transportation, including water transportation, railway, highway and air transportation; two wings consisted of 2 linear regions, Northeast Yu Wing centering on Wanzhou district and Southeast Yu Wing centering on Qianjiang District (Figure 5). These 3 regions have different development directions based on their own advantages; the center region should fulfil its leading role and make efforts to narrow the gap among cities and towns, while the other two regions should fulfil the duty of ecological migration and accelerate to transfer superfluous labour.

During these 10 years, Chongqing was able to build a relatively rational system of cities, explore the approach to build metropolitan areas and drive the development in rural areas.

Year	Planning	Strategic Positioning	Key Points	Major Influence
1946	<i>Draft of Ten-Year Planning on the Construction of the Alternate Capital</i>	the permanent alternate capital after the war; future center for policy, economy, military and culture in southwestern areas	satellite town; economy; transportation system; health facilities	not implemented
1960	<i>Chongqing Primary Plan</i>	a comprehensive and modern industrial city specializing in steel, machine, transport tool, heavy chemical industry	satellite town; industrial distribution; transportation system	not implemented
1964	<i>Third Front Construction Plan</i>	/	industry development	rapid growth in population and industry; poor economic output; severe pollution
1983	<i>The Master Plan</i>	a commercial center in upper Yangtze River, a water and land transportation hub and trade port,	polycentric structure; compact groups with mixed uses;	constellation-like urban structure formed;
1990	<i>The Master Plan (Adjustment)</i>	an industrial city with light and heavy industry, a national famous historical and cultural city, an international trade port	historic cultural heritage; International trade port	comprehensive development;
1998	<i>The Master Plan 1996-2020</i>	the biggest center for economy, technology, culture and education in upper reaches of the Yangtze River and southwest areas, a national transportation and communication hub, and an important industrial city	city-town system	great area growth; balanced city-town system
2007	<i>The Master Plan 2007-2020</i>	the important Center City, a national famous historical and cultural city, the national modern manufacturing industry base, a commercial center in upper Yangtze River, a transportation hub in middle and western areas	urban-rural integration; function structure;	one center two wings structure;

Table 2: Summary of Important City Plans



**Summary**

That the city development history of Chongqing is unique is not only resulted from its special landscape with rivers and mountains, but also because of those critical junctures, especially after it was forced to open up to Western countries in 1890s when its dramatic leapfrog development started. Since 1890s, Chongqing gradually started its urbanization and become the commercial center because it was the only opened port city in inland China. After the KMT government moved to Chongqing and designated it as the wartime capital, Chongqing reached its peak of political status, jumping to the national political, military and commercial center and experiencing the wartime prosperity with a 10-time increase of population from 1936 to 1946; this is also the period when Chongqing first got its heavy industry development.

After the foundation of Republic of China in 1949, Chongqing achieved significant success during the difficult time because of the *Third Front Construction Policy*, which greatly enhanced its heavy industry foundation and grow into one of the most important industrial bases nationwide. Then in 1978, along with *Reform and Opening Up*, the whole nation experienced significant change and so did Chongqing. However, since the *Reform and Opening Up* mainly focused on eastern coastal cities, Chongqing's development was soon found left behind after 1978. Therefore, in order to minimize the gap and strike a balance, the central government designated Chongqing as the fourth MCG in 1997 and released *Great Western Development Strategy* in 2000, helping Chongqing develop into a growth pole in the Three Gorges area and southwest China.

Driven by political power, social organization and economy development, Chongqing's area, population and Per Capita GDP greatly increased from 1949 to 2010. Among these forces, political ones contributed most especially by changing the administration area of Chongqing, continuously practicing and developing the idea of dispersed and compact groups (Table 3).

Period	Critical Junctures	City Index			Main Motive Forces
		Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Population (10,000 persons)	Per Capita GDP (yuan)	
1949-1957	The Great Leap	7692 (1959)	2005.18	132.45	political power; social organization
1957-1977	Third Front Construction	9848 (1978)	2724.89	221.00	political power; social organization; economy development
1978-1990	Reform and Opening-up	23114 (1983)	2920.90	1122.09	social organization; economy development
1991-1996	Designation of City of Open Economy along Yangtze River;		3042.92	4350.71	political power; social organization; economy development
1997-2010	MCG ; Three Gorges Dam Project; The Great Western Development	82403 (1997)	3303.45	26127.28	political power; social organization; economy development

Table 3: Summary of Critical junctures, City Index and Main Motive Forces

**Concluding comments**

This study reviewed the city development and planning history of Chongqing from 1949 to 2010, finding that critical junctures, usually followed by significant policies and strategies, constituted a crucial motive forces for its development. Generally, Chinese cities are motivated by comprehensive forces in regard of policy, economy and society, however in Chongqing, especially in modern period, political power, instead of social and economic accumulation, played a crucial role and stimulated its development rapidly.

Meanwhile, in response to these continuing policy shifting, the city planning proved to be reasonable and successful, particularly concerning the city structure. Based on its own geography and profoundly influenced by the organic decentralization theory which was widely spread in the Modern China, the idea to develop Chongqing into a polycentric city with dispersed compact groups remained and its implication kept being specified and grew. Developing from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a city with one single center, Chongqing's urban morphology gradually grew bigger and more comprehensive. During the wartime, its urban areas began to disperse and primarily formed the quincunx structure. The *Third Front Construction* in 1960s brought about a rapid development of small cities and towns; as the city planning came back on track in the 1980s, city development became more rational and the constellation-like structure began to emerge. Later after its municipality, the administrative area greatly grew and the polycentric structure at a bigger scale formed.

After around the 30-year development after the first city planning document was released, Chongqing has already built a comprehensive development framework in system of cities, transportation and economy. Along with the history, the political environment and national strategies kept changing, and so did the direction of Chongqing's development. Therefore, city planning in Chongqing generally stayed on macro level and did not go further. As



the nation is developing into a new stage, Chongqing is also embracing its new chance and challenge now; this study provided suggestions that it is time for Chongqing to adjust the development objectives from macro structure building to micro quality improving. First, it is pivotal to continue the environment-friendly polycentric structure development according to the natural geography. This will also strengthen Chongqing's identity as mountain and river city and help build residents' identity which can transfer to the competitiveness of the city. Moreover, Chongqing still needs to improve its livability and sustainability both ecologically and socially, which particularly require attention on human scale and everyday life. To address this, it should try to improve the quality of urban environment, create more livable communities, provide more public spaces with diverse uses, as well as conserve its historic heritage. Finally, there are already increasing urban redevelopment projects where traditional planning theory finds difficult to deal with. Urban redevelopment requires new knowledge including economy, property law, management, and so on. Public participation will be critical to guarantee the justice during the process, that is to say, besides making sure that politic and economic forces can fulfil their role, decision makers should also pay attention to social forces, making multiple objectives, exercising public participation and achieving social justice in policy making and implementing process.

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### Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

### Notes on contributor(s)

Min Jiang is a first-year Ph.D. student from the University of Tokyo, Japan. Her Ph.D. research is dealing with publicness, development of riverfront areas, production of space, especially in Chongqing, China. Before that, she studied the history and theory of American humanistic urban design, focusing on streets, for her Master degree.

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> The 4 municipalities in China include Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin and Chongqing.

<sup>2</sup> The first generation of National Central Cities were designated in 2010, including Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chongqing.

<sup>3</sup> Prince Zhao Chun described his being titled as Prince Gong and then Emperor Guangzong in the following month as a double celebrations.

<sup>4</sup> Other 4 national center cities are Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

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Figure 1: Redrew by the author according to The City Planning Department of Chongqing. *The Historical Atlas of Chongqing*. Shanxi: Xi'an Cartographic Publishing House. 2017.

Figure 2: Alternate Capital Planning Advisory. *Draft of Ten-Year Planning on the Construction of the Alternate Capital*. Chongqing: Chongqing Planning Exhibition Hall & Chongqing Library. Reprinted in 2005: p132.

Figure 3: Redrew by the author according to Xu, Yuhui. *History, Present, Future: research on the Evolution and Planning of Chongqing's Center Urban Areas*. Chongqing University. 1999: 175.

Figure 4: Redrew by the author according to Xu, Yuhui. *History, Present, Future: research on the Evolution and Planning of Chongqing's Center Urban Areas*. Chongqing University. 1999: 255.

Figure 5: Redrew by the author according to Master Plan 1996-2020, 1998.