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The Warp and Weft of Life:

Heritage and Working-class Nostalgia in a Chinese Textile Town

Xiao Luo

The Warp and Weft of Life:

Heritage and Working-class Nostalgia in a Chinese Textile Town

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geboren te Xi'an, China
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Go with the flow. My name, 潇(Xiao), carries the imagery of water — unhurried but persistent, deep and clear. In many ways, this dissertation followed that same logic. It did not force its way forward; instead, it drifted through curiosity and serendipitous encounters.

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致我最爱的父母：
无论我身在何处，无论我选择何路，你们的爱与支持始终如一。

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Nostalgia, Heritage and Class

I stood in the main building of the art district. It was a vast industrial space with a long, wide hall and a high, slanted ceiling supported by exposed beams. Natural light streamed in through a row of windows lining one side of the building, filling the interior with a bright and airy atmosphere. Located in a textile town on the eastern suburb of Xi'an — a city renowned as the ancient gateway to the Silk Road and the resting place of the Terracotta Army — this art district has been transformed from the ruins of a bankrupt Printing & Dyeing Factory in 2007. Like this factory, four other factories in the textile town were closed in 2008. Since then, the original sites have seen the rise of cultural projects and real estate developments.

Xu, a former textile worker, accompanied me. She had been a team leader on the preparation shop floor. After the factory's closure and the subsequent layoffs, she found work as a sales assistant in a supermarket. Although the art district was only a fifteen-minute walk from Xu's home, this was her first visit back to the site.

It was a very hot summer day, but when we entered the main hall, we felt pleasantly cool even though there was no air conditioning, as the building was well-ventilated. Xu seemed excited to return. Her large eyes blinked with curiosity, and her warm smile brightened her face as she spoke. She constantly compared the details of her past working days with the current situation before us: the two sides of the long hall were divided into a tea house, art gallery, coffee room, photographic studio, and various workshops where classes were held. But when we walked along the hall, we noticed that some spaces, which could be rented for commercial use, were vacant, with advertisements for leasing them posted on the windows. The contrast between the prosperity of the heyday, when thousands of workers labored together on the various shop floors, and the depression of the sparsely populated art district made Xu emotional. As we walked through the long hall, we saw three textile machines. She slowed down, moving closer to the machines, intending to show me how they operated, but a sign reading "Please do not touch" prevented her from doing so. Xu sighed, and complained that there was no opportunity to show me how the machines worked.

We could not find anything else related to the textile shop floor except for the building's inner structure and the three obsolete textile machines. Yet, this only seemed to deepen Xu's sense of

nostalgia. She began recalling details about how they worked on typical days and during the tough night shifts. Xu missed the simple, pure relationships she had with her follow workers, whom she called sisters. She expressed her frustration and pain about the factory's economic decline, which eventually led to the layoffs. Although she spoke in a calm tone, her teary eyes and deep sighs conveyed her strong attachment to this place. In the end, Xu mentioned that she needed to visit more often, even though it was no longer the place she once knew. Before I completed my year of fieldwork, however, this was the only time she revisited the site.

Xu was one of the thousands of workers laid off in the textile town a decade ago. Though no longer employed at the factories, they still reside in the nearby residential area, just a short walk away. Yet, like Xu, most of my other interlocutors rarely return to the places where they once worked. The pain of revisiting those memories is too overwhelming. It is as if an invisible boundary has formed between the factory grounds and their homes, a boundary making the apparent disconnect between their past and present. Yet, when they do cross that line and return to their former workplace, the nostalgia deepens their struggles with the experiences that have shaped most of their lives. The place they return to is now labeled as "industrial heritage," but only the physical structure remains. The tradition and legacy of the working class that once brought this space to life are nowhere to be found. Where are the workers who gave this place its soul? How can it be called industrial heritage if there is no working class here?

This study is about how working class people like Xu navigate their ruptures and connections between their past industrial experiences and their current engagements with heritage. I aim to establish a more specific connection between "class" and "heritage" and to explore how far the concept of heritage works for understanding class solidarity. I particularly ask whether "heritage" is useful for exploring class identities in a nominally socialist state. The story of an industrial community and its workers, who have lived through the social and cultural transformations, provides us with an effective way to reflect on this relationship.

Despite the closure of factories and the resulting disruptions in the transmission of heritage between past and present, workers demonstrate resilience and adaptability. They have the capacity to preserve their heritage and inherit working-class legacy in their daily lives. Nevertheless, the connection between workers and their former workplaces is multifaceted, involving a complex sense of nostalgia intertwined with pride and loss when reflecting on their heritage. By employing the concept of nostalgia, I examine how it connects industrial heritage with the working class. This analysis helps us understand questions such as: What does this nostalgia reveal about the nature of class? How do shifts in class status create nostalgia that might diverge from the actual experiences of work during that period? This nostalgic complexity challenges oversimplified narratives of class struggle and underscores the multifaceted nature of how the use of heritage reflects class complexity.

I further question unilineal models of "progress" and explore how "progress" and "heritage" serve to relate class identity to ideologies of social and cultural change. By exploring the relationship between workers and their factory community, my aim is to demonstrate that heritage involves not only preserving the past but also actively negotiating the present. These dynamics are evident in the

enduring disconnections between official narratives of "progress" and the lived realities of dislocation. To provide a clear structure for my study, I outline two main aspects of research questions:

- *Heritage*. What do the symbolic significance and value of industrial heritage mean for working-class people and authorities in the present, respectively? How has the socialist legacy influenced nostalgia and conflicts in contemporary China? What forms of heritage, beyond material conservation, can be integrated into daily lives and passed down?
- *Class*. Does class still matter? What does it mean to be socialist workers amidst the shifting dynamics of gender, identity, and class across generations? How does China's ongoing shifting class structure reflect changes in the political economy and politics, particularly within the context of the socialist factory's history, and subsequently influence the complex utilization of working class heritage?

I adopt an ethnographic perspective and delve into the daily lives of workers before and after the closure of a state-owned textile factory in the textile town. The stories in the textile town are able to demonstrate the diversity of heritage and the influence of class and power in determining which ones are recognized. This strengthens our understanding of "Critical Heritage Studies" (Harrison 2012), which critically examines how heritage is constructed, managed, and represented, questioning dominant narratives and power structure. What happened at the textile factory will illuminate these questions at the grassroots level, thus constituting a significant anthropological contribution to broader discussions on heritage politics and class dynamics. To delve into these dynamics, I aim to navigate through relevant literature and theories concerning heritage and class. This exploration will serve as a guiding framework for my research.

Nostalgia and Heritage

Upon entering the reconstructed traditional buildings, the old furniture and decorations transport us back in time. They have been carefully placed there to evoke a bygone era and an old way of life. This experience can evoke a sense of nostalgia within us, and we may find ourselves yearning for a simpler time. Nevertheless, this longing can be ironic to the local people, as the reconstructed heritage may represent an imagined, idealized, and distorted past. The reality is that even within this inner community, there are variations in how the past is remembered and interpreted. This raises a question: if we no longer see that it is the community that shares one single memory, then what is the intellectual significance of a variety of different memories and different kinds of nostalgia? To address this question, I divide it into two sub-questions: First, what do people remember, and how do they represent their lived experience when they feel nostalgic for the past? Second, how do people comprehend the past through heritage, viewing it as a form of cultural memory that both represents and reconstructs the past within a larger societal framework? These two concepts, nostalgia and heritage, are interwoven throughout the dissertation.

The term nostalgia is Greek in origin, and it consists of two words: *nostos* and *algia*. *Nostos* means returning home, and *algia* means pain. In an introduction to thoughtful research on nostalgia, Boym

stated that "nostalgia is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed" (2001: xiii). In her study of the Soviet Union, Boym traced the emergence of nostalgia and showed the presence of a longing to return to a communist utopia that never existed. Nostalgia is neither a lament of loss nor a dissatisfaction with the present, nor is it a simple return to the better past, for as Boym argued, "one is nostalgic not for the past the way it was, but for the past the way it could have been. It is this past perfect that one strives to realize in the future" (2001: 351).

The emergence of nostalgia as a practice in people's everyday lives has become a common phenomenon the world over. Nostalgia is present in films, music, literature, social media, restaurants, and other nostalgic commercial products. As Lowenthal pointed out, "nostalgia is today's favored mode of looking back" (2015: 31). The German term Ostalgie, for example, combined *die Osten* (the East) and nostalgia, which emerged after the collapse of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the fall of the Berlin Wall. In Berdahl's (2010) observation, Ostalgie products, such as game cards, disco music, and GDR food brands, have become a major source of longing for aspects of life that existed in communist East Germany. The commercial dimension to Ostalgie products has successfully evoked people's shared memory, connected the past and the present, and combined personal experience and social production in various forms to thus generate "feelings of longing, mourning, resentment, anger, relief, redemption, and satisfaction — often within the same individuals (2010: 203)". These Ostalgie products underwent a shift "in value and demand," which means that nostalgia is a reflection of the present more than of the past. Thus, nostalgia provides us with an opportunity to rethink the relationship between the past and present, and it prompts us to delve into the interaction between personal identity and official history. This provides a way of resisting and struggling over dominant modes of knowledge production and power.

Nostalgia is not always present, but certain scenes do evoke it. Spatial arrangements can evoke nostalgic sentiment. The industrial museum, for example, establishes a connection that helps former workers recall their experience working on a shop floor, and it offers an effective way of making nostalgia come alive in a productive and emotional way. Smith and Campbell (2017) conducted interviews on industrial heritage with people from three countries. They found that when working-class people visited such industrial places, the visit helped these people to trace the history of the factory and the process of industrialization, and they recalled their memories of being part of the working class. These people were not just visitors to the industrial museum, rather, they became masters and storytellers of working-class history, and they even constructed their own history from this memorialization. Nostalgia can thus be seen as a force for radical and progressive change. Smith and Campbell further verified the positive effect that nostalgia can have. They argued that there is a distinction between "reactionary nostalgia" and "progressive nostalgia," and they suggested that progressive nostalgia is an effective and emotional way for working-class people to express themselves in order to "contextualize the achievements and gains of present day living and working conditions and to set a politically progressive agenda for the future" (2017: 613). In my study, textile workers expressed similar emotions when reminiscing about their past experiences working and living in the factory community. I will demonstrate how their nostalgia plays a productive role in evoking hopes for

social equality, a sense of self-esteem with dignity, and fostering class solidarity for the future.

Nevertheless, nostalgia can be used as a tool by a bureaucracy to distort and tamper with social and collective memory. In official narratives of recalling the past, nostalgia is always presented as an innocent and romantic emotion in order to invite people to forget the painful aspects of the past. Rosaldo (1989) argued that when mourning the loss of traditional societies, we must realize how complicit we are with imperialism. He introduced the term "imperialistic nostalgia" to describe this sentimental discourse: "the anthropological trope and the colonial official's curious longing for what he or she has destroyed" (1989: 120). Specifically, the colonial powers did not want the old cultural values to prevail; they dismantled past rituals and reified their remnants as museum objects, relegating them to an unrecoverable past. Building on Rosaldo's idea, Herzfeld (2021) proposed the concept of "bureaucratic nostalgia" to illustrate how the official state wants to destroy all traces of the old lifestyle, replacing them with a sanitized version that those whose lifestyle is affected would not even recognize as their own. An example of this is seen in the authorities' actions at Pom Mahakan in Bangkok, where commemorative signage was set up to acknowledge traditional activities that once took place but have since disappeared. Herzfeld used findings to criticize the political logic of eviction during urbanization, and he gave a further explanation wherein:

> ... bureaucratic nostalgia is a forced eviction from the present, which evacuates the community from historical time just as the authorities have banished it from space ... The bureaucrats' nostalgia is a weapon of structural violence; they use the mockery of those monumentalizing little notices about vanished streets to exorcise any trace of the lived reality and to deny it any hope of return. (2021: 154)

Indeed, when people talk about nostalgia, they always focus on *nostos* (home), but neglect *algia* (pain). Nostalgia relates to something really painful for people, but what the official state generally does is to conceal the painful side, only showing the beautiful surface and evoking a nostalgic imagination. The state asks people to forget the pain in order to build a positive image that will attract people with a connection to this romantic nostalgia, which it does to avoid people harboring resentment toward them. Thus, forgetting becomes a frequent occurrence during urbanization, and it only leaves a memory that has been distorted. Therefore, in my dissertation, I analyze how working-class people reclaim the aspect of "pain" in nostalgia, which is often neglected by officials who promote the labor spirit of the working class for socialist construction.

Nostalgia shares its territory with heritage all the time. Heritage is able to provide a theater in which memory could perform (Samuel 1994), and it can recall people's nostalgia vividly. The question that heritage brings up is similar to what nostalgia always causes: it simplifies a tension and contradiction between local people and official heritage discourse during the simple and selective process of heritage-making. Nostalgia can be used during a heritagization process. When local people experience nostalgia because they are dissatisfied with the present, local officials or business investors may use such sentiment to reconstruct architecture to bring about the past — the beautified and imagined past. This result, however, may enhance more nostalgic emotions. This can occur because

heritagization processes, as Herzfeld argued, "are not strictly nostalgic. They are, rather, products of nostalgia, stimuli for its production, or mere imitations. They usually only trigger nostalgic reactions when observers lament that they are 'not the real thing' — a bow to the rhetoric of authenticity and the sense of loss" (2021: 13–14). Therefore, in my study, it is crucial to ask: What are people nostalgic for? Do local residents genuinely care about heritage? And to whom does heritage belong?

Berliner (2012) explored the connection between nostalgia and heritage and analyzed how nostalgia works as a critical driving force in heritage-making when Luang Prabang became a UNESCO-listed World Heritage Site in 1995. He found multiple nostalgic attachments engaged in heritage-making. These were all rooted in personal experiences, and they intersected with specific stances or postures toward time, history, heritage, development, and culture. The local elite and experts felt a sense of loss when UNESCO arrived, because few local participants were involved in the heritage-making decision, and they therefore feared they would lose the Luang Prabang spirit (2012: 776). Berliner asserted that people experience nostalgia even if it does not come from a firsthand nostalgic memory, and he viewed nostalgia "as a specific posture vis-à-vis the past seen as irreversible, a set of publicly displayed discourses, practices, and emotions where the ancient is somehow glorified" (2012: 770).

Understanding heritage politics requires ethnographic detail in order to uncover such powerful inequality. Herzfeld's (1991) analysis of the politics of heritage in Greece considered the political logic and cultural contradictions between history and modernity, occident and orient, and official ideology and social practice. The concepts of "social time" and "monumental time" help us understand the conflict between public memorization and official ideology. His critical discussion of heritage shows how it can be used, from various perspectives, as part of struggles with cultural identity in social practice. This is visible in Thailand too, where the residents in Pom Mahakan, one small community in Bangkok, also use history and heritage to struggle with Thai politics in order to protect their homes from gentrification and themselves from eviction (Herzfeld 2016a). These thought-provoking ethnographies encourage me to pay attention to local practice, listen to voices from the grassroots, observe conflict and resistance, and uncover political and social inequality. My study of the relationship between industrial heritage and the working class in the textile town is a profound example that demonstrates such inequality. The narratives unfolding within the textile town provide a view of the disjuncture between official models of "progress" and the on-the-ground experience of dislocation. I will use local cultural projects to highlight this discrepancy.

Nostalgia represents various forms of sentimental longing. In my study, the critical question is: who is nostalgic? And why? Nostalgia has multilayered meanings for different places, communities and people, and we should therefore understand what nostalgia means in local discourses. Analyzing nostalgia is an important way of understanding the relationship between the past and present, and it also offers the possibility of longing for the future. To understanding various forms of nostalgia and nostalgic practice, in my dissertation, I use ethnographic details when searching through the different layers of nostalgic longings to analyze the nostalgia's contradictions and conflicts. I will show the potential problem of expressing simple nostalgia in order to avoid a power imbalance and the social inequality inherent in sentimentalizing the past (Strangleman 2013).

Heritage provides a space for nostalgia to interact with class tradition and identity. Understanding whose heritage and nostalgia are involved, and how they all interact is critical to comprehending how people experience the past, present, and their longing for the future in a particular place. Therefore, identifying the relationship between nostalgia and heritage through people's everyday lives is an effective way of grasping their attachment to a place and their relationship to time.

Industrial Heritage and Working Class

The smokestack was a defining feature of many factories, and it stood for the prosperous industrial period. But how did the smokestack change after the factory closures? When exploring an industrial site that has been reused as an art district or other commercial space, the enduring presence of smokestacks never fails to evoke a sense of nostalgia. Despite the transformations it has undergone, the sight of these towering structures stands as a reminder of the glories of the past that workers have made. It shifted from being a material entity to becoming a visual symbol evidencing the inevitable trend of deindustrialization the world over, and it is remembered through the idea of "smokestack nostalgia" (Cowie and Heathcott 2003: 15). This, however, is not the simple memorization of the past; we should be aware of the smokestack's historical importance and the cultural meanings of the smokestack and other surrounding objects for contemporary society (Cowie and Heathcott 2003; Dudley 1997; Strangleman 2013), and then we need to delve into the impact of deindustrialization.

Deindustrialization is not just a phenomenon that happens in a particular place at a specific time, like in the Rust Belt, a steelmaking region of the US, in the 1980s (Bluestone and Harrison 1982). Thus, deindustrialization cannot just be understood as a factory shutdown or job losses. Cowie and Heathcott (2003) summarized the meaning of the deindustrialization process in the US, and they claimed that it is important to analyze "fundamental long-term historical trends" through a discussion of "spatial relations, cultural politics, labor organization, key transformations in the urban landscape, the political and social burdens that plague former industrial communities, the environmental legacy, and changes in social identity" (2003: 14). Thus, deindustrialization has a broader meaning of conveying a social and economic transformation that has complicated and crucial influences on places and people all over the world.

The phenomenon of deindustrialization has spurred efforts to safeguard industrial heritage, which has been increasingly recognized as vital for preserving the cultural identity and historical memory of communities affected by economic shifts. Since the signing of The Nizhny Tagil Charter by The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage (TICCIH) in 2003, the practice of protecting industrial heritage has proliferated worldwide. Subsequently, The Dublin Principles were adopted in 2011, providing a framework for the conservation of industrial heritage sites, structures, areas, and landscapes (Douet 2013). Nevertheless, despite these efforts, industrial heritage sites are underrepresented on UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites compared to other cultural heritage sites. Additionally, the sites listed tend to be concentrated in Western countries rather than other regions of the world. This illustrates the selection process for industrial heritage in the

West, as defined by Smith (2006) as an Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD). From policymaking and selection procedure to protective implementation, cultural heritage is consistently legalized and regulated through an AHD. This discourse holds persuasive power across international organizations and domestic bureaucracies. Nevertheless, to avoid the overly broad application of AHD, we must first consider who holds the authority to authorize it. Smith argued that what is chosen as heritage follows "western elite cultural values as being universally applicable" and neglects the people and places that do not match the aesthetic logic of the cultural and economic elite, which therefore "undermines alternative and subaltern ideas about heritage" (2006: 11). She mentioned two consequences of the AHD: one is the formation of "legitimate spokespersons for the past," and the other is that of treating the idea of heritage as innately valuable, wherein everything "good and important about the past has contributed to the development of the cultural character of the present" (2006: 29). Meskell (2013) criticized the artificial separation of material heritage and local people's experience, especially in UNESCO, for example, and argued that this represents a dynamic political complexity that links to the interests of nation states and various agencies. As he said, "The creation of heritage is also the creation of heritage conflict." Therefore, UNESCO has become a platform on which different stakeholders position their interests.

Industrial heritage does not only include factory buildings, machinery equipment, and monuments; it is also concerned with working-class life and communities, such as ways of using machines, festivals or events, oral history, pictures, songs, and literature (Smith, Shackel, and Campbell 2011). Working-class people who work, live, and experience everything in their industrial workplace and community have a capacity for self-expression that draws on their past, which they can use to remake the present and future (Dicks 2000; Keşküla 2013; Loveday 2014; Muehlebach 2017; Smith, Shackel, and Campbell 2011). Local practices offer us some alternative ways of understanding the relationship between class and heritage. For example, in the Durham mining communities, workers have begun rebuilding their community solidarity by revaluing the 1984/85 strike and reassessing the impact of deindustrialization (Benyon and Austin 1994). This process of "emotional regeneration" (Stephenson and Wray 2005) demonstrates that working-class residents possess the capacity to reinterpret and reclaim the meanings of their past.

What deindustrialization brings about is not only the physical destruction and ruins of the industrial landscape, but also a profound sense of nostalgia that permeates the community. Nostalgia offers an effective form of longing and hope because it has a "disruptive and unsettling force" (Bonnett 2015), and it has a future-oriented power that emerges from the memorization of working-class people (Smith and Campbell 2017). In recent years, industrial museums have emerged, and artist zones have been established in former industrial sites, signaling a shift in heritage politics. This phenomenon raises several questions: Why has this shift occurred? How can we interpret these new conceptions of heritage in relation to the values and meanings of industrial heritage? What are the effects of this shift on the reuse and reconstruction of industrial ruins? And when these ruins are repurposed to promote heritage tourism, how does industrial heritage tourism differ from traditional cultural heritage tourism? In this dissertation, I will show the different perspectives on such cultural processes that are

involved in the performance and negotiations of cultural and economic values, nostalgia, narratives, and memorization in the industrial community.

Establishing a more specific connection between "class" and "heritage" is very important. Critical Heritage Studies underscores the importance of acknowledging the diversity of heritages and the influence of class and power in determining which ones are recognized as such. Nevertheless, industrial heritage and the working class are always viewed separately. Lots of stories about industrial history, labor, and inspirational working-class people speak of the importance of this class and its history. Meanwhile, the preservation of industrial heritage, such as Iron Bridge in the UK and the Ruhr in Germany, provides positive examples for the textile town on how to preserve the industrial landscape and keep the industrial past vivid. Yet approaches to the phenomenon of industrial heritage that do not recognize its working-class origins — approaches often linked to gentrification — can disrupt the lives of working-class people (Morell 2012).

Industrial heritage is, by definition, passed on. In this study, I do not describe how to preserve industrial remains but rather examine how working-class people inherit their traditions and maintain their collective memory, even though their practices may vary from generation to generation, and this group may no longer exist. I will explore how they inherit industrial heritage and how they deal with breaks in this inheritance, which may be caused by official government approaches to heritage and by breaks in the memory chain connecting one generation to the next. There are three generations living in the textile town. Each generation laments that the present time lacks the purity, mutual understanding, and spiritual essence of their own era. A break in the affective relations also entails a break in the transmission of knowledge. Therefore, I aim to investigate the differences and similarities in yearning over the generations, and how their interactions and conflicts arise when they evoke the idealized past and the present reality.

We need to examine the transformation of working-class life and community if we wish to understand people's feelings of loss and hope, their hidden nostalgia, and their ambiguous attitudes toward industrial heritage. Other working-class communities have faced a similar fate amid social and cultural transformation. Caoyang New Village, for example — the first workers' community built in Shanghai and the earliest of its kind in China after 1949 — stands as a model for the development of working-class neighborhoods. Once celebrated as a "model community" and a symbol of social status and pride, the village has declined amid urban transformation and social change. Now recognized as part of the 20th-Century Chinese Architectural Heritage, it faces the pressing challenge, as Yang (2019) notes, of balancing heritage conservation with the need to improve residents' living conditions — a dilemma also encountered by textile towns. On one hand, the local government is eager to renew the buildings, which hold symbolic value in embodying socialist ideals and the spirit of solidarity. On the other hand, such renewal risks erasing the memories cherished by older generations and deepening class divisions, complicating efforts to foster an inclusive and meaningful heritage revival.

By exploring the intersection of working-class experiences and industrial heritage, I create a critical and empirical space, using the concept of nostalgia to analyze the symbolic meaning and value of industrial heritage. This raises important questions about the impact of industrial heritage

conservation, highlighting how it can inadvertently marginalize the very people it aims to celebrate. Nevertheless, such marginalization is often inadvertent but functions as deliberate symbolic violence, akin to bureaucratic and imperial nostalgia. To analyze how local officials use heritage to establish symbolic boundaries between working-class people and industrial heritage, I will employ a dynamic historical approach. This approach will examine changes in working-class everyday life and identity both before and after factory closures.

Class in China

What occurred in the textile town and the life stories of its workers raise the series of questions: How has the working class, once considered the master of the socialist country, seemingly disappeared? What new classes have emerged, and how have individuals transitioned into this new class structure? Why has this transformation occurred with minimal friction or upheaval? Additionally, how has the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) retooled the traditional socialist culture of class and work to suit its contemporary governance agenda? Lastly, what is the relationship between class and heritage in China's context, particularly given the evolving landscape of the country's class structure? To gain insight into the working class and industrial heritage in China, I will delve into the contextual background of China's political and economic landscape in the following sections.

Danwei and the Working Class in China

The fate of China's state-owned enterprises (SOEs) fluctuated alongside China's political and economic transformation. From the period of the planned economy to the market economy, state-owned factories have played a significant role in China's industrial development. In this period, the trajectory of the state-owned factories has been marked by a rise, development, and then a decline. The formation and reform of the state-enterprise system, which people in China always call the danwei (work unit) system, is commonly viewed as being subject to China's political and institutional system, and completed on behalf of it. The elements of state-owned enterprises include "a bureaucratic governance structure, distinctive management and incentive mechanisms, and the provision of social services and welfare" (Bian 2005: 1).

When and how the danwei system emerged and formed in China's history is the first important question to discuss. After the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) and the Chinese Civil War (1945–1949), China's industrial and agricultural production was particularly low, and the country had a weak industrial base. By 1949, the pervasive poverty and the lack of industrial production had caused serious problems in social life. The kind of path that China should choose was the priority question for the Chinese Communist Party. Mao Zedong published an article entitled "The Present Situation and Our Tasks" in 1947, in which he proposed that the economic structure of New China consist of:

- the state-owned economy, which is the leading sector;
- the agricultural economy, developing step by step from individual to collective; and

- the economy of small independent craftsmen and traders and the economy of small and middle private capital.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union was the first country to establish diplomatic relations with China. Two months after the foundation of the People's Republic of China, on December 6, 1949, Mao visited the Soviet Union for the first time. The main purpose of his visit was to ask the Soviet Union for help with the economic recovery and development. Since then, a series of economic policies came into force, and the top priority project was the construction of heavy and light industrial enterprises. Mass state-owned factories came into being.

Some scholars have asserted that China's economic approach during the 1950s was almost a duplicate of Russia's Stalinist model in the 1930s, and China adopted a Soviet-style system until the late 1970s (Cheng 1971; Dernberger 1999; Perkins 1991). Except for this external Soviet influence, what were the deep-rooted reasons that stimulated and mediated this approach to the Chinese economy as suiting China's situation? The formation and development of the danwei system offer a distinctive answer. Some scholars traced the original roots of the danwei system back to before 1949. In her analysis of labor policy and the communist labor movement, Perry (1997) argued that some skilled workers from Shanghai's communist labor movement from the 1920s to the 1940s then became the Party's leaders and formulated policies that turned the state enterprises into institutions that offered lifetime benefits in the 1950s. Lü (1997), meanwhile, suggested that the free supply system (*gongjizhi*) and the Communist Party's self-reliant economic role took shape in wartime and also gave rise to the structure of the earliest danwei system. Bian (2005) discussed the endogenous and exogenous origins of the danwei system and offered a thought-provoking analysis, describing how the crisis triggered by war motivated the formation of state-owned enterprises. He focused on the history of how heavy industry, such as weapons production, developed during the Sino-Japanese War, and how the strategy of "path dependence" strengthened the management of the state-owned enterprises.

The textile town in Xi'an is a typical example of the state-owned textile factories that were originally built from the early 1950s. In this dissertation, I trace the history of constructing the textile town from the level of national policy to local practices. The purpose of returning to history is to answer a series of questions: why did the New China require the expansion of light industry like the textile industry? Why and how did it choose the eastern suburb of Xi'an as a place in which to build textile factories? What was the construction process for the six factories in the textile town during the first five-year plan (1953–1958)? What role did the Soviet Union play during this period? And how did ordinary people overcome difficult conditions when building factories? Did this historical process affect their identity as socialist workers?

To understand the character of the danwei system, we should view it as a dynamic process and not only focus on its formation but also observe what kinds of interaction it promoted between the government, managers, and workers. In the socialist period, danwei divided urban space up into self-sufficient units with a clear boundary. Danwei was not only a place of work; it also provided other social facilities including housing, medical care, and education that benefited various generations. Bray's (2005) analysis of how the danwei system was organized as the predominant sociospatial form

and self-sufficient unit provides us with a productive way of thinking about the political and social logic of the danwei system. As he said, "Political and economic strategies of government in China have impinged upon the everyday lives of the urban population" (2005: 1). Bray combined a Foucauldian genealogical methodology and Henri Lefebvre's theory of space to analyze the reformation and reform of the danwei system. He traced the traditional Chinese "wall" concept back to Confucian cosmology in order to discuss the political and cultural function of the "wall" in the spatial organization of the danwei.

I agree with Bray's argument that the danwei system was not the simple extension of state or Party-centered control in a negative way, rather, it entailed "positive technologies productive of particular relations of spatial practice" (2005: 20). In my study, the positive elements come from the dynamic labor process on the shop floor. I focus on daily routines and activities on the shop floor, and on how workers produced knowledge and formed a habitus from danwei. I argue that the social practice of workers both working and living in danwei formed a productive way of interacting with other workers and family members, and it enhanced their sense of belonging and collective sense of honor when working in a socialist state-owned factory.

Danwei is not an isolated island surrounded by a wall, and it is not a self-sufficient utopia. Rather, its rise and fall has closely followed China's economic and social changes, and workers' fates have been deeply affected by the policy of reform. The economic reforms began in the 1980s, and they introduced a socialist market economy. The opening up of the Chinese economy for foreign direct investment, a free market, a commodity economy, and private enterprises was part of significant reforms made to the Chinese economy during the 1980s, and these reforms decentralized and privatized the political and economic structure. The 1990s was the main period of the SOEs' institutional reform. This included the transformation of enterprise operating mechanisms, the establishment of modern enterprise systems and the reorganization of state-owned enterprises. The *Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Major Issues Concerning the Reform and Development of State-Owned Enterprises*, adopted by the 15th CPC Central Committee on September 22, 1999, was the cornerstone of the SOE reform. It strengthened the reform process and had a profound influence on workers all over the country, which then led to more than sixty million job losses between 1993 and 2006 (Hurst 2009: 1).

Working-class people, who were one of the most influential groups, have been significantly re-shaped by policies and practices under the influence of economic reform in late socialist China. China's economic reform has brought tremendous social, economic, and political changes to industrial structures and working-class society. Workers who devoted most of their life to the socialist construction, however, have been neglected and excluded by the rapid urbanization. The term for laid-off workers in China, *xiagang*, was pervasive over the last two decades. Mass layoffs were widespread and caused crucial social problems. Despite some efforts to ease the unemployment situation, finding a satisfactory solution was difficult. Scholars presented a description of the painful and miserable experiences of laid-off workers. To hear the voice of *xiagang*, for instance, Hung and Chiu presented how ordinary workers comprehended their private troubles, with their wrath over "their betrayal by the

state" (2009: 113).

I trace the reform of state-owned textile factories in the textile town not only in terms of the historical background and policy analysis but also in terms of individual workers' responses to the reforms. After the SOEs' reform and the bankruptcy policy, workers in the textile town did not escape the reality of being laid off. They suffered a great deal during this period; they felt angry, disappointed, sad, and even felt betrayed. But life has to move on; what happened to the workers and how did they deal with such difficulties? Workers' remembrance, forgetting and commemoration, and the everyday practice of struggle, resilience, conflict, silence, and concessions provide us with important details about this tough period. I describe the complex nostalgia linked to having been a textile worker, now caught between a sense of pride and loss. On the one hand, they were very proud that they were socialist workers, and they recognized themselves as the masters of the socialist country. This pride was rooted in a sense of security and dignity. On the other hand, what they were proud of, in turn, led them to now feel a sense of loss and precarity.

The workers with whom I talked had already experienced the SOE bankruptcy process over ten years ago. Therefore, my study differs from the other literature on laid-off workers in that I focus on their changing perspective on this dynamic process. Ten years of experience since being laid off has affected their attitude toward danwei, and it has led to changes in the working class's identity, which has shifted from a collective class consciousness to individual neoliberal ideas. This also relates to the production of industrial heritage. The workers' attachment to their danwei and the later break in that connection has resulted in complexity and contradictions vis-à-vis official practices of industrial heritage. The workers' sense of pride and loss are certainly part of this heritage, as these emotions demonstrate how workers reinterpret and reflect on their traditions and experiences, and then inherit them in different ways in their daily lives.

China's Shifting Class Structure

The history of danwei and the working class people are part of a larger story behind the changes in the political economy and politics associated with China's ongoing shift in class structure.

During the Mao era, the urban class structure in China adhered to a hierarchical framework. The "state cadres" (guojia ganbu) comprised only 5% of the total workforce and approximately 20% of the urban labor force, holding esteemed administrative, managerial, and professional roles, and enjoying above-average privileges (Bian 1994; Walder 1995). Despite the urban working class being enshrined as the "leading class" and fundamental to the socialist regime, there existed a substantial disparity between them and the state cadres, both in terms of authority and economic standing. After the reforms in 1978, increased marketization led to a more fragmented and less clearly hierarchical structure, fundamentally reshaping the societal order. The question of whether state cadres still enjoy privileges compared to emerging occupations such as entrepreneurs and intellectuals has garnered significant attention from scholars (Oi 1992; So 2003; Walder 1994). Despite a series of reform policies and practices, it is evident that state cadres continue to leverage their political and social capital, ranging

from high-ranking officials to local government representatives (Duckett 2001; Nee 1992).

Since the economic reforms of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in China by 1998, marketization and housing privatization have profoundly altered the landscape of lifetime employment and collective benefits (Davis 2000), while also fostered dynamics of social stratification focused on disparities in market status (Davis 1995). Unlike the pre-reform era, where cadres held top positions of authority, the emerging "market socialist" economy significantly undermined the foundational structures of the previous hierarchical system (Bian 2002). Subsequently, social change has diversified significantly, witnessing the emergence of numerous new occupations and social demands. Chinese working class structure is experiencing profound change. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics of China (NBSC) in 2023 reveals that state-owned enterprises employed merely 56.12 million individuals, constituting only 7.3% of the total employed population for that year (NBSC 2023).

This prompts the question: who else comprises the working class? China's integration into the global economy and the labor market's diversity unveils various forms of employment. For instance, there has been a noticeable surge in the number of "hired workers" in the private sector, fostering the expansion of the emerging social class during the urbanization. It has also resulted in an increased presence of "migrant workers" — a newly emerging and increasingly influential demographic within the Chinese labor force — migrating to urban areas, facilitated by the more flexible hukou policy. A significant portion of migrant workers are involved in manual labor, such as construction work, signaling an increase in "informal employment" within the industry (Swider 2016). Migrant workers play a crucial role in urban development, yet their relationship with local residents and government officials is often complex, characterized by both cooperation and conflict. They face the constant risk of eviction, which further compounds their already precarious and fragile situation (Liu 2015; Shi 2008; Xiang 2004; Zhang 2001). As a result, many individuals previously employed in state sectors faced layoffs, alongside migrant workers, leading to the emergence of a new urban poverty stratum.

Defining the working class is not straightforward; we must also examine it in light of other class transitions, such as the emergence of the middle class. Unlike the middle class that emerged in 19th-century Europe, China's middle class carries a more nuanced meaning, and determining whether the newly emerging class belongs to it requires examination. For instance, Goodman (2010) suggested that as China underwent significant changes after 1978, the rise of a new wealthy class did not mirror the emergence of the bourgeoisie during the industrialization of 19th-century Europe. In contrast to historical Europe, China's affluent newcomers often maintain strong ties to the existing political system, suggesting they may become central figures of the future ruling class. The lifestyle of the middle class has increasingly become a symbol of identity, reflecting both socio-economic status and consumption habits. For example, where one lives or the type of property one owns can symbolize their social standing. The privatization of real estate has notably heightened class distinctions, as the spatial organization of urban areas reflects and reinforces class differences. This process is driven by the evolving dynamics of urban governance. Housing privatization has dismantled the previous system of welfare housing provided by danwei, leading to the emergence of a new middle class and its associated lifestyle (Zhang 2012). In addition, intellectuals have emerged as the most innovative

segment, with science and technology playing a dominant role in production. While intellectuals played a significant role as part of the working class in Chinese history during the Mao era, New Class theories propose that in post-capitalist societies, it is the intelligentsia rather than the proletariat that is moving toward positions of power (Gouldner 1979; King and Szelényi 2004).

China's political and economic reforms have led to significant inequalities, which the government has not sought to eliminate but rather to manage through various modes of governance. For instance, the term "class" is no longer prevalent in popular discourse; instead, "social strata" is used to emphasize cultural distinctions, helping to manage a society that has become more stratified. As argued by Anagnost (2013), the middle class is actively constructed through a new model of citizenship that positions it as a source of value production. This governance strategy separates the new social class based on consumption patterns, encouraging the majority of the population to aspire to a "dream image" of the middle class. This approach not only stimulates further economic growth during the reform era, but also masks the social inequalities by reinforcing cultural differences in a hierarchy of national belonging.

This is why I want to delve back into the forgotten communities of the working class, seeking to understand this shift in the discourse on class. Class has not disappeared but persists in subtler, more concealed and contradictory forms. While class discourse still remains among older generations of workers, among their descendants, the aspiration for a middle-class lifestyle has led to a greater disconnection from the traditional inheritance of the working class. The emergence of industrial heritage discourse appears, on the surface, to revive the past of the working class. Yet, it actually serves as an attraction for the consumption of middle class or those aspiring to be middle class. This dynamic represents a mode of social governance that not only fails to safeguard the working class's heritage but once again marginalizes the working-class people who still living in the old industrial communities by discarding the notion of class and its attendant values.

The emergence of new social classes over the past two decades reflects China's transition in economic and political contexts, reshaping the relationship between the state and the public. State governance is more than just top-down policy implementation; it is a form of governmentality (Foucault 1991) that interacts with people's daily lives. Zhang's concept of "late-socialism" encompasses various forces, including marketization, privatization, globalization, and the enduring influence of the socialist system (Zhang 2001). These forces not only impact changes in class relations but also shape the lives of individuals today. The three generations of textile workers I focus on are influenced by these multifaceted forces. Nevertheless, they are not passive actors manipulated by external forces; instead, life difficulties have compelled them to exercise agency in navigating social change. While the pride of their past as a significant working class remains with them, it is also the root of conflict and pain. I aim to portray the past and present of these textile workers, discussing their transformation as a working class. I argue that the working class has not vanished; rather, with increasing class diversity, it has integrated into other social categories of laborers. Importantly, the working class is not merely a status symbol for them but a way of life that can be passed on as industrial heritage. Therefore, I will detail their productive labor process on the socialist factory floor and how they have adapted to

working in new state-owned factories and private enterprises under late-socialism. This exploration aims to understand how, amidst the process of class change, they have incorporated their socialist-era working-class tradition and experience into their new work and life.

Neoliberalism in China

Neoliberalism has become a popular but controversial term for scholars interested in discussing the social and cultural transformations that capitalism and globalization have brought with them. As Ganti (2014) and Kipnis (2007) noted, neoliberalism has grown to become a term ubiquitous in anthropological journals; it seems to be crucial to understanding recent changes in everyday life. The principal elements of neoliberalism include privatization, competition, responsibility, self-management, and self-improvement, and it is a structural force or ideology of governance embedded in policymaking and individuals' daily lives. Anthropologists' ethnographies have demonstrated practices linked to neoliberalism throughout the world. For example, Molé (2010) analyzed how the effects and implications of neoliberalism affect labor exclusion and work conflicts in Italy, and her work has also indicated that neoliberalism has given rise to a growing sense of apprehension and fear among Italian workers. Tran (2015) focused on how neoliberal reforms have had implications for new models and discourses on the emotions among the middle-class residents of Ho Chi Minh City. Matza (2012) discussed how psychological education has affected people in post-Soviet Russia through a governmentality perspective, and he suggested that attending to both subjectivation as an ethical practice and social history can help to understand the capitalist present effectively. According to Ganti (2014), anthropologists have adopted a critical understanding of neoliberalism on various topics, and they understand it in three ways. First, as a structured force, neoliberal policies and politics affect people's lives, such as through fiscal policy and collaboration (Riles 2013) and neoliberal welfare-state reform (Molé 2010; Muehlebach 2013b; Yazici 2012). Second, neoliberalism as an ideology of governance shapes subjectivities; this understanding focuses on the technologies and knowledge through which neoliberalism governs people in order to bring about the self-regulation and self-management of subjectivities (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2002; Craven 2007; Matza 2012). The sites and agents of neoliberal practice are a third way in which neoliberal ideology and policies are engaged. The growth of NGOs, for instance, intersects with the policy and ideology of neoliberal practice as an agent that seeks to decentralize and privatize the political and economic landscape (Ganti 2014: 97).

Anthropologists who explore topics related to neoliberalism expand our understanding of how this economic and political ideology affects both the state and individuals. Nevertheless, the ongoing debate over the appropriateness of the term "neoliberalism" serves as a reminder of our tendency to overuse and misinterpret concepts in contemporary society. It often seems that every phenomenon, regardless of its location around the world, can be explained and justified by applying the modes and patterns of neoliberalism. But the critical question we should ask ourselves is whether we truly comprehend the history, significance, and ramifications of the concept of neoliberalism. Is neoliberalism a universal phenomenon, or is it a specific practice within local knowledge? And does the term hinder our

understanding of cultural and social transformation? The 2012 meeting of the Group for Debates in Anthropological Theory (GDAT) provided critical insights into the use of this term (Ganti 2014). Supporters argued that the term provides a framework for understanding the relationship between the state, organizations, and individuals in a changing world, while opponents feared that it may obscure deeper and more complex issues within specific localities.

The debate over the use of the term "neoliberalism" in ethnographic research reminds us of the importance of adopting and using the term carefully in specific local contexts. It is essential to acknowledge the structural forces and ideologies that underlie neoliberalism's practice and its impact on people's thinking, behavior, and freedom of choice. The widespread use of the term, however, can obscure real problems if we attribute all problems solely to neoliberalism. For instance, as Ferguson (2006) asserted, Africans in various social and geographical contexts seek to assert their membership within a global community, which calls for new understandings of the global and neoliberal world orders. Therefore, as anthropologists, it is our responsibility to avoid applying the term too indiscriminately in different situations and to be mindful of our interlocutors' perspectives. In my study, I attempt to use the term critically to analyze the local knowledge and practices that emerged in late socialist China.

The literature on neoliberalism in China is also very rich and insightful. We should not neglect the historical context when we talk about neoliberalism in any place. This is equally true in China, where the critical questions include the following: how do neoliberal policy and ideology occur? And how do they affect people's lives and change the relationship between capitalism, governance, and subjectivity? Since the economic reform in 1978, a series of government decisions have been implemented to modify the previous political significance of the Cultural Revolution. Under the slogans of market "reform" (*gaige*) and "opening up" (*kaifang*), China has shifted focus from political campaigns to economic development. Throughout the 1980s, China established special economic zones (SEZs) in coastal areas, formulated fiscal and monetary policies to stimulate economic recovery, and gradually loosened its management of rural-urban migration. It has brought about rapid economic benefits, partly solved poverty-related problems, and changed peoples' living conditions. But at the same time, this has resulted in social inequality. During the 1990s, more policies and practices were introduced. The reform of welfare and state-owned enterprise has deeply affected most people's daily life. The main question is whether such reforms are led by neoliberalism, and, if so, how those neoliberal policies affect individuals' lives.

There are two common approaches to neoliberalism in China, and they relate to the discussion above on anthropological approaches to neoliberalism the world over. The first derives from a Marxist paradigm that regards neoliberalism as the effects of structural reform. It talks mainly about the economic reforms since the late 1970s, and how the reforms have resulted in a social and cultural transformation and have affected everyone's daily life. The second concept draws on Foucault's notion of governmentality (1991), which examines how knowledge and technology are used to manage subjectivity through everyday practices. It particularly focuses on how individuals are made docile by being led to police themselves. These two approaches always intertwine. The main focus on

neoliberalism concerns whether China has become a neoliberal country, and how China engages with the process of neoliberalism. In terms of how the state mediates market reform, Liew (2005) analyzed China's engagement with neoliberalism in relation to three factors: path dependency, industry policies in geography, and Party self-reinvention. The growth in a discussion about neoliberalism provides an opportunity for microlevel analysis in anthropology. Some scholars think there are several major characteristics that show that China is undergoing a neoliberal process of restructuring and a shift to neoliberal capitalism (Anagnost 2004; Rofel 2007; Yan 2003). In her deep description of "desire" as a key cultural practice that both the government and citizens pursue in postsocialist China, for example, Rofel (2007) examined how neoliberalism can be linked to a reconfiguration of the relationship between subjectivity and postsocialist transformation. In contrast with Rofel, however, Nonini (2008) asserted that China is neither becoming a neoliberal country nor is it undergoing a neoliberalization process. Rather, China's logic of rule, which the Communist Party of China's (CPC) leaders call "market socialism", is entirely different from Anglo-American neoliberalism, as the Anglo-American neoliberalism is challenged by disenfranchised classes.

The problem of applying a neoliberal paradigm to China, like the debate on neoliberalism I mentioned before, is an overarching trope. Nevertheless, how does neoliberalism impact Chinese society, and how is it manifested within the Chinese context? Some ethnographies provide insights into how neoliberalism is implemented in China. In his comprehensive study of Chinese party schools, Pieke (2009) introduces the term "neo-socialist" to analyze how neoliberal ideas cooperate with Chinese market principles, Leninist party organization, modernizing reforms, and party priorities within Chinese party education. This blend leads to the emergence of a distinct neo-socialist governmental discourse, which can be identified as one of the key factors contributing to twenty-five years of economic growth and social stability (2009: 6). In a subsequent article, Pieke (2012) specifically examines the transformation of neoliberal ideas of public management into the concept of "social management", which has increasingly become a prominent aspect of the Party's neo-socialist project. Kipnis (2007) provided two case studies that criticized the use of neoliberalism in China. In his discussion on China's concept of *suzhi* (quality) education, Kipnis unraveled how suzhi is used in myriad ways by actors ranging from the state to individuals. He demonstrated that the spread of suzhi, driven by the promotion of authoritarianism, may have a stronger governmentality effect. Additionally, the concept of suzhi is influenced by Chinese nationalism and is rooted in both Confucian and Marxist traditions (Kipnis 2007). Therefore, he asserted that the reified use of neoliberalism needs to be analyzed to avoid the holistic tropes that cover the differential representation of neoliberalism. Kipnis (2008) then followed this approach to discuss audit culture in China. In Western academia, audit cultures in schools are frequently criticized for their association with neoliberal ideologies (Shore and Wright 1999). When Kipnis explored the complexities of audit culture in China, he discovered that performance audits are characterized both as "socialist" and as a form of "neoliberal governmentality." He traced the idea of self-discipline and self-cultivation that originated in the historical context with, for example, classical philosophers in ancient China. Then he described how the new social effects came from the audit culture, which is heterogeneous in the sense of "governing from a distance". Anthropological

theory and ethnographic comparisons play a crucial role in analyzing the form of neoliberalism present in a given context. It is true that, for example, if we ignore "the interrelations among written plans, official pronouncements, off-the-record comments, and observed social practice" (Kipnis 2008: 285), then it is hard to grasp the contradictions and tensions occurring in a particular place when we face neoliberalism.

I find the discussion of neoliberalism useful when looking at China, neither because China has become a neoliberal country, nor because China perhaps simply borrows neoliberal ideological strategies when dealing with domestic and international issues. Rather, it is a productive way of understanding the dynamic process of social and cultural transformation through the changing interrelations between the state and individuals. My research is about workers' everyday lives before and after the factory closed down, which were deeply affected by economic reform policies. If we are to ask whether a series of economic reforms implemented by state-owned enterprises (SOEs) has been affected by neoliberalism, then we need to analyze the shift and the consequences that such policies bring with them, and we need to pay special attention to how such policies affect the lives of working-class people.

Therefore, in my dissertation, I analyze not only the political and economic background of the reform and the details of the shift in regulations, but I also concentrate more on how individuals experienced such changes. I describe historical images of workers' everyday routines on the shop floor and their social life in the welfare housing that forms their home. I then present details about the SOE reform and how the reform policy affected those workers and their families, with an emphasis on their complex sentiments: their disappointment, anger, struggle, and their survival strategies. Next, I consider their resistance, adaption, negotiation, and reciprocity in order to show how their subjectivities are changing ten years after the factory closure. This is not a set of independent phenomena combined to show the changes, rather, it is a historical and dynamic process that individuals have experienced and that covers their adjustments when dealing with the changes. In this process, how neoliberal policies such as the bankruptcy policy, the retrenchment of social welfare, and the privatization of state-owned factories and public goods affect workers' ways of living and working offers a window into local practices linked to discussions of neoliberalism.

Despite some similarities between appearances and the form of neoliberalism in this dynamic process, I challenge the patterns of "neoliberal governmentality" approach that describes a way of understanding individuals' subjectivity. I do this by analyzing how habitus and *guanxi* (a network of relationships) formed in the factory still affect their working and social life. Specifically, I criticize the idea of "neoliberal governmentality" from two aspects. First, workers needed to find new jobs to get by after being laid off, but because of their limited knowledge and the deskilling trend, it was difficult for them to find satisfying jobs. In this situation, neoliberal policies were manifest through an agency that offered various training classes and certificates, (for which the government had handed over responsibility to the agency) that claimed to provide useful techniques and skills to help workers gain fresh employment. At last, however, such practices became marked by formalism, inefficiency, and even complicity (Steinmüller 2013). In contrast, the workers' reemployment relied on their own

guanxi and reciprocity with their friends from the factory or relatives. Thus, we need to unravel the contradiction between neoliberal policy and social relations like guanxi in local practices.

Second, when the laid-off workers found new jobs, their punctuality, strong work ethic, sense of responsibility, and easygoing characteristics was positively evaluated and led to their receiving compliments. Did such advantages come from the neoliberal governmentality that workers learned during the reemployment training? Or was it their self-discipline gradually cultivated in the new workplace? I use the ethnographic method to uncover what has hidden behind these performances, and I use Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" (1984) to demonstrate some levels of adaptability among the workers while they maintained a sense of continuity with their historical practices. I discuss how the previous habitus formed from their experience working on the shop floor affected them and helped them to adapt to the new working environment.

In addition, the practice of industrial heritage can be discussed as logic of neoliberal policy useful for understanding the relationship between spatial arrangements and subjectivity. The cultural policy of protecting industrial heritage has been implemented in old industrial places around the country recently. Specifically, in the textile town, one textile factory became the art district, and the local government also created a Soviet-style street. I observe these two heritage projects in order to investigate heritage politics as a form of neoliberalism. My study elicits more narratives on previous textile workers' views on industrial heritage. As I described before, workers seemed to care little about how the factory turned out, but they then felt very emotional and nostalgic when they sat on the shop floor. I believe these contradictions indicate their complex relations with the spatial changes, and I analyze why workers' voices are neglected by heritage policy in practice.

Doing Fieldwork in the Textile Town in Xi'an

Xi'an is my hometown. I grew up in southeast Xi'an, went to university in the city's east, and worked in south Xi'an up until I went to the UK for my second master's degree and then to pursue a PhD in the Netherlands. My return to Xi'an to complete fieldwork was actually a challenging task, not only because the fieldwork was conducted in a community that I had never visited before, but also because that city is my hometown, and so I needed to rethink my position in relation to the fieldwork, and I had to consider how to balance anthropological "others" with myself — as a person familiar with the city but unfamiliar with this community that forms part of the city. Although an increasing number of anthropologists return to their own country, city, or community to do research, often called "anthropology at home" (Jackson 1987), I also needed to pay attention to the limitations of such an approach. I am willing to explain what I consider "others" to be in this research, and my interest in what makes people "others" is partly what motivated me to pick this topic.

One thing I have learned from anthropologists is how I can turn my gaze inward and see myself reflected through other people's everyday life. I understand "others" as not only a group of people you do not know but also as the distance present in the relationship between the researcher and their informants. This distance is not only a physical one; it also links with other essential factors. This

distance is a dynamic process. It has already narrowed down at the beginning when an anthropologist chooses one place over another and selects one group of people over others. When the anthropologist goes to this place and talks with others, lives with others, and experiences everyday life with others, the distance, both physical and cosmological, ever decreases up until you leave. Chinese researchers doing fieldwork in urban China may to experience less difficulty than those conducing fieldwork in Thailand or Estonia and speaking Thai or Estonian. Nevertheless, this assumption is flawed. It is often harder to conduct fieldwork "at home" because phenomena that an outsider might find interesting seem "too obvious." Additionally, one's relatives and friends may try to interfere in unhelpful ways, which can pose more challenges in dealing with complex *renqing* and *guanxi* (Yan 1996), making it difficult to grasp the "cultural intimacy" (Herzfeld 2014) through verbal, gestural, and other forms of interaction with others.

I had never been to the textile town's community before. The residents and workers who live there were total strangers to me. But some aspects of my positionality did positively affect or also limit my practice in the field. First, I used the same language (Mandarin) with my interlocutors, and I even speak the Shaanxi dialect, although not very fluently; this sometimes helped me to reduce the distance between myself and my informants. Second, although I was a newcomer to the textile community, this did not mean that I was totally unfamiliar with workers' life and the state-owned factory. In the 1980s, state-owned enterprises were still the main economic force in urban China, and most of the urban people worked and live in a *danwei* (work unit). During the late 1980s and the early 1990s, for roughly six years of my childhood, I lived with my parents in the workers' community of a state-owned watch factory in a southern suburb of Xi'an. I still remember snapshots of my childhood, such as running through the buildings of the work unit's housing, playing with friends whose parents were work colleagues of my parents, visiting the shop floor where my parents worked, and going to public baths with my mother, or the primary school just ten minutes' walk away from my home. After this short but very happy six years, our family moved to central Xi'an, and everything changed for me then. Therefore, while I cannot remember a lot about my childhood, I still have some feelings or connections with the factories and workers. This is why I was so excited when I decided to study workers and industrial heritage in a textile town in Xi'an.

During the fieldwork, I took my parents to visit the textile town several times. These visits always sparked their memories of having worked and lived in another state-owned factory — the watch factory community — although they left this community in 1995. When they walked under the tall sycamore tree and saw the dilapidated Soviet-style buildings that stood neatly by the roadside, nostalgia overwhelmed them, and they recalled many stories that happened in their *danwei*. The work unit (danwei) existed as a semi-isolated community that functioned as a 'small society' (xiaoshehui). It transcended the traditional boundaries of a workplace by managing the total social needs of its members, offering lifelong and intergenerational access to housing, medical services, and schools. The fate of danwei has fluctuated along with China's political and economic transformation. From the period of a planned economy to that of a market economy, danwei have played a significant role in China's industrial development and social stability.

My plan is to preserve the memories that I fear losing, and document the stories that I fear forgetting, as a way of continuing the legacies of the factory and its workers that have been taken away from my own life but that continue in the lives of others. Additionally, I feel that it is my mission to write a story about my parent's generation, depicting their struggles with the shift in social and cultural norms during late socialist China. This motivation explains why I chose this topic and conducted the fieldwork in a workers' community. During my first month in the textile town, the socialist housing, Soviet-style architecture, boulevard with sycamore trees, and the huge shop floor in the art district always brought me back to the imagined past of the 1980s and the 1990s. My parents also had similar feelings when I took them to the textile town. It felt as if we had fallen into an "imagined community" (Anderson 2006) and ignored reality. But after I had stayed in the textile town for longer and spoken with more people, I realized that my motivation at the beginning was a kind of "simple nostalgia" akin to that of the middle-class "urban explorers" (High and Lewis 2007) whose activities resonate with Romanticism. I may have experienced the "denial of coevalness" (Fabian 2014). I neglected this coevalness: the textile town was not in the 1990s and was not an imagined past because workers had been living in the factory community and had experienced real life, and real social and cultural change. I therefore then paid more attention to "intersubjectivity" (Fabian 2014) and focused on their own history and current everyday life.

But my imagination before the fieldwork period was very useful. It helped me to rethink how I anticipated, or failed to anticipate, my actual experiences in the field. Under these circumstances, my whole fieldwork changed form. During the fieldwork, forty-six people acted as my interlocutors. If we also include their family members then I talked with around one hundred people in total. I conducted fieldwork with ten informants in their current workplaces too. In sum, the fieldwork consists of three sections. The first part began in November 2017, and it continued up to March 2018. During this period, I accessed the field, met and talked with former textile workers and their family members, and observed their everyday life. In the workers' community, people knew each other. Although the factory had closed down ten years ago, most workers still lived in the same community. It was easier for me to form connections with more and more residents. They knew one another, and they recommended other workers to me very enthusiastically. This helped me to find similarities in working class families and also differences between individuals. In this period, retired workers were the main group that I focused on. This was because they had more time to talk with me and welcomed me into their homes. We cooked together, watched television, or completed outdoor activities like morning exercises or going to the outdoor market. In this period, I collected data mainly about workers' labor and social life in the factory through oral history, and with help from materials like pictures or memoirs, the past became more vivid. I completed informal interviews frequently too. I listed my questions before I talked with someone, but I found that my following their rhythm was more appropriate. It is easy to list interview questions in chronological order for a researcher, but for workers, the past exists in their memories, and their narratives about the past do not mean they are standing in that past moment; rather, they are standing in this present moment and are looking back at the past. Consequently, they always compared the past with the present. At times, individuals would share emotional narratives

about their experiences, while at other times, they calmly and objectively recounted events from the past. It is important to understand the context in which these stories were told, and how they differed across various situations.

The details I collected about workers' past days in the factory are not the whole story of their lives. After the factory was closed down ten years ago, most of them found other jobs and have since been working elsewhere, but they still live in the textile town. Thus, except for the retired workers who described their work after being laid off, I paid more attention to the former textile workers who were now employed elsewhere. It was impossible for me to observe how they worked in the factory in the past, but I could compare their current work with their narratives about the factory work in order to understand the dynamic labor process, their work and life habitus, and their everyday practice. Therefore, the second section of fieldwork was conducted from June 2018 to November 2018, and it concentrated mainly on those workers who had been laid off ten years ago but who had then found other jobs elsewhere. During this period, I followed them from the textile town in which they still live to their various new workplaces, such as supermarkets, shopping malls, restaurants, schools, shops, and other companies. Also, there is a new textile factory which is a combination of the previous five textile factories, and many former textile workers are employed in the new factory. This therefore provided me with another opportunity to gain a further understanding of the labor process in the textile industry, and to delve into the inner tensions present on the current shop floors. This fieldwork, which included my moving across sites, offered insights into how spatial changes affect workers' current work and life. It also provided me with more opportunities to dig into the relationship between the past and the present, and it helped me to understand how my interlocutors employed specific strategies to reproduce the social space.

My initial interest in this project stems from my first visit to the art district, which is a site at which one textile factory has been reconstructed and repurposed. But when I asked the factory workers how they felt about the art district, they displayed indifferent attitudes: most had not even been there, although it was just a ten-minute walk from their homes. This initial interest prompted me to figure out the relationship between industrial heritage and the working class; why did these workers seem uninterested in the art district, when it was in their former workplace? A simple walk around the art district was not an effective way of answering this question. Only when I understood the working class's past and present daily life could I understand what industrial heritage means to them. This is why the first and second sections of my fieldwork focus on workers' everyday life.

What industrial heritage means to working-class people is a central theme running throughout my entire dissertation. This is why I took walks with my interlocutors to the art district and observed their complex sentiments. During the last section of my fieldwork, from May to July 2019, I revisited industrial heritage sites, such as the art district, and focused on ongoing cultural projects in the textile town. This included a Soviet-style street, which was the local government's attempt to revive the area. Through this fieldwork period, I gained a deeper understanding of the contradictions between industrial heritage and the working class. I finally understood that industrial heritage is not just limited to physical places like the art district; it is also manifest in workers' everyday lives, and in how they

draw on the past and interpret the present. All in all, I demonstrate in this dissertation that the working class still matters.

Dissertation Structure

In this dissertation, I present my findings on the working class and industrial heritage, drawn from a thirteen-month fieldwork in a textile town in Xi'an, China. Apart from the introduction, the dissertation comprises three main parts. In **Part One** I focus mainly on the historical details about the textile workers in the textile town. Specifically, **Chapter 2** opens with a description of how the textile town was constructed as an industrial project in one of the oldest cities in China during the First Five-Year Plan (1953–1957). I describe how workers from diverse dialects and backgrounds settled in the textile town. They worked tirelessly to build the factories and endured harsh conditions to contribute to the construction of socialist China. Nevertheless, their efforts were ultimately met with bankruptcy and layoffs. While individuals may have limited power to determine their fate, I also demonstrate how they, as agents, actively resisted, adapted to, and negotiated changing circumstances. **Chapter 3** provides shop floor ethnography, delving into the labor process and workers' subjectivity in both the old and new factories. I offer a comparative analysis to understand what workers memorialize and why they feel nostalgic. By examining the daily routines and activities on the shop floor, I aim to demonstrate that nostalgia is a complex emotion that cannot be reduced to a mere longing for a simpler or better past. Instead, it arises from the intricacies of the labor process and its various cultural, social, and emotional dimensions. This analysis sets the stage for a deeper exploration of their everyday lives after the factory closed down, a topic discussed in Part Two.

Part Two shows what happened to the textile workers following the factory closure and their layoffs. In **Chapter 4**, I uncover how workers struggled with precarity when they worked in other places. I describe their commute, their working tasks, and what strategies they used in the new workplace. Even though they had left the state-owned factory many years ago, their resilience and strategies intertwined with the guanxi and habitus that had formed during their previous experiences in the factory; nevertheless, in their new workplaces, their guanxi and habitus were reified in various new ways. In this chapter, I present a new perspective on how habitus and guanxi can be viewed as forms of industrial heritage that working-class individuals can inherit to deal with life difficulties when their life situation changes from one of security to one of precarity. In **Chapter 5**, I explore the strategies textile workers use to navigate these changes. By employing the term "strategies of adjustment," I aim to shed light on their paths of resilience, compromises, and negotiations as they navigate shifting circumstances amid social changes. Their life experiences vividly demonstrate how individuals can adapt to crises, ruptures, and contradictions, while also navigating intergenerational relationships, gender dynamics, and friendships. I aim to demonstrate the essential role of the working class identity, as it shapes people's memories of the past and thus influences their attitudes towards the ongoing changes in the present.

Part Three focuses on industrial heritage as a method for revitalizing old industrial places amid

social change. In particular, in **Chapter 6**, I focus on how and why the heritage discourse, the reuse of industrial ruins, and the renewal of the factory community do not speak to working-class people effectively in this textile town. To examine the impact of the renovation of the industrial ruins and the factory community, and to address questions of "whose heritage?" and "whose nostalgia?", I focus on two projects in the textile town: the art district and the Soviet-style Street. I use these examples to demonstrate the complexity and contradictions of different actors engaged in the heritage discourse. Furthermore, these cases shed light on distinct layers of nostalgia — bureaucratic nostalgia and social nostalgia — offering profound insights into the social and cultural dynamics that underlie industrial heritage. In **Chapter 7**, I argue that understanding collective and individual memory in such nostalgia is an effective way of learning what industrial heritage means for working-class people. In the ethnographic part, I show how the government and working-class people share a sense of nostalgia, but even though their presentation of how they remember the past is similar, especially in relation to the glorious heyday, the meanings attached to their respective nostalgia are not the same. **Chapter 8** serves as the conclusion, where I present my ethnographic findings. I revisit the central themes of heritage and class, aiming to draw out some of the broader implications of the study.

Chapter 2

The History of the Textile Town

In this chapter, I will explore the history of the textile town on various levels, ranging from national policy to local practices. To understand the origins of working-class solidarity and its eventual dissolution, I view the industrial community, known as a "danwei," as a dynamic entity. A danwei or work unit is a seemingly closed community — a small society surrounded by walls. It is not only a place of work; it also provides for other social needs, including housing, medical care, and education, and these benefits pass from one generation to the next. My focus in this chapter extends beyond the formation of this industrial community; I also delve into their everyday practices, examining the interactions within the "state-danwei-individual" framework. I aim to analyze how a danwei forms, evolves, and functions as a bridge between the "state" and the "individual." Despite the disappearance of danwei as a formal entity, individuals continue to use the term and give it meaning in their daily life.

My study on the textile town in Xi'an is a typical example of how state-owned factories were an original development from the early 1950s onward in China. The textile town represents a typical danwei neighborhood where all the workers both work and live in this small society. Workers always used the term "small society" (xiaoshehui) to emphasize and distinguish this social realm from "outside" society (shehui shang). They had experienced past glories and felt a sense of pride in being masters of the country; but they had also endured the pain of being laid off, and they experienced a sense of loss from being abandoned by their country. In order to examine workers' stories through the rise and fall of the textile town, I return to where these stories unfolded, and to the question of how they ended. Thus, in this chapter, I start with my first impressions of the textile town after I gained access to this factory community. Then, I trace the history of the textile town from its birth and development to its bankruptcy and transformation. I intend to investigate how national policies affected the textile town and the workers during the last half-century, and I will also outline the workers' agency during this period of social and cultural transformation.

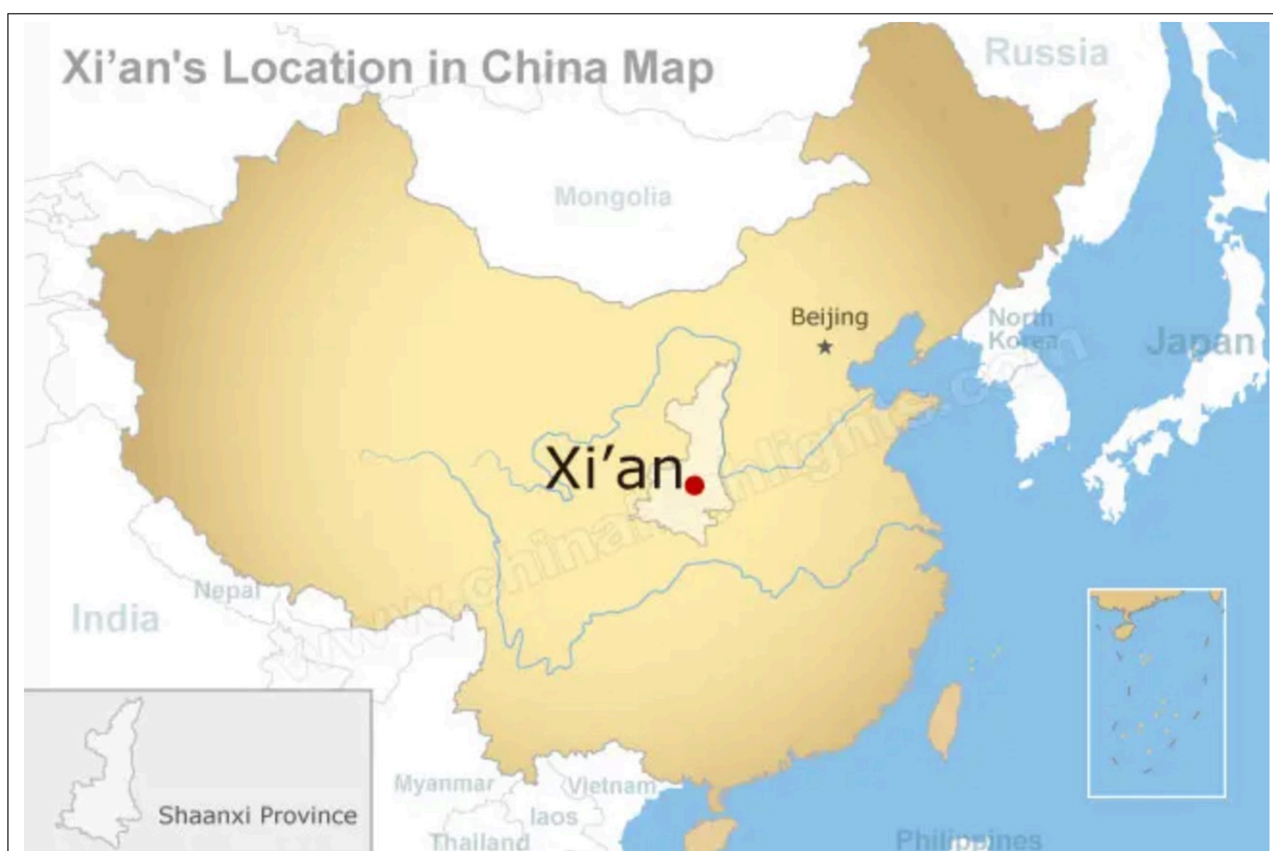

Figure 2.1: A map of China and the location of Xi'an city. Source: Chinahighlights.

Access to the Textile Town

It took me nearly one hour of traveling on the No.8 bus from Xi'an's city center to reach the heart of the textile town. The textile town lies at the edge of the Bailu plain in an eastern suburb of Xi'an, approximately twenty kilometers from the city center. There used to be a particular railway line for the textile factories, and this marked the boundary of the textile town. When the bus crossed this railway line, I had entered the textile town.

The textile town was split into two parts: the factory area and the living community. In the past, there had been five textile factories and a cement factory. In order from north to south, these were the First Printing & Dyeing Factory (known as Yiyin), the No.3 Factory, the No.4 Factory, the No.5 Factory, the No.6 Factory, and the Cement Factory. Each factory looked out onto a slope that led to that factory's living community. For example, if you traveled along the 350-meter slope at one side of the No.3 Factory, you would reach No.3 Factory's living community (*shequ*). Five slopes linked the workplace at the bottom of a slope to the living place at the top. The residents in the textile town always used the term "slope" (*po*) to describe their location. When I asked them to show me the location of certain restaurants, shops, or bus stops, they would say "the top of the slopes" (*po shang mian*) or "the bottom of the slopes" (*po xia mian*) to show me the direction.

While the No.5 Factory is still operating, the other four textile factories closed several years ago, and most parts of the plants have been demolished and used for other purposes. Specifically, a theme park was constructed on the former site of the No.3 Factory. The No.4 Factory was demolished, and a

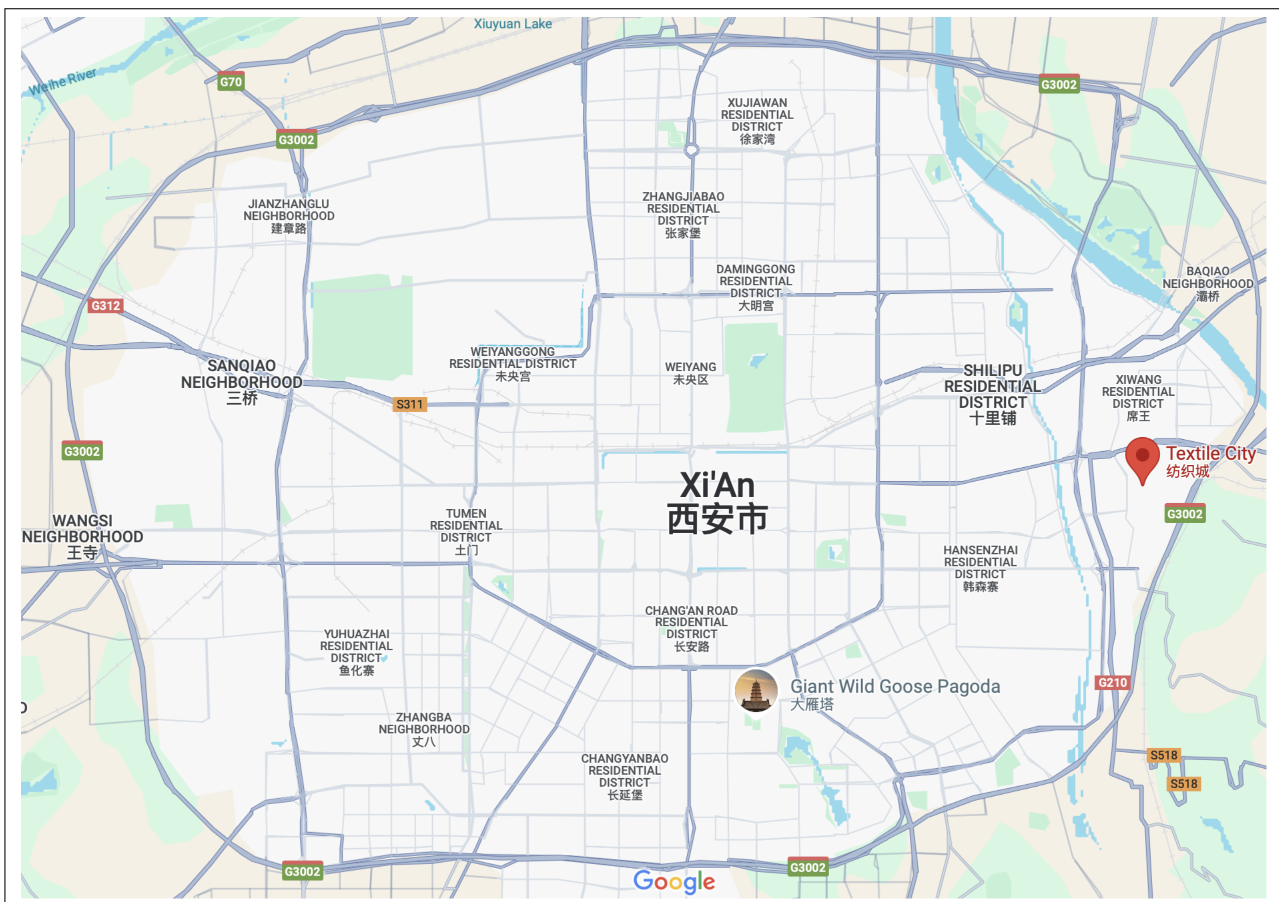

Figure 2.2: A map of Xi'an city showing the location of Textile Town (Fangzhicheng) in the eastern part of Xi'an. Source: Google Map.

new road now connects the suburb directly to the East Third Ring Road (Dong Sanhuan), and some new private communities have been built on the two sides of the road. The First Printing & Dyeing Factory, which was renovated first — because it was the first factory in the textile town to go bankrupt — has turned into an art district, and many artists and cultural companies have used the main plant and transformed its interior into studios from 2007 onward. The No.6 Factory's gate has become the gate of a private community, and several high-rise apartment buildings now stand on the former factory site.

Although the factories went bankrupt and ceased operations in 2008, the former workers still live in the welfare housing (*fuli fang*) which distributed and managed by the factory community. In the past, thousands of workers wearing blue uniforms and white hats walked up and down the slope. It took them only ten to fifteen minutes to walk between the working and the living area. Nowadays, however, except for the workers employed at the No.5 Factory, who would walk along the slope connecting the No.5 Factory with its living community, it was rare to see textile workers walking along other slopes to work.

In socialist residential planning, the structure of the workers' community was divided into three levels: neighborhood, cluster, and microdistrict (*xiaoqu*) (Wu 2015: 34). The textile town's structure can be explained in this way too: the entire residential community in the textile town is a working-class neighborhood. It includes all the residents from this area — members of all four generations since the 1950s. The second level is a factory cluster, and the clusters are divided in line with the division of the

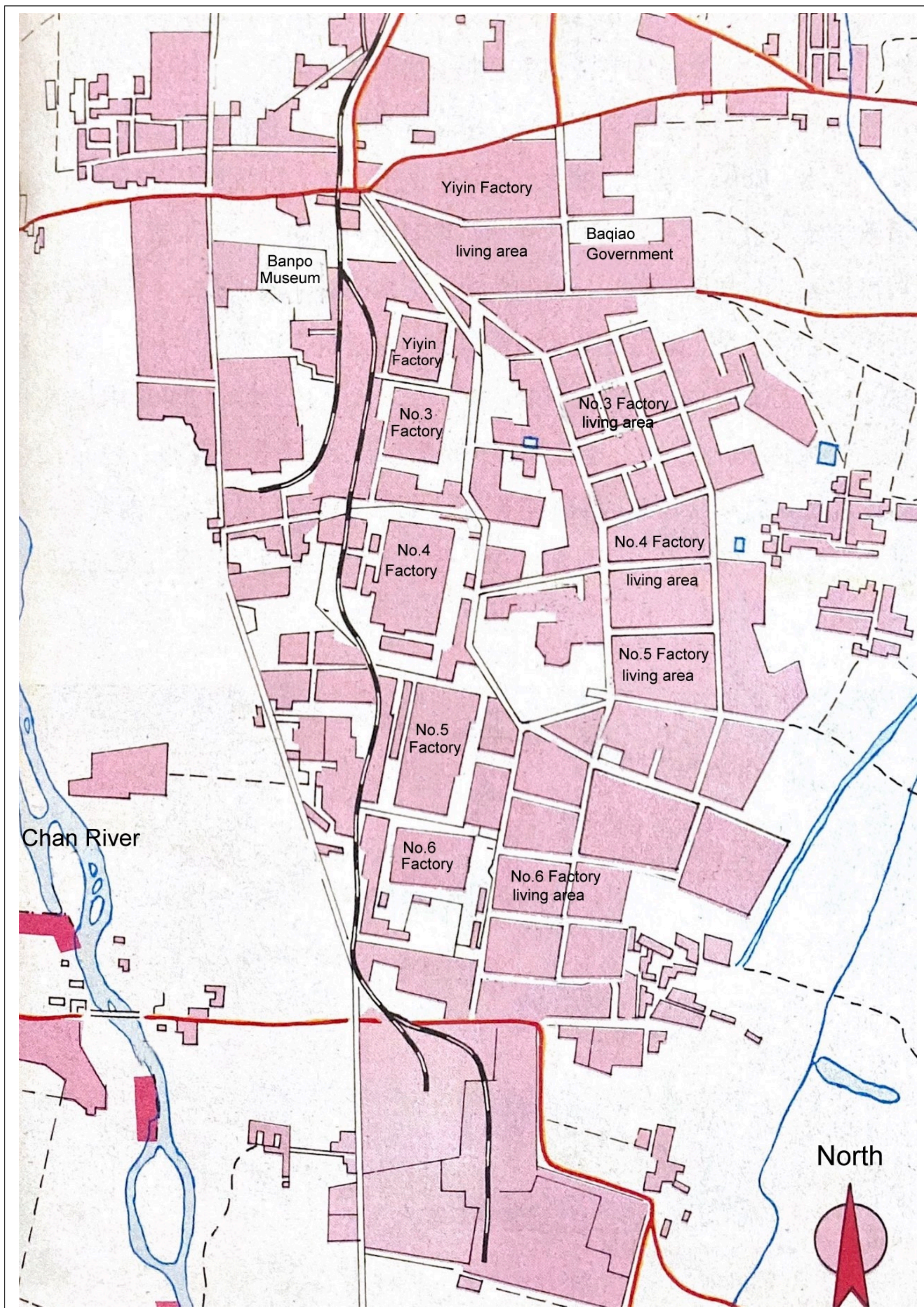

Figure 2.3: An old map showing a railway line linked all the textile town's factories. Source: The map from the book "The Memory of the Textile Town" (Fangzhicheng Jiyi) published by Xi'an Baqiao District Government.

various factories. For example, workers from No.3 Factory lived in a cluster that had been arranged and managed by No.3 Factory. Each cluster had its own clinic and school all within walking distance.

The third level is the microdistrict (*xiaoqu*), which includes several apartment buildings surrounded by the enclosure wall. The microdistricts often have two gates, that is, a front and back entrance. The settlement that belonged to the No.3 Factory has two xiaoqu, which are named "northern community"

(*beiqu*) and "southern community" (*nanqu*), and these names are engraved on top of the entrance gate. Nevertheless, workers never use beiqu or nanqu to describe where they are living. Instead, each building in the xiaoqu had its own name, and the names were assigned during the early period of the socialist project. Typical names included "civilization village" (*wenming cun*), "welfare village" (*fuli cun*), and "happiness village" (*xingfu cun*). When workers talked about where they were living, they never stated locations such as, "I am living in the southern part of No.3 Factory housing." Instead, they just mentioned the village's name and the number of the building, which provided enough information from which to glean their accurate location.

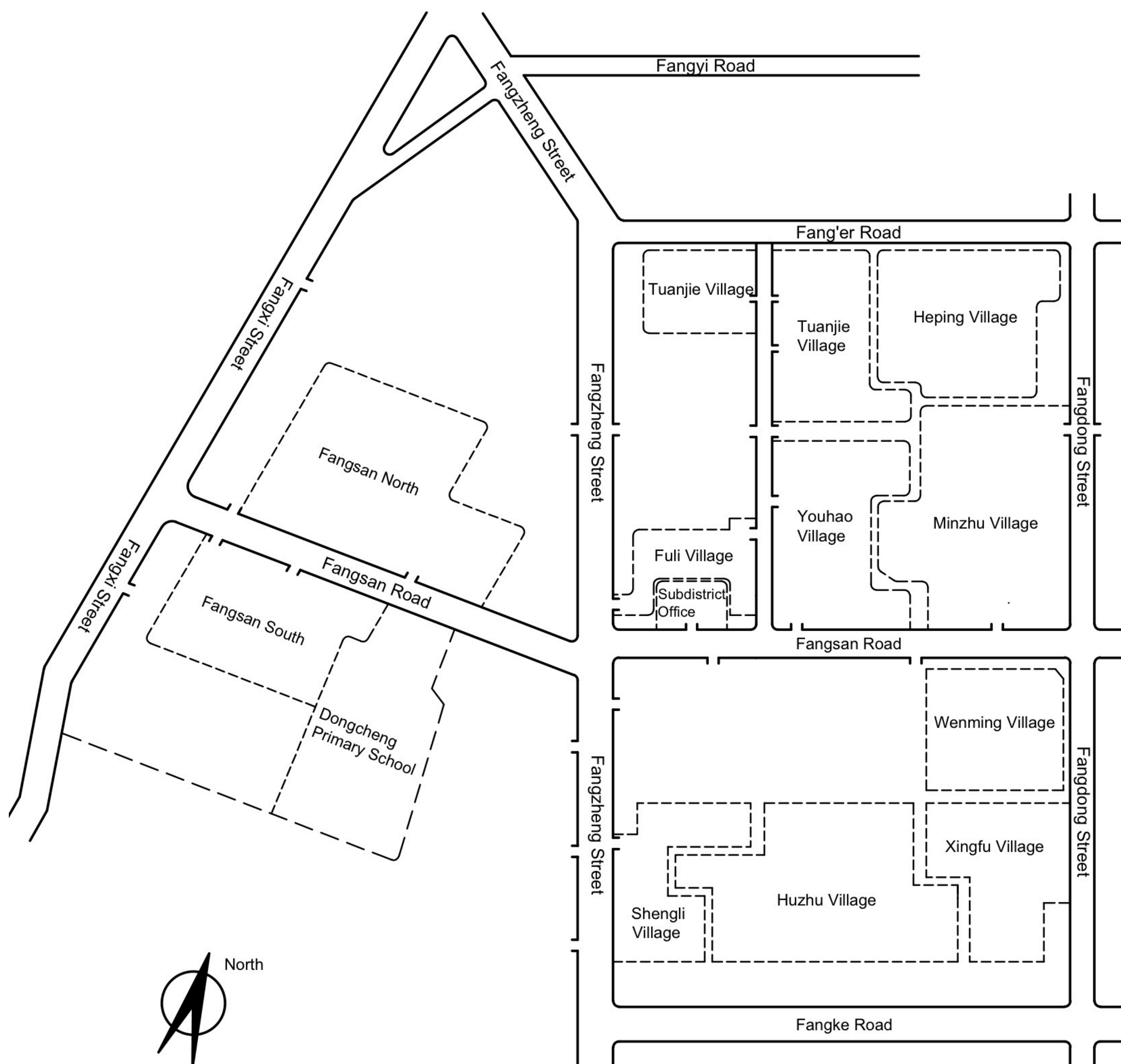

Figure 2.4: The map of No.3 Factory's xiaoqu and the socialist-style names of each building within it. Image rendered by Chi Cheng.

One of the differences in public space between social housing communities and private communities lies in how people use public space. In a private xiaoqu, it may be hard to see certain forms of

entertainment practiced in public space because the real estate company ensures a quiet, clean, and elegant inner space is maintained for middle-class residents (Zhang 2012). The old socialist community, however, is more vivid and less organized than those private communities. I often saw seniors talking with one another while they sat in groups of two or three on tiny chairs they had brought with them. Another common phenomenon inside the factory community was people playing mahjong or Chinese chess. On warm days, before I joined the crowds, I could hear the noises of people playing these games. There were more than ten tables. Some tables were made of stone or wood fixed on the ground, while others had been transported from people's apartments. Although there were only four people playing mahjong at one table and two people playing Chinese chess, they drew a crowd of spectators double the number of players. Most of the players and spectators were male. Female players were the only older people there, and few spectators watched them. It was very noisy during the entertainment, as the spectators always gave the players suggestions. Female players, however, played relatively quietly and sometimes discussed circulating gossip. Although I could feel the leisure and entertainment atmosphere, many residents complained that playing mahjong was a bad *fengqi*. Fengqi can be translated as a social ethos. Residents always used the word fengqi to self-mock the place in which they lived and to describe the textile town's backwardness.

Fangzheng Street was the busiest commercial street in the textile town. It was the main road that crossed all the five slopes and linked all the community clusters. Residents from all four generations walked up and down this vivid, lively, and noisy street from early morning onward. Many students walked from the community to school, either on their own or accompanied by parents or grandparents. Some stopped in at the shops to grab freshly steamed buns on the way to school. There were many private cars on the road, which always led to traffic jams. Many people who lived outside the textile town drove in and then dropped off their children by the primary and middle school; these schools had first belonged to the textile factory but later opened to the public. Some former textile residents drove out from the xiaoqu to work in locations outside the textile town. Most other people left their home and walked to the bus station or the subway en route to various workplaces far away from the textile town. The retired residents rushed to open-air markets or supermarkets very early in the morning to purchase fresh, cheap food. Many then went to the Textile Park (Fangzhi Gongyuan) — a public park in which they joined their exercise groups, enjoyed square dancing, sang in a small choir, did taichi, or played Chinese instruments. The vivid, lively atmosphere was ubiquitous, with the sound of car horns, pedestrians' voices, lively exchanges when haggling in the market, and various park noises.

Compared with these scenes at the top of the slope, the scene at the bottom of the slope was strikingly different, one of desertion and depression. In the past, the slopes that linked the living quarters and the workplace made up the entirety of a person's working life. During fieldwork, however, it seemed as if the two worlds had become divided into the top of the slopes (*po shang*) and the bottom of the slopes (*po xia*). The slopes did not feature as a linkage but rather as a boundary between the life of the former socialist xiaoqu and the lives of others in the private communities. The slopes remained the slopes. What had changed were the fate of the factories and the trajectory of workers' lives. To understand the rise and fall of the textile town, we need to first consider the birth of this industrial

place.

The Birth of the Textile Town

Before the founding of the People's Republic of China, the textile industry in China was considered one of the most developed industries. Shanghai, as the most prominent industrial center in 1930s China, possessed the most and largest cotton mills. These mills, however, had significant semicolonial characteristics, mainly because the equipment and raw materials could not be self-sufficient. More than half of the industrial sites were directly operated and manipulated by foreign countries and subject to foreign capital. For example, half of all the mills were Japanese cotton mills (Honig 1992: 28). The textile workers in Shanghai's cotton factories, especially the female workers, experienced various forms of oppression and exploitation. The Japanese invasion of China in 1937 seriously damaged the development of China's domestic textile industry. Shortly after, continual worker strikes and resistance during the civil war led to the slower-than-expected growth of China's textile industry (Honig 1992: 39). Because of this situation, after China was founded the state desperately needed to build its own industrial textile systems.

The act of establishing an independent and essential industry that would serve the new China required transforming the old textile industry into a socialist industry. The state had to solve the problems of sourcing equipment and raw materials themselves, and of cultivating a talented team. Thus, after the establishment of the Ministry of the Textile Industry in 1949, the original textile machinery parts and accessories repair factories in Shanghai, Tianjin, and Shenyang were transformed into textile equipment manufacturing plants. They produced various machines and then organized nationwide collaborations to form a complete set of supply capacities that met the requirements for developing the textile industry. In the meantime, the work of cultivating talent also swung into action. In the early 1950s, according to the subjects' adjustment of higher education institutions, the East China Textile Engineering College was established by merging some higher textile colleges in Jiangsu, Shanghai, and other places, all of which were fully equipped and cultivated a professional environment. This college adapted to the need to construct industrial textile bases in places such as Beijing, Xi'an, Zhengzhou, Shijiazhuang, and Handan (Chen 2012).

In the spring of 1952, China's former Ministry of the Textile Industry[1] decided to construct a textile base in Xi'an. They eventually selected an area named Guojiatan, located in the east suburb of Xi'an city between Ba River (Bahe) and Chan River (Chanhe). They chose this area for three reasons. First, the north was close to the Baqiao Thermal Power Plant, one of the 156 projects supported by the Soviet

[1]The Ministry of the Textile Industry, established in October 1949, was once an agency of the State Council in China. It then became a constituent department of the State Council in September 1954. In April 1970, the First Ministry of Light Industry, the Second Ministry of Light Industry, and the Ministry of the Textile Industry merged to form the Ministry of Light Industry. Still, the State Council restored the Ministry of Textile Industry in 1978. The Ministry of Textile Industry was abolished at the first session of the National People's Congress in 1993. In March 1998, the State Textile Industry Bureau was established based on the China Textile Federation, which was managed by the State Economic and Trade Commission. In February 2001, the State Textile Industry Bureau was abolished, and the China Textile Industry Association was established. Since then, the textile industry has been self-regulated by intermediary social organizations providing services and coordination.

Union during China's First Five-Year Plan period. The power plant could provide a convenient power supply and offer direct heat using the power plant's exhaust gas if the factory were close by. Second, because the Baqiao Thermal Power Plant (Baqiao dianchang) had a dedicated railway line that linked the important arterial east–west railway (known as the Longhai Railway), the new textile factories could also link their own railway line to the Baqiao railway line to deliver the products. Third, it was not very far away from city center when workers crossed the Chan River in the west. The geology of this site was hard loess, and so it was high terrain with no flood risk. There was enough groundwater, the water quality was good, and the temperature was low. It thus met the water requirements for air conditioning in the textile factories. An open plain lay to the south, and this plain could provide a vast space in which to construct joint factories and residential buildings. Therefore, this area was an ideal place in which to establish a textile base.

In March 1953, the Central Finance and Economics Commission and the Chinese Ministry of Textiles approved the construction plan with a total investment of 38.04 million RMB and land acquisition of 0.69 square kilometers from local peasants. The Infrastructure Bureau of the Ministry of Textiles designed the master plan and the main works, and the Northwest Textile Construction Corporation[2] undertook the construction task.

In April 1953, the first well was sunk. On June 20, the warehouse works began, and the plant infrastructure was ready to build. Many other works were carried out alongside constructing the main plant: acquiring land and relocating, digging deep wells, dealing with graveyards, erecting builders' sheds, building an exclusive railway, and constructing roads to the city. The construction conditions were arduous and challenging. When they started out, they relied entirely on the workforce because of the lack of mechanical equipment. Wang Yuncheng, who was one of the constructors in 1953, recalled the situation:

> The construction machinery and equipment were insufficient, and most of the earthwork was mainly excavated, carried, and compacted by hand. There were only a few small mixers, no tanker, and a pump truck. Most of the time, the workers used a shovel to mix, and they carried and lifted manually or used a one-wheeled cart to transport items. They used iron bars to punch solid. Construction scaffolding was not steel with fasteners but was instead tied with bamboo and bamboo splits. They assembled 1145 blocks per person per day. The diet and the residence conditions were also harsh. The shed's structure consisted of moso bamboo pillars, moso bamboo beams, a straw mud roof, reed foil walls, with hanging straw curtains as doors and windows. Each shed was 231 square meters, with 160 people living in it. Workers slept on double bunk beds made of moso bamboo sheets with straw curtains. There was less than two square meters per person. The cadres worked voluntarily every Sunday and came to the shifts in batches to do three things with

[2]On October 7, 1952, the Northwest Textile Administration Engineering Cooperation was established in Xi'an. Meanwhile, the East China Textile Administration Construction Engineering Company was formed in Shanghai. In February 1953, the Ministry of Textiles merged with the East China Textile Administration Engineering Corporation and Northwest Textile Administration Engineering Corporation to form one corporation — the Northwest Textile Construction Corporation. It later changed to the Northwest No.4 Electric Construction Company.

> the workers: they lived with them, ate with them, and worked with them, and this formed a system. Under such harsh conditions, all the workers completed the textile factory's construction tasks quickly and to a high quality. (Wang 2012: 7)

At the end of September 1954, the construction work was basically completed. After testing, the construction projects followed the original design, and all the quality indicators attained the national standard, and the quality of the main plant, chimney, canteen, and floor was rated highly as the best project.

As the building projects were completed ahead of schedule, the equipment installation works also advanced in good time. Two-hundred young workers were sent to other factories in the province for the three-month training. On February 25, 1954, the equipment installation commenced. The quality of the equipment arriving at the plant was first appraised. The working methods were then decided on and formulated in line with the technical and quality standards. As for labor organization, the spinning department installed the equipment bit by bit, with equipment parts allocated to professional groups for installation.

During the installation, the workers put forward tens of thousands of suggestions. Of these, the factory adopted twenty-three important suggestions and technical reform programs. The equipment installation took only three and a half months, and almost all the equipment was successfully trialed at the same time, thus laying a good foundation for official production.

The production preparation work began in the third quarter of 1953. According to the Chinese Ministry of Textile requirements, the factory's scale of production entailed the use of 50 560 spindles and 1584 pieces of fabric machinery. The main production varieties were 21 and 23 counts of medium-grade yarn and 23S×21S plain cloth. The annual production capacity was about 8000 tonnes of cotton yarn and forty million meters of cotton cloth. The yarn was put on the market under the trademark of Li Mountain (Li Shan). A production preparation team was formed in January 1954, and they started to prepare plans for production tools, machine materials, vehicles, pipe containers, the deployment of technicians, and new worker recruitment and training. At the same time, the production management system was developed, and various production reports and other support services were prepared for the trial production.

At the end of 1953, the training committee was established and started recruiting and training workers. More than 1660 workers came from various counties and cities in the province. The workers were first organized into six brigades, and they trained separately in other cotton textile mills for five months. After all the workers had completed the training and returned to the factory, trial production began in early May 1954. The work efficiency and quality of the trial production increased. By October, all the production indices had reached the required level. The cotton yarn yield and the rate of cotton fabric production exceeded the levels of other cotton textile mills in the province.

On December 8, 1954, an approval committee organized by the Ministry of Textiles and Shaanxi Province conducted a complete appraisal of the construction project and officially approved the start of construction. On December 15, a grand opening ceremony was held. The secretary of the Shaanxi Provincial Party Committee of China and the vice minister from the Ministry of Textiles gave a

presentation in which they congratulated the construction project. At this point, the No.3 Northwest State Cotton Factory was officially completed and began operations. From 1953 to 1958, during the period of the First Five-Year Plan, four textile factories and one printing and dyeing factory were built in successive years. These were the No.3 Factory, the No.4 Factory, the No.5 Factory, the No.6 Factory, and the Northwest First Printing & Dyeing Factory. The scale and landscape of the textile town were established.

Most records below are from the *No.3 Factory Chronicles* and some previous workers' memoirs. They are the first generation of the textile town. The records display the glorious past and describe how the first batch of workers endured hardships and was capable of hard work. These materials offer an effective way to understand the textile town's beginnings, and they also possess a symbolic meaning wherein the stakeholders use the past in the present moment. In Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, I will show the different understandings and tensions that emerged when working-class residents, artists, and government officials drew on the past.

The Workers' Origins

Recruitment in the state-owned factory before 1993 was completed in line with a recruitment index issued by the competent department, and the local government conducted targeted recruitment in the area. By September 1954, when the first factory — No.3 Factory — began operations, the total number of workers was 3166.[3] The fast-paced construction from 1953 to 1958 then resulted in the number of employees reaching a record high. According to the factories' chronicles, at No.4 Factory there were 3593 workers in 1956 and as many as 6761 workers in 1957, there were 4982 workers at No.5 Factory by the end of 1957, there were 3321 workers at No.6 Factory by the end of 1959, and there were more than 1600 workers in 1960 at the Yiyin Factory. The young workers came from different areas and families; they settled in this new place to work, live, and start creating stories with one another.

Workers from the Inner Province

During the textile town's construction period (1953–1958), the primary source of workers in each factory was local workers, mainly from Xi'an and other counties in Shaanxi Province[4]. At the early stage of building the No.3 Factory, many new workers came from rural areas, with 1266 workers from rural areas present among a total of 3166 workers. Nevertheless, from 1958 to 1964, there were 903 new workers from Xi'an city, yet only 156 rural workers. After "the period of hardship" (*kunnan shiqi*), in 1964, the production situation of the factories in the textile town improved, and many young

[3]Of the 3166 workers, 340 were cadres, accounting for 10.7%; 112 were technicians, accounting for 3.6%; 213 were mechanics, accounting for 6.7%; 248 were apprentices, accounting for 7.8%; 316 were skilled operators, accounting for 10%; 1662 worked in operations, accounting for 52.5%; 275 were other miscellaneous workers and guards, accounting for 8.7%. Of the workers, 6.9% of the total cadres, mechanics, and skilled workers were deployed by the Ministry of the Textile Industry. In comparison, 25.7% were deployed by various danwei in Xi'an, and 57.4% of workers were recruited by the factory.

[4]Besides the workers mainly from Xi'an, others came from counties like Lantian, Lintong, Weinan, Gaoling, Sanyuan, Xingping, Huxian, and Zhouzhi.

men and women were recruited mainly from all urban districts of Xi'an to make up for the number of machine workers.

Many urban intellectual youths (*zhishi qingnian*, abbreviated to *zhiqing*) were sent to rural areas during the Cultural Revolution. The policy entitled Up the Mountains and Down to the Villages (*shang shan xia xiang*), which arranged for zhiqing to go to the countryside, was the primary method used to solve the employment problem of urban youth in the 1960s and 1970s. From 1962 to the end of 1979, 17 764 800 urban zhiqing went to the countryside (Gu 1997: 301). But after 1978, the policy allowed some of the youths to return to the city. Also, the college entrance examination was resumed after 1978. Young people, especially those who came from urban places and who had lived in rural places for several years, saw college as an opportunity for them to return to the city. The examination, however, was not easy for those young people who had lost several years' education during the decade of the Cultural Revolution. At this time, a fresh approach to the recruitment of urban youth emerged. The No.3 Factory, for example, stipulated that the recruitment targets included young people who had gone to the countryside, urban youths exempted from going to the countryside, and urban youths waiting for employment. Then, a total of 1571 young urban people were recruited from 1975 to 1980.

The return of many zhiqing to the cities caused a sharp increase in urban employment pressure and created severe social problems. In this situation, workers' early retirement and their children's participation in the workforce began to be implemented nationwide to relieve the employment pressure on urban youth. In the textile town, after 1977 — because of the large number of workers' offspring waiting for employment — the competent department for the textile industry permitted a target wherein "internal recruitment" of the factory's offspring could account for forty percent. In the No.3 Factory, for example, by 1986 a total of 895 workers had been recruited to replace the retired workers.

Nevertheless, the shortcomings of the offspring-oriented employment system were exposed. The State Council issued the Provisional Regulations on the Recruitment of Workers in State-owned Enterprises in 1986, and it stipulated that replacing retired workers with their offspring should no longer be implemented. The textile town followed this policy and abolished the internal-recruitment rule. The factories posted recruitment brochures and applied a ratio of 1 : 3 recruitment in line with the recruitment index, with new workers admitted based on merit after an examination. Also, the labor contract system was introduced in 1982, and the factory recruited 1764 contract workers over the ten years until 1992.

After approximately three months of training, the factory arranged for the new workers to manage the machinery and work the night shift. These tasks were new but tough to many, especially for workers from urban families. Workers who came from rural places had followed their parents into the fields, where they had worked from their early teenage years. Compared with rural work, factory work was more attractive. They could take on heavy responsibilities, follow the shop floor rules, and master factory techniques with dedication. At first, however, workers from urban settings felt the workload was too heavy, and many cried each day. After they had been educated and consoled for the first few months, they were able to adapt to the textile factories' work intensity and social life. As one older worker recalled, when she started work as a textile worker in 1953, the experienced workers, the

section chief, and the branch secretary continually emphasized that being a worker was not only a job one was also a master of the country. To be a master of the country, they had to increase production levels and fight for socialist construction.

The Workers from Outside

In the 1950s, the central government made the national call "go west" (*dao xibu qu*). Xi'an was one of the important cities in northwest China, and many experts and young people responded to the call to support its education, industry, and urban construction. Before China was founded, the textile industry in northwest China was backward compared with Shanghai. Xi'an's Dahua Yarn Factory (dahua shachang), the earliest modern fabric factory in northwest China, which was founded in 1935, had only 30 000 spindles and 800 fabric machines. Thus, during the First Five-Year Plan period, to develop the textile industry in China's northwest, the state established large state-owned textile factories in Xi'an, which required skilled workers from other areas to support the northwest. According to the policy and call of "supporting the northwest" (*zhiyuan daxibei*), many professional and experienced workers from textile factories in other provinces became technologists and trainers for guiding the constructors and training the new workers in the textile town.

During the construction of the first textile factory in 1953, much support came from Qingdao, Shandong Province. Qingdao's cotton textile industry was the leading textile industry in China, and it provided very important support with respect to human resources. Before 1949, Japan opened eight textile mills in Qingdao. These mills used Japanese-made equipment, and their management enslaved Chinese workers and many child laborers. After China's independence, Qingdao became a base for the textile industry. The workers in Qingdao's factories responded to the call and submitted applications to support the northwest. During the construction of the No.3 Factory in 1953, a group of more than 120 workers, including skilled operation workers, trainers of new workers, skilled security workers, maintenance workers, engineers, and management staff all left Qingdao and moved west. Their primary purpose was to train and inspire new workers and carry out the tasks of installing equipment and commissioning workers for the new factory (Zhang 2012: 125). They took the train to the northwest and finally arrived at the ancient city of Xi'an, after two transfers with the journey lasting three days and two nights. Wang Jingtong, who was one of these workers from Qingdao in 1953, wrote about the situation at that time:

> The female trainers selected from all the factories in Qingdao were all competent operators familiar with the process's working method, including the "Hao Jianxiu work method" and "the 1951 weaving working method." Although they were still very young, most were experienced workers who entered the factory before 1949. Some were still child workers who had entered the factory during the Japanese occupation. To support the new factory in the northwest, some postponed their marriage, and some encouraged their partners to join the ranks of support for the new factory ... The trainers ate and lived with the new workers at the training site. They taught them the techniques by hand and educated them about the

> factory and about class with their personal experiences in which they compared the old and new society. As the new workers were young girls recruited from various counties and rural areas, they had left home for the first time and did not adapt to factory life. Some of them often felt homesick and cried, while some cried because of the challenging work. Through several months of training, the new workers who first entered the textile industry became the first batch of qualified textile workers in the new factory in Xi'an's textile town. (Wang 2019)

Support also came from Shanghai, the largest city and the most important textile industry base. Three hundred workers came from Shanghai during the construction of the first textile factory in 1953. After the Spring Festival of 1956, 2001 female workers took the train from Shanghai to the west. According to the arrangements that the Ministry of Textile Industry had made, the Shanghai Labor Bureau was entrusted with recruiting female workers for the second textile factory, that is, for the No.4 Factory in the textile town, which also was the largest textile enterprise in the northwest region.

When they first came to a new place that was in poor condition, many workers found it difficult to acclimatize. They missed Shanghai, the modern city, the prosperous Nanjing Road, and their faraway parents and siblings. They did not adapt to eating wheat-based foods, typically with fewer vegetables. And working the night shift regularly was also difficult. To help them deal with these difficulties, the factory recruited ten cooks who made Shanghai-flavored meals with local ingredients. The factory also arranged for them to live in four new three-story apartment buildings, and so four workers lived in a twenty-square-meter dormitory. This provided them with better living conditions, which comforted their homesickness. After these Shanghai workers had completed a course in safety education, their technical training and a course in factory discipline, these Shanghai workers were assigned to the eight workshops to implement ten industrial processes and carry out more than ten types of work tasks in the factory (Yang 2012: 130). They adapted gradually to the rhythm of being socialist textile workers and got along with other workers from provincial areas.

The workers from the southwest were also a source of significant support for the third factory — the No.5 Factory. In 1956, the Southwest Textile Management Bureau assigned some cadres and workers to Xi'an. The road conditions and travel options from Chongqing to Xi'an were poor. The southwest and the northwest were separated by China's most extensive and treacherous mountain range, the Qinling Mountains. The mountains were high and their paths were winding, and a railroad was not accessible then. They arrived at Xi'an after a hard journey, and so the thirty-member delegation modified the route. Later, 1200 workers (divided into three groups) took ferryboats from the Yangtze River to Wuhan, from where they traveled by train to Xi'an. By May 1956, a total of 1500 employees had settled in Xi'an from the southeast, and they contributed their whole life to the development of the No.5 Factory (Yang 2012).

In addition to the migrant workers from Shanghai, Qingdao, and Sichuan, there were many workers from other cities and towns. Some technical experts and cadres from northwest China provided strong support with management and technology use. Indeed, many graduates of textile technical schools from various places became professional team leaders, and veterans returning from the Korean

battlefield provided core support with equipment maintenance and security work. All worked and lived in this new, fresh place with workers from the inner province. The textile town became their home, and they became tied to it for their entire life.

Dialect

When I walked through the residential area in the textile town, while most textile workers spoke the Shaanxi dialect, I also encountered other dialects. The two main dialects I could distinguish were the Henan dialect in the No.3 Factory and the Sichuan dialect in the No.4 Factory as many workers came from these two provinces. One interesting phenomenon was that the act of imitating another dialect was even prevalent among workers. For example, my informant Aunt Xing is a local worker who had been born in and had grown up in Xi'an, but when she greeted another worker who spoke the Henan dialect, she spoke in Henan dialect. I asked her why she spoke the Henan dialect, which I noticed many workers used, and she explained it as follows:

> The use of other dialects was a habit in the past — a kind of convention. In the 1960s, our factory recruited mainly Henan and Shaanxi workers. It became fashionable to speak the Henan dialect then, and so it slowly became a trend and habit of the time.

But speaking the Henan dialect was unacceptable to many workers who had grown up in urban locales in Xi'an. From their perspective, Henan Province was poorer and more backward than Shaanxi, as billions of people fled from Henan to Shaanxi during the Henan Famine (1942–1943) and the Great Chinese Famine (1958–1961). But in the No.3 Factory, the new workers had to adapt to the atmosphere and speak the mainstream dialect, even though they were reluctant. Aunt Lin told me her feelings about speaking the Henan dialect when she graduated from middle school and was recruited by the No.3 Factory in 1978:

> I didn't like the Henan dialect when I entered the factory. I believed that speaking blunt Mandarin on any occasion demonstrated that I had cultivation (*xiuyang*). But later, I found that the work environment with pure Mandarin was not only not well regarded by others but also very difficult to integrate into and even despised. So, in time I complied with the trend. I did so because my purpose was to fit in; otherwise, I would be isolated everywhere. So, at that time, this was the only way to integrate into that era and environment. If you did not follow the customs, you would be marginalized or ostracized.

Although many local workers disliked the Henan dialect, they realized that they would be ostracized if everyone else spoke the Henan dialect. Especially at that time, once the operatives had been excluded, the production and quality quotas would be more challenging to accomplish. The spinners hoped their work would be ranked top. The blackboard on the wall of the shop floor (each shift group had one) would announce the completion of the individual production and quality quotas every day, and the workers would examine the figures carefully, even in the middle of meal times, as they were afraid

of falling behind. If a worker seemed asocial, other workers gossiped about them and even reported them to the team leader. Then, the team leader made life difficult for them. For instance, they may be assigned to a difficult position or allocated more complex tasks. In the collective unit, everyone was afraid of exclusion and of gossip; thus, keeping a low profile and working hard was an effective way to survive on the shop floor.

Therefore, although the workers came from different areas and spoke different dialects, direct conflict among them was seldom observed. In this atmosphere of compromise and reconciliation, a tendency toward homogenization emerged over many years of working together. Even if the factory workers were able to get along peacefully and make friends with like-minded coworkers, this danwei was not a completely closed space. The external environment affected it all the time and further influenced the individuals in it.

The Reform of the State-owned Enterprises

The SOEs' Reform Policy

The reform in 1978 brought hope after economic development had stagnated during the Cultural Revolution. A decision on economic reform adopted by the 12th CPC Central Committee at its third plenary session in October 1984 defined China's socialist economy as a commodity economy based on central planning and public ownership. It stated clearly that the reform of state-owned enterprises was central to the economic system's reform, which intended to reform the relationship between the state, enterprises, and workers. The shortcomings of the planned economy model had resulted in the enterprises' lack of autonomy. The reforms aimed to change the situation described as eating a "big pot of rice" (*da guo fan*). This had seriously suppressed the enthusiasm, initiative, and creativity of enterprises and the masses of workers. Therefore, the central government proposed economic reform measures, which included plans to 1) enhance the vitality of enterprises, expand their autonomy, and make them genuinely independent economic entities; 2) reform the planned economic system and develop a "socialist commodity economy," a term mentioned here for the first time; 3) establish a reasonable price system and pay full attention to the role of economic leverage; 4) implement the separation of government and enterprise responsibilities, simplify administrative control, and delegate powers; 5) establish various systems for economic responsibility system and adopt a general manager responsibility system (*changzhang fuzezhi*). The enterprises themselves determined enterprise workers' funds in line with their business conditions. The government would reform the original average distribution by widening the wage gap and distinguishing between rewards and punishments.

The decision resulted in significant changes to the SOEs. These changes shifted the SOEs from being administrative units to being relatively independent enterprises. According to the national policy, in 1985 the factories in the textile town established the "general manager responsibility system," which stipulated that the factory manager was the head of a factory and the legal representative of the enterprise, and that the factory manager was entirely responsible for production command,

management, and the appointment and dismissal of enterprise staff in line with the relevant national regulations. In 1987, the 13th Party Congress proposed that "the state regulate the market and the market guide the enterprises," which broke through the old framework of a dichotomy between a planned economy and market economy, which was present when the reform began. This proposal integrated the role of planning and that of the market. The market's status was significantly increased. In the case of the No.3 Factory, for example, the new leadership decided to follow the market closely and introduce new technology and a technological transformation. From 1986 to early 1990, the No.3 Factory used bank loans and countertrade five times to introduce advanced equipment from Italy, Japan, the Czech Republic, Germany, and other countries. Also, it built buildings to provide production space for new equipment, and the latest products were constantly developed, with a gradual reduction in low-grade varieties and an increase in export volume.

In 1992, Deng Xiaoping pointed out in the Southern Tour that a "planned economy is not equal to socialism; capitalism also has plans. The market economy is not the same as capitalism; socialism also has a market," which determined the socialist market economy. In 1992, the 14th National Congress established the reform goal of a socialist market economy system. In November 1993, the Third Plenary Session of the 14th CPC Central Committee adopted the Decision on Several Issues concerning the Establishment of a Socialist Market Economy System. This became the action program for promoting economic system reform in the 1990s. Specifically, the reform of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) proposed the establishment of a modern enterprise system and the implementation of a corporate system for SOEs.

Nevertheless, the reform of SOEs did not go well, and they also suffered from the impact of other economic institutions in the market. In the 1980s, multiple economic institutional forms coexisted and developed, and the two fast-growing economic forms were the primary township and village enterprises (TVEs) and foreign-funded enterprises (FFEs). Compared with the slow reform of SOEs, TVEs and FFEs were more independent and autonomous, especially in the textile industry where they proliferated, and their market share increased to the extent that they became SOEs' most significant competitors (Chiu and Lewis 2006).

Therefore, in February 1998 the State Council issued the *Notice on Issues concerning the Deepening of the Reform, Adjustment, Structure, Relief and Turnaround of the Textile Industry*. This aimed to deepen the reform of the textile industry, adjust its structure, resolve difficulties, and turn losses around. The notice indicated that with

> the serious, repeated construction of state-owned textile enterprises, low-level production capacity excess, low technical level, unreasonable structure, excessive surplus personnel, and heavy historical burden, the textile industry has now become the industry with the most difficulties and the most serious losses.

In May 1998, the State Economic and Trade Commission issued an official document titled Opinions on the Reform and Development of State-owned Enterprises. It proposed once again that the textile industry needed to undergo radical reform. The specific implementation measures included:

> encouraging mergers, standardizing bankruptcy, rearranging for layoffs, reducing staff and increasing efficiency and reemployment projects, eliminating outdated cotton spindles, focusing on the structural adjustment of cities where state-owned textile industrial enterprises are concentrated, and properly resettled laid-off workers.

The three-year goal was to eliminate ten million spindles and to rearrange for 1.2 million laid-off workers by the year 2000. The "compressing spindles" policy (*ya ding*) significantly influenced the textile industry and textile workers.

In response to the national policy, Shaanxi Province planned for the three-year task of compressing spindles (*ya ding*) in the textile industry, with the province having to compress 476 400 pieces. In total, 43 000 laid-off workers (*xiagang zhigong*) had to be shunted and resettled. The individual textile factories in Shaanxi Province were tasked with this mission.

The Reform in the Textile Town

The textile factories in the textile town set about a significant reform of the SOEs in response to the national policy. In 1998, the Shaanxi provincial government approved the establishment of a large textile printing and dyeing group — the Shaanxi Tanghua Textile Printing & Dyeing Group. This entailed a merger and reorganization of the No.3 Factory, the No.4 Factory, the No.6 Factory, the No.11 Factory and the First Printing & Dyeing Factory, completed by China Huacheng Holding Group. The separate legal personalities of the five enterprises were annulled, and the management of people, factory finances, and materials was unified. While the No.11 Factory was in another district, the other four factories were in the textile town. At that time, the total number of textile workers in the textile town was 40 647, and the company covered an area of 2.3 square kilometers, with a construction area of 0.87 square kilometers.

Nevertheless, this operating model ultimately failed. In 2001, Huacheng Group terminated the operation of Tanghua Corporation and restored the business autonomy and legal personality of each enterprise. In March 2001, Shaanxi Tanghua No.3 Textile Corporation was established. Because of the excessive investment in the early stage, however, the company sank into the quagmire of successive years of losses. Other factories in the textile town experienced a similar fate.

The merger and reorganization of the enterprises initially brought hope to the workers. But later, through the policy of "compressing spindles" (*yading*), the workers, especially those working in the first line, had become jittery about the possibility of being laid off. According to the "compressing spindles" task, all the factories were striving to complete the mission. At the same time, reducing the number of workers was also the factory's primary task. For factories and leaders, this was a campaign, and every factory was afraid that it would fall behind, so each factory tried to complete the task ahead of schedule. The workers, however, were concerned with their fate, so they did everything possible to avoid being laid off. No one wanted to be a victim of the reform.

The "compressing spindle" policy had different effects on workers in the textile town. The policy did not affect workers who were in management or support jobs. But those machines workers engaged

in shift work had all found ways to get rid of the operation shift work, which would reduce the risk of being eliminated. The "compressing spindle" policy directly related to the machine, and the workers were bound to the machine. The machine's demolition entailed the removal of the people who operated the machine. Thus, many machine operators pulled strings in order to become workers who could work in the factory's administrative departments.

At the same time, the factory responded to a Ministry of Labor policy known as "internal retirement" (*neitui*). The policy stipulated that

> among the spinning and weaving jobs with spindle compressing tasks within three years, the factory implemented early retirement for laid-off workers who had worked for more than twenty years and were less than ten years away from retirement age, who had single skills and were difficult to reemploy.

In addition, some workers who had not reached retirement age but were ill could also apply for "illness-related retirement" (*bingtui*). Thus, in the first year of the reform, more than seventy percent of the laid-off workers in the factory had taken early retirement, which also eased the pressure on the factory to lay off more workers.

The "compressing spindle" policy indeed had a big impact on all workers. The workers' reaction was that the "iron rice bowl" (*tie fan wan*) era was gone forever. It was an opportunity for some intelligent workers because, in the early days of reform, individual businesses were already booming, and some people began to "go to sea" (*xiahai*) to do business. Also, those who were not comfortable with textile work looked for ways to leave the factory. For most workers, however, while they had not experienced "layoffs," they had started to think of possible routes out of the industry in the future and what they could do if they were to leave the factory. The "compressing spindle" policy acted like a hurricane in that it swiftly made textile workers who had previously believed their jobs were stable suddenly experience insecurity and crisis.

The "compressing spindle" policy was implemented relatively actively at the factory. The factory could eliminate old equipment on the one hand, while it enjoyed relevant subsidy policies on the other hand. Specifically, the factory could obtain financial subsidies of three million RMB and bank discount loans of two million RMB if it compressed 10 000 spindles. The funds would be used to develop new products, adjust product structures, set up tertiary industry, and compensate and resettle laid-off workers. For the outdated equipment that had been compressed and eliminated, the policy stipulated that the textile and apparel council was responsible for supervising the spindles' delivery to the furnace for destruction. As there was no supervision mechanism, some factories enjoyed the subsidies and reported the destruction of spindles. But they did not compress the spindles and instead sneakily sold the spindles to other small cotton mills. While the state managed to reduce production capacity in large SOEs, small enterprises and workshops sprang up in the region. The excessive production of many low-quality and low-cost textile products further impacted the entire textile industry and worsened the situation for the state-owned textile enterprises.

The term used in the policy and official document is “compressing spindles” (yading), which refers to the compressing of excess capacity in the cotton textile sector. All the factories and workers throughout the country, however, used the term “smashing spindles” (zading). “Smashing” refers to the process used to compress the spindles. The move from yading to zading reflects a shift from abstract policy to action. There were scenes of workers using hammers to smash the spindles one by one, before they left the spindles broken and scattered all over the shop floor. The term “smashing” demonstrates initiative; it reflects the connection between person and machine, and it displays the “destruction” of an era. It is a kind of helplessness — it bids farewell to the past, and it evidences a determination about the future. When the textile workers recalled the scenes of smashing spindles, they all felt heartbroken, and many female workers gently wiped tears from their eyes.

The smashing of spindles accelerated the pace of reform of SOEs and had a significant impact on the textile town. This struggle lasted for ten years. In 2008, the textile factories in the textile town that had lasted for half a century declared themselves bankrupt.

The Bankruptcy, Layoffs, and Reemployment

China joined the WTO in 2003, and that same year the State Council established the State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) to perform regulatory functions. SASAC gradually developed a regulatory framework for state-owned assets, and a legal and regulatory system was established. In 2006, the State Council forwarded a document issued by SASAC entitled *Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Adjustment of State-Owned Capital and the Restructuring of State-Owned Enterprises*. The 17th National Congress optimized the layout of the state-owned economy through the reform of the company system and shareholding system. Furthermore, it deepened the structure of state-owned assets with mergers and reorganizations.

The Bankruptcy Policy

The textile factories in the textile town went bankrupt amid the reform of the SOEs. Because of the long-term insolvency of textile enterprises, after the 17th National Congress, the China Huacheng Group Corporation underwent a planned bankruptcy under the auspices of SASAC.

As a result, the affiliated Tanghua Group also met the conditions for overall bankruptcy. The No.3, No.4, and No.6 factories, which the Tanghua Group managed, were all included in the national bankruptcy policy plan. In July 2008, Huacheng Group handed five enterprises belonging to the Tanghua Group over to the Xi’an municipal government. After this takeover, the Xi’an municipal government established a group that would steer the policy-based bankruptcies, and each factory established a corresponding working group. By this point, the policy-based bankruptcy was in full swing.

There is a difference between policy-based bankruptcy and legal bankruptcy. Policy-based bankruptcy, also known as planned bankruptcy, refers to the bankrupting of SOEs in a manner

included in a national bankruptcy merger plan. SOEs affected by this form of bankruptcy enjoy corresponding preferential policies that the relevant departments of the State Council determine. The SOEs implement their own closure and bankruptcy in line with the policy. After state officials have examined and approved all aspects of the bankruptcy, the State Council would then approve the declaration included in the national bankruptcy project plan. Policy-based bankruptcy entails preferential policies on debt write-off, employee placement, and debt repayment orders. The capital gained from sale of the assets would be used to pay for the bankruptcy liquidation costs and employee placement costs first.

The municipal government sought to make employees understand these relevant policies on bankruptcy, and so the working group compiled two brochures, the *Policy Bankruptcy Publicity Handbook* and the *Policy Bankrupt Employee Resettlement Policy Questions and Answers*, which were distributed to all serving and leaving employees. Policy publicity and consultation points were set up in the living and production areas. Retired employees managed them, employees visited them, and consultations were organized to answer questions. These points also held classes for middle-level cadres and employee representatives. On September 30, 2008, the No.3 Factory's Workers' Congress discussed and approved the Policy Bankruptcy Plan and the Employee Resettlement Plan. On October 10, the Intermediate People's Court of Xi'an City declared the No.3 Factory bankrupt.

Although the company went bankrupt, a policy of "bankruptcy does not destroy productive forces" ("pochan bu po shengchanli")[5] was implemented. In early 2009, Xi'an SASAC, as the investor, established a wholly state-owned company — Xi'an No.3 Textile Co., Ltd. — to continue the former production and operation activities. About half of the old employees were employed by the new enterprises.

After the court declared the bankruptcy, the task of employee placement was initiated immediately. According to the established plan, employees had three options: 1) to enter the newly established enterprise and continue their employment there; 2) to find jobs independently and terminate the labor contract with the original enterprise, with the original enterprise issuing a one-off resettlement fee or economic compensation; or 3) to seek early retirement — for this, all male employees had to be at least fifty-four years old, and female employees had to be at least forty-four years old before October 10, 2008.

After more than twenty days, the factory completed the placement work. In total, 970 workers could retire early in line with the policy, 2427 people chose to leave the factory, and 2338 people decided to continue working in the new factory. On December 8, 2008, Shaanxi Tanghua No.3 Factory ended its policy-based bankruptcy. The No.4 Factory and the No.6 Factory underwent the same bankruptcy procedure.

In 2010, Xi'an Textile Group Co., Ltd. (Xifang Group) was established. It sought to integrate and reorganize the No.3, No.4, No.6, and the Printing & Dyeing factories. Xifang Group is a wholly state-owned enterprise established by Xi'an SASAC and managed by Xi'an Textile Holding Co., Ltd. Xifang Group (Xifang jituan) set up a new factory area, the Modern Textile Industrial Park,

[5]It means that although the company goes bankrupt, the productive capacity — such as labor, technology, and resources — remains intact.

approximately 10 km east of the textile town. It covered an area of 0.52 square kilometers, with a total investment of 1.6 billion yuan and 188 800 spindles. In 2014, the No.3 and No.4 factories moved at the same time to the new industrial park. The No.6 Factory had shut down production before the relocation, and the employees had been reallocated to the No.3 Factory and the No.4 Factory. On October 30, 2014, the new factory officially started production. To date, apart from the Wuhuan Group (which used to be the No.5 Factory), the other four factories no longer exist on the textile town's original site.

Personal Choice — Stay or Leave?

After the bankruptcy of the textile factories, except for those who could retire early, workers faced two choices: one was to continue working in the new factory, and the other was to find their own way out. According to the data, there was little difference between the number of people who stayed in the new factory and those who left. I would now like to analyze their specific choices.

Many workers admitted that in order to decide whether they would leave or stay, they calculated an amount. How they calculated this amount varied according to individual circumstances. There were two factors here: one was the one-off resettlement fee, and the other was how certain each worker was of their own ability to find a job. Resettlement payments also varied depending on the length of service, with each receiving a different amount. The following formula was used to calculate the resettlement fee:

> Individual resettlement fee = the average annual resettlement fee of the enterprise × the length of service of the individual

Each enterprise fixed the average annual resettlement fee, which would then vary according to each worker's length of service. Thus, the longer a worker had been employed there, the larger the settlement payment they would receive. But after they received this resettlement fee, they would then have to pay their annual pension until retirement. At that time, there was also a policy of subsidizing individual pension payments: they would pay for three years and then receive three years back[6]. Thus, each person would consider the amount of settlement money they would receive and how many years they needed to pay into their pension. For example, in the case of Han, he was forty-nine years old when he accepted the resettlement fee (maiduan), with thirty-one years of working service and eleven years until retirement. Because of his long service, he received a settlement payment of almost 100 000 RMB. In 2008, 100 000 RMB was a lot of money for a factory worker, and this is what Han considered to be his "basic confidence" (diqi). He thought this money would be enough to pay for the pension anyway. Also, he believed that the textile industry had declined, and he wanted to try to find work in another industry. He thought he was still capable because of his years of working experience. For female

[6]This was also a policy that supported the policy-based bankruptcy. According to this policy, workers would pay their own pension for the first three years, the state would waive the fees for the next three years, and then they would continue to pay it after this six-year period until the worker retired. In actual fact, after the workers had paid their pension for three years, the state did not waive 100% of the pension payments for the next three years but instead waived 90% for the first year, 80% for the second year, and 70% for the third year.

workers, the retirement age was fifty. Thus, many in their thirties and forties also considered accepting a resettlement fee and going out to look for work themselves. For example, Xu, who received over 60 000 RMB in her buyout, considered going out to find a job to pay her pension so that the 60 000 could be saved and left untouched. After a while, she got to know other female workers and found a job in a supermarket that would pay her pension. Thus, many who chose to leave the factory were workers with long years of service and a relatively shorter time (around ten years) to retirement.

In contrast to those who left the factory, those who decided to stay also had their own considerations. It was better for them to continue working in a new factory with the possibility of a wage increase. They were generally younger and had shorter service years. So even if they had accepted a buyout, they would not have received a large resettlement fee, and it would also have been a challenge to find work again. In addition, they had other concerns over family issues. For example, their children were still young and needed to be picked up and taken care of. The factory had its own kindergarten and primary school, so if they continued to work in the factory, it would be easier for them to take care of their families, and the commute would be shorter. If they went out to work, the commute would be challenging, and they would have greater difficulties in caring for their family.

Many couples worked in the textile factory together. When everyone made their choice, few families with both husbands and wives employed in the factory left the textile factory together. Most couples opted for one to stay and one to leave. In 2014, the new factory moved to an industrial park ten kilometers away. This time some workers decided to leave the factory because of the distance. Xing, who later worked in a watch shop, said, "If the factory hadn't moved, I would have stayed on because I lived right in the textile town, everything was convenient, and it was only a ten-minute walk to work. Now it's moved so far away, and I have to take the bus, and since I'm taking the bus, I might as well go out and find a job. The pay might even be higher." But her husband still worked at the recombined factory, even though he had to commute by bus every day.

The choice was not a simple one but rather a complex and holistic consideration influenced by the individual, the family, and the social environment. Everything would change no matter who left and who stayed, and the previous life in the state-owned factory would be gone forever.

Conclusion

The danwei, as the fundamental unit of urban society, has played a significant role and profoundly influenced the existence of organizations and individuals within the danwei system. It is not an independent entity but rather is continuously influenced by state power, particularly through detailed reform policies. Nevertheless, the relationship within the "state-danwei-individual" framework is not simply a top-down structure; individuals have played a significant role during periods of industrialization and deindustrialization.

In this chapter, I have sketched how workers who speak different dialects, and who came from other places and families, settled down in the textile town, endeavored to build the factories and work under harsh conditions, and devoted their lives to constructing socialist China. Despite their efforts,

their eventual fate was marked by bankruptcies and layoffs, highlighting the overwhelming power of the state. Nevertheless, although each individual's power is limited and cannot determine the unit's fate, the individuals, as agents, have the capacity to resist, adapt to, and negotiate the changing situation Understanding workers' agency is impossible without understanding their everyday practice in the factory community, particularly on the shop floors. Therefore, in the next chapter, I will delve into the past and present factories respectively, providing insights into workers' daily lives on the shop floor. I will explore how a sense of working-class identity was forged through work routines and procedures in the past — and how it has led to tensions in the present.

Chapter 3

Inside the Factory: The Past and the Present

In this chapter, I present a shop floor ethnography to explore how the labor process can be viewed as a form of industrial heritage and how it shapes working-class identity. Workers often present nostalgia for their past experiences on the shop floor, where strict regulations and genuine relationships fostered a sense of pride as socialist contributors. This nostalgia leads them to view critically the more irresponsible and insincere practices of the present. Nevertheless, my exploration of textile workers' daily routines and activities within the shop floor environment reveals that this nostalgia is not merely a longing for a better past. Instead, it is a complex, multi-layered emotion, deeply intertwined with the intricacies of labor processes and infused with cultural, social, and emotional dimensions. I will argue that the shifts in class status create nostalgia that might diverge from the actual work experiences of that time, while also fostering a sense of class solidarity within the evolving labor process.

For textile workers, the shop floor is more than just a workspace. It is a place in which they created their own history and working-class culture, a place in which they shaped collective and individual memory, identity and belonging, and a place that combined their sense of pride and the emotionally painful, when they realized what had happened to them. Thus, if the shop floor is considered a heritage space, it is more than just an area for labor processes; it also encompasses workers' subjectivity, which plays a crucial role in shaping their working-class identity.

Following the closure of the old factory, many workers transitioned to the newly established factory, providing me with an opportunity to compare their experiences in both old and new factory environments. To gain insights into the working-class identity and the inherent nostalgia within it, I will provide a comprehensive description of the labor process. This will include detailing the product manufacturing process, outlining the workers' daily routines, and examining workers' cooperation and conflicts that unfolded within the factory. Subsequently, I will explore the shifts in workers' subjectivity within the new factory, aiming to understand how their lived experiences on the shop floor have influenced the evolving working-class identity, which has been under siege within the confines of the shop floor culture.

Labor Process Theory

Many shop floor ethnographies have focused on labor process since the publication of Braverman's classic monograph *Labour and Monopoly Capitalism* (1998). Braverman felt nostalgia for the period before capitalism when artisans could fully control the knowledge and labor process. He asserted that workers' knowledge of the production process has been deprived because of scientific management and duplicated mechanization in the labor process after Taylorism. To reveal the "hidden abode of production" (Marx 1976: 279), Braverman (1998) offered the critical argument that the labor process involves the separation of "conception" and "execution" so that the capitalists take away workers' control of the labor process.

Despite Braverman's insight into class antagonism in the labor process, which evoked "the labor process debate" and inspired a further exploration of deskilling, his approach still had many limitations, as he focused mainly on how capitalism controlled the labor process but ignored workers' subjectivity (Meiksins 1994). Burawoy (1982) used his own experience as a worker on the shop floor to examine a critical question — why do workers work as hard as they do, and why do workers routinely consent to their own exploitation? He provided a different perspective by arguing that "consent is produced and reproduced on the shop floor," and that the internal labor market, internal state, and the global state are involved in producing consent (1982: 198). Therefore, not only is the factory a productive place, as Burawoy believed, but we should also consider workers' subjectivity within the "factory regime" in relation to three dimensions — the economic, political, and ideological — on every shop floor (1990: 39).

Many researchers then provided various perspectives on labor process theory. Lee criticized Burawoy's ignorance of gender in the labor process discussion, and asserted that workers' gender, class, and ethnicity mutually influenced the politics of production (1998: 21). She compared two factories owned by the same company, and discussed how the social organization of two labor markets differed and resulted in "two gendered regimes of production" (1998: 12), which she called "localistic despotism" and "familial hegemony." Other ethnographies have also contributed to a focus on women's subjectivities through everyday life in the factory. For example, Ong (2010) discussed how technology and assembly-line work disciplined and affected factory women during the rapid industrialization in Malaysia. Ngai (2005) described the everyday life of women workers who left the countryside and worked in an electronics factory in southern China. From such ethnographies, we can see how those female workers who experienced life struggles and difficulties — despite their being affected by the social transformation — still found strategies and ways of living a better life and adapting to change in society.

In addition, when researchers have brought gender into the labor process, the relationship between space and subjectivity has also become an important dimension. Some researchers have been inspired by Lefebvre's theory of space (1991), which argues that the real, lived social space produces people's practices in everyday life. This space becomes a set of powerful tools and strategies that affect people's thoughts and actions. Researchers have further used ethnographies to understand power relations and

the importance of ethnicity (Kim 2013) and the guanxi network (Zhang 2001) in the labor process. These studies consider the labor process beyond the realm of "class," and they reveal the diversity of workers' subjectivity through gender, ethnicity, space, guanxi, and so on.

In this chapter, I will bring workers' subjectivity into the labor process to show how the workers, not only as members of the working class but also as specific individuals, have operated on the shop floor. I still think Braverman's separation of "conception" and "execution" applies to the period of China's economic transformation, and I also believe that gender, space, and guanxi play a very important role in the labor process. Therefore, in this chapter, I infuse these elements in the ethnographic section to reveal how the textile workers worked on the shop floor in both the past and present, and I summarize how changes in the labor process help us understand workers' nostalgia.

Two Factories: The Past and the Present

I describe mainly two factories in this chapter: the textile town's No.3 Factory, which went bankrupt in 2008 and was demolished in 2014, and a new factory — the Xifang Group, which has integrated and reorganized the textile town's old factories — No.3, No.4, No.6, and the Printing & Dyeing Factory. This new factory was established in 2014 at an industrial park.

The best way for me to observe the labor process is through considering "presence." My examination of the shop floor of the old factory draws heavily on former workers' oral narratives and materials like photos, texts, and other documents. Despite this workspace no longer existing, former workers still remembered their working and social life in these earlier times very clearly. The oral narratives of working on the shop floor give a clear picture of an everyday working environment. Thus, I will describe the labor process on the various shop floors and focus mainly on workers' subjectivity.

As I depend on their narratives alone, it is hard for me as an outsider to understand actual practices on the shop floor. The new factory has provided me with another way to connect with the former workers' narratives. Although it was impossible for me to visit the old No.3 Factory (because it had been demolished), my visit to the new factory at the industrial park played a significant role in helping me to understand the labor process in the textile industry. First, textile technologies are complex and professional; they require a certain level of technical proficiency to operate and maintain, and require specialized training and expertise to use effectively. Thus, it is hard to imagine how workers operate the various kinds of machinery and what production procedures are in place across the shop floors without visiting them in person. Although the new factory has more automatic machines and fewer workers than the old one, the weaving process of the warp and weft has not changed much. Second, when I experienced a working day firsthand and then wrote about it, I was able to better understand workers' emotions and feelings linked to working under harsh conditions, which enabled me to understand their nostalgic connections and attachment to the past and this place. Third, the new factory is not entirely new because it is actually a mix of the former factories. Many workers and managers from the older factories now work in the new factory. There is a connection and something has been inherited. The workers have inherited working styles and a habitus based on their previous factory experience,

and they have also inherited the previous factory's traditions and cultural values. Nevertheless, these inherited experiences have also caused tensions and contradictions when the workers have encountered power struggles in the new, recombined factory.

Therefore, this chapter's ethnography has two main parts. The first part focuses on the labor process inside the old No.3 Factory. I outline the shop floor culture and environment, and I describe how workers experienced the day and night shifts on the shop floor. In this part, I state how workers operated machines during production procedures, with an emphasis on revealing the production process and the power relations between workers and machines, and the relations between workers and their leaders during the working day. The second part is based on my fieldwork in the new factory. I begin by comparing the spatial structure in the new factory with the old one, and then I show how traditions inherited from the old factories caused tensions and contradictions in the new factory.

Inside the Old Factory

The No.3 Factory lay at the bottom of a slope called Fangsan Street (Fangsan Lu), which stood alongside other factories in a row on Fangxi Street (Fangxi Jie). It was the first textile factory in the textile town; it was established in 1953 and went bankrupt in 2008. By 2014, the majority of plants at the original site had been demolished and the factory had moved to a new industrial park.

Figure 3.1: The landscape of the No.3 Factory. Image from the book "No.3 Factory Chronicles."

The Structure of the Factory and the Labor Process

The entrance to the No.3 Factory faced Fangsan Street. This sloping street linked the workplace at the bottom of the slope to the residential area at the top. Workers walked up and down the slope every day. As soon as they entered the No.3 Factory's main entrance, they came across a two-story administrative office building. The ground floor included a security room, a maintenance room and an infirmary, while the other administrative offices were located on the first floor. Immediately behind the office building was a production area that included seven shop floors. From north to south, these were: the blowing-and-carding room (qingshu chejian), the drawing-and-roving room (bingcu chejian), the spinning room (fangsha chejian), the bobbin, the drawing-and-slubbing room (tongbingnian chejian), the preparation room (zhunbei chejian), the weaving room (zhibu chejian), and the finishing room (zhengli chejian). Here, I explain some of the crucial technical terms used in the spinning and weaving of textiles.

1. Blowing and Carding: These are two crucial steps in the preparation of fibers for spinning into yarn. Blowing involves removing dirt and impurities from raw fibers by blowing air through them, while carding involves combing and aligning the fibers to form a continuous strand, known as a sliver.
2. Drawing: This is a process where fibers are pulled and stretched to reduce their thickness and increase their length, resulting in a more even distribution of fibers and improved yarn quality.
3. Roving: Roving is a stage in the spinning process that follows drawing. It involves further drawing and twisting of the fibers to form a long, thin, and continuous strand, ready to be spun into yarn.
4. Spinning: Spinning involves twisting fibers together to form a continuous strand of yarn. It is usually done using a spinning wheel or a spinning machine.
5. Bobbin: A bobbin is a cylindrical spindle used in spinning to store and hold the newly formed yarn.
6. Slubbing: Slubbing involves twisting and drawing out two threads of yarn to form a single yarn thread, resulting in enhanced yarn strength.

The factory roof was serrated and the windows all faced north. This was done to make the most of the fact that the sun rises from the east each morning, and so the north side was relatively bright and sunny then. Equally, in the late afternoon, the sun would shine on the south, which meant that it was not too hot on the shop floor. There was a two-story building at the southern end of the factory. The ground floor housed the biggest canteen and the first floor had a meeting room. The warehouses were immediately behind the shop floors, with two rows of warehouses separated by a special railway line. This railway line, which stretched from Baqiao railway station in the north to the cement factory in the south, linked all the textile town's factories.

When trains and trucks delivered the raw cotton grown in Shaanxi and Xinjiang to the warehouse behind the various shop floors, male workers from the supply and marketing section unloaded bales and put them on the carts to send to the blowing-and-carding room. They opened bales and fed the cotton

into the blowing machine. The blowing machine would remove most of the impurities, blemishes, and short fibers in the raw cotton so that the processed cotton would be suitable for spinning. After the machine had rolled the cotton laps, male workers used roll carts to move them to the carding machines. As the sheet of cotton passed through the carding machine, it was carded by the metal teeth and then blended into slivers through many procedures that used the cylinder, covers, licker-in, and doffers. Specifically, after the cotton entered the carding machine, the licker-in performed pre-carding and impurity removal, and then transferred the cotton to the cylinder. The cylinder and cover plate area performed the carding process. The separated fibers were then taken out of the work area by the carding cylinder and transferred to the doffer, followed by being crushed into cotton sliver and wound into the cotton sliver can.

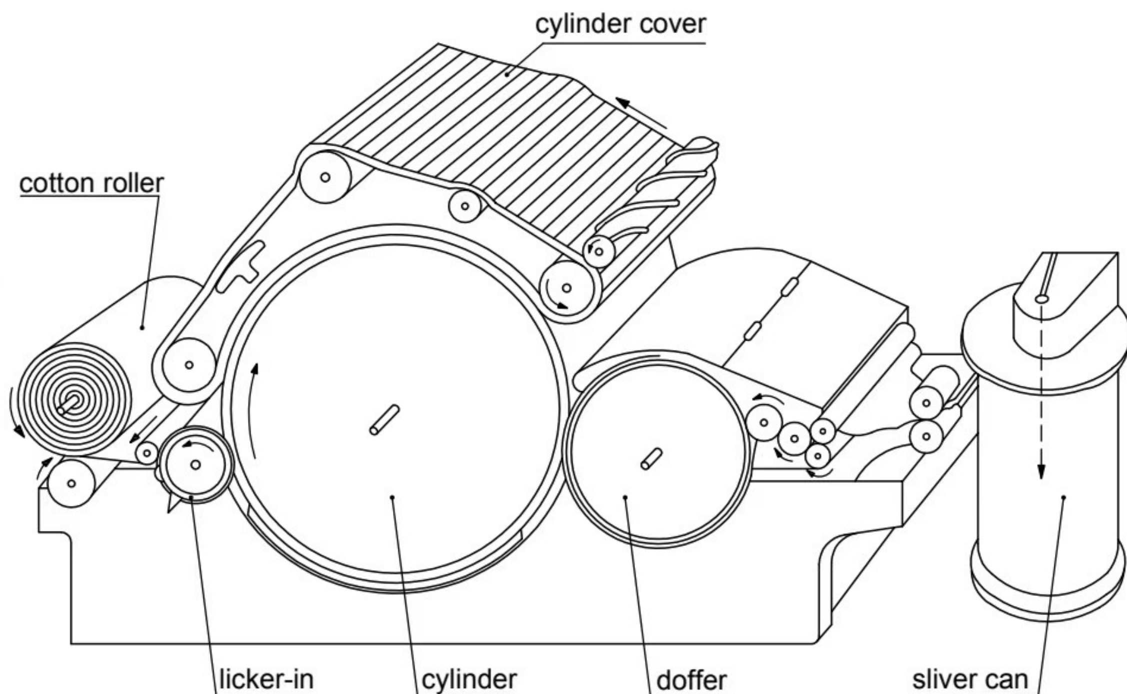

Figure 3.2: Carding machine diagram. Image rendered by Chi Cheng.

Then, the cans of cotton slivers were moved to the second shop floor to carry out the drawing and roving. Women workers put six to eight cans of slivers on the drawing machine. The drawing frame could improve the unevenness of the sliver length and thus further strengthen its thickness, so that it did not break easily. Then the slivers were blended on the drawing machine in a merging and drafting process. Finally, the laps were made into a well-formed drawing sliver that was coiled regularly in the bobbins. After that, the operators moved the bobbins to the roving frame so that the slivers could be drawn and twisted to be strengthened and prepared for spinning.

Spinning was the final yarn process in the spinning production process. Through drafting, twisting, and winding in the spinning machine, the cotton could finally meet the requirements of warp and weft tube yarns for the preparation and weaving processes, respectively. When the No.3 Factory was established, it had 50 560 spindles and reached 84 584 spindles mounted on 204 spinning frames by 2008, the final year before the entire enterprise went bankrupt. The spinning workshop was the most

labor-intensive workshop in the entire textile factory. According to the No.3 Factory's record, there were 720 workers based in the spinning room. They were grouped into fifty-two teams, including 142 male workers and 578 female workers. The spinning machine was generally large and long, and so one spinning machine could reach eighteen meters. One spinning worker was in charge of six to eight spinning machines. They walked back and forth, passing through the machines to check them and join up any broken threads. In addition, they had to replace the empty roving bobbins, and they also assisted the doffers in doffing the yarns.

The yarn from the spinning room was used as the weft on the loom directly, but the weft still had to go through several other procedures. First, the yarn had to pass through the winding, drawing, and slubbing process. Male auxiliary workers used carts to move the bobbins from the spinning room to the next shop floor. The first step was the winding procedure. Female workers placed the bobbins onto the cheese winder. Next, they used a knotting machine — the bobbin knotter — to join each bobbin yarn. It passed through the bakelite roller on the winder to form a cone many times larger than the original bobbin. Because of the machines' high speed, various fiber tissues in the yarns became attached to the cylinder, and so workers had to use a special brush to clean the kinks, knots and impurities from end to end regularly, usually every two hours.

Besides the winding process, merging, slubbing, and reeling yarn were other important procedures. A merging machine could help to merge two threads of yarn into one. Then, the yarn was wound with a roller and a special tube into a parallel cotton yarn or thread. In the winding room, a portion of corn from the winding machine was placed into the reeling machine, and it was then reeled into bunches of yarn rolls. The rolls were packed into a baler that included twenty-four bunches of rolls. And then they were packed again into larger bales, and porters from the supply and marketing section were transported to the warehouse for sale.

Then, the thread cones were moved to the preparation room before the weaving procedure began. The processes completed in this room included winding, warping, sizing, and drawing procedures. "Warping" referred to winding the cylinder yarns in parallel (that is, the required number and length of warp yarns) at the same tension and speed neatly onto the warp beam for use in the warp knitting machine. In the warping process, female workers still had to remove any defects. "Warp sizing" referred to the process of enhancing the threads to make them strong. The sizing room was the hottest room in the factory. It was often steamy and the temperature could reach forty degrees centigrade. Because of these working conditions and the labor intensity, nearly all sizing workers were male. The sizing machine could bond the single fibers of the yarn threads to increase the strength of the threads for weaving later on the loom. The sizing workers placed the warp beams on the bottom of the machine's tank, with starch used to size the warp threads.

The last step before weaving was called "drawing in." In the past, the manual drawing in of warp yarns was usually done on the drawing-in frame. After a manual separation of these tasks, the female workers used a metal hook to thread into the warp stopper and the harness eye, and then they inserted the warp into the reed teeth. Later, in the 1980s, the factory used a drawing-in machine, which could automatically perform the five basic drawing-in operations — called the yarn separation, warp stop,

heald separation, drawing in, and reed insertion — on the same machine. But for the entire time until the factory's final days of operation, there were only a few automatic drawing-in machines. Although there were only four major processes in the preparation workshop, these processes were the most critical and complex processes in the entire textile factory. The preparation workshop was the keystone of the textile factory. After all of these procedures, the warp threads were ready to send to the weaving shop floor.

The weaving room was the noisiest workshop in the factory. Although the machines in other rooms made very loud noises, the rattle of the machinery inside the weaving workshop was unbearable for factory visitors, but the weavers were used to the working conditions. When they were operating the looms, they seemed to ignore the noise, but when talking to others, they had to stand closely and shout into each other's ears.

The weaving room had the largest number of workers and machines in the entire factory. The woven fabric was made of warp threads and weft yarns, which were interwoven through the mechanical movements known as loom opening, shuttle casting, weft beating, warp feeding, and winding. The weaving room was the shop floor that delivered finished products through the upper shaft and weaving process. The blank fabric was then sent to the finishing workshop for inspection, which involved a cloth dropping process. The factories faced diverse demands for domestic and international textile specifications from the 1980s onward, and so the looms were modified and imported equipment was also introduced and installed in the No.3 Factory. Up until the bankruptcy in 2008, there were 1494 looms in total, with 363 male workers and 1108 female workers working in the weaving room.

The rolls of woven cloth from the weaving room were sent to the inspection room. Inspection rooms are often equipped with special lighting fixtures that provide bright and even illumination. In this room, female workers inspected the cloth under the light. The artificial lighting ensures consistent illumination and provides good visibility for the inspectors. The inspectors had to concentrate very carefully on the cloth, so it was easy to make their eyes tired. The inspector could find up to 200 defects in one hour and would then repair the defects on the folding machine. Finally, the cloth was packed as finished products that satisfied the requirements of the packing process, and they were finally handed over to the warehouse. Then, and only then, the entire production process was complete.

Besides the workers on the seven shop floors, certain other workers also completed very important tasks in the production process. For example, the workers from the mechanics section, the energy and power section, and the supply and marketing section also played a crucial role in supporting production. Most workers in these departments were men. Specifically, the mechanics section workers had to repair machinery and equipment in the whole factory and process machine components and accessories. The mechanics section workers often also completed technical improvement projects. The main task for workers in the power section was the repair and maintenance of power equipment, and they also took care of the production and domestic use of electricity throughout the factory. As the machines ran almost twenty-four hours a day, the probability of a machine breaking down was high, so the workers from the power section and from the mechanics section were on call at all times in order to ensure production was smoothly maintained.

Figure 3.3: The inspectors are finding defects in the cloth in the finishing room of the new factory. They are working under the special light. The finishing room in the old factory and the new factory does not have much difference. Photo taken by the author.

Each shop floor had a signal light. The signal light system on the shop floor was designed to be highly visible and effective. The lights, which were red and approximately the size of a football, were hung from the ceiling in the center of the shop floor. In larger shop floors, signal lights were placed in front and behind to ensure all workers could see the signal. The signal light was accompanied by a loud whistling sound, although this sound could sometimes be drowned out by the noise of the machinery on the shop floors. Despite this, the bright and distinctive red color of the light ensured it

was easily noticeable. The signal light would stay illuminated for thirty seconds, providing enough time for all workers to acknowledge and respond to it. The signal light served two crucial purposes on the shop floor. Firstly, it was used to clearly distinguish the beginning and end of shift changeovers. Before the red light came on, the responsibilities of the previous shift were still in effect. Once the red light was illuminated, however, the problems became the responsibility of the next shift. Secondly, the signal light was used as a visual cue for eating times. The first light indicated the start of the break, and the second light signaled the end of the break and the resumption of work. The signal was carefully managed by the electrical maintenance workers to ensure it was turned on and off at the specified times. In the past, there had been instances where the operators were neglectful and turned the lights on too early or too late, causing disruptions in the workshop's operations.

The signal lights were not illuminated during the daily commute, as the factory's radio, colloquially referred to as "the loudspeaker," had begun broadcasting half an hour earlier. The broadcast would start with music and then proceed to factory news. As the factory was located near the residential area, the workers could listen to the news on their way to and from work. It was an effective way to acknowledge and applaud the good workers and commendable actions of different workshop teams, as propagandists from each workshop contributed these updates. It served as an encouragement for the workers to stay motivated and engaged in their work.

During the mid to late 1990s, the factory established a closed-circuit television (CCTV) center, integrating it with the existing broadcast center. The factory's CCTV center would conduct the on-site shoots and interviews based on news material provided by the propaganda departments of each workshop. The produced content would then be broadcasted. The impact of this was greater than that of the loudspeaker, and if a worker was featured on the news, it would be a topic of discussion among workers for several days. The factory installed CCTV connections in every household, allowing all families to view the factory's programs.

The Preference for Shop Floors

The above description of each shop floor and the production procedures convey the textile factory's complexity and diversity. Each step had a different requirement that workers should follow to complete the tasks. Some procedures were harder to follow than others, and thus required a higher level of skill or certain physical qualities. Although the factory administration decided on the worker arrangements, this did not mean they were always satisfied with each worker's position in the factory. The shop floor and the types of work became topics that workers always discussed. During the rest of the working day, for example, on the way to the factory canteen or when walking home together, many female workers discussed who was doing the easier work and who had been allocated a harder task. They were full of envy for the less labor-intensive room and types of work. In fact, managers and directors knew the most about each room's situation, and they thus arranged for their family members or relatives to work in a more relaxed room and in more relaxed groups, and they asked the team leaders to take care of these people. Then, other workers would gossip that someone had close connections (guanxi) with the

factory's managers based on the ease of their work task.

Specifically, the preferred workshop for a female worker was the finishing room as it was less noisy and was a slightly lighter job. The second type of preferred work was on the carding and roving procedure, as it was a supply process and the machines could be turned off as soon as the number of slivers was great enough. They could then rest when the machine stopped. Probably the least preferred work was that on the spinning and weaving shop floors. Workers generally preferred the weaving room to the spinning workshop. Like the looms, the spinning machines' roar was too noisy, but the length of the machine was much longer than the loom. One worker was responsible for six to eight spinning machines. They would walk back and forth and constantly deal with broken ends, replace the rewind roving ends, and assist the doffers with the doffing yarn many times. After the working day was over, they felt very tired, and they could no longer move their legs. Thus, the workers would rather work in the weaving room than the spinning room.

If we exclude all these types of work, the most favorable work for female workers was at the factory laboratory. The laboratory was a very desirable department in the eyes of all factory workers. In the laboratory, the workers' daily task was to go to the shop floor regularly to take samples, return to the laboratory to carry out tests, and then to fill in the test reports. The laboratory was directly led by the factory-level department, and the managers in charge of production went to the laboratory almost every day. Because workers in the laboratory were close to the factory leaders, this meant they had control over many sources of information, and thus much gossip came from the laboratory. Many workers from other shop floors complained that the laboratory workers were very arrogant. But when other workers encountered laboratory workers, they always seemed friendly. The directors on the various shop floors wanted good relations with the laboratory workers, because no one wanted their part of the production process to be jeopardized because of problems with the experimental data. The laboratory's production index values were directly linked to the workshop's production index. Thus, the status of the female laboratory workers was very high. Consequently, almost all those who could work in the laboratory had guanxi, and most of the factory leaders' offspring worked in the laboratory.

The status of male workers in the power section was also relatively high. When they were called to fix a machine or equipment damaged by an electrical problem, two or three phone calls were usually not enough. Sometimes the shift foreperson or team leader went to the electrical operation room to request a personal appearance from the individual. And occasionally, they even prepared a box or two of good cigarettes for them, or made a promise to treat them to a drink after work. The head of each shop floor often had a good relationship with the electricians, because if the production target was not completed as the electrical equipment had failed, this would be a very serious matter. If they had a good relationship with the electricians, not only could they guarantee production, but the electricians could also help with electrical problems at home.

A Female Operator's Working Day (from 7:45 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.)

Except for the small number of workers who worked in the relatively lighter workshops, like the laboratory technicians, or those — such as the electricians — possessed vital factory skills they could leverage, the majority of workers still did very hard, basic, repetitive work, day after day. For example, here is a description of a female worker's daily routine.

Before going to work: She got up in a hurry at 6 a.m. Besides washing up, she also had to prepare breakfast for the whole family and awaken and dress her child. After packing everything, she walked with her child, taking about fifteen minutes to get to the factory. When she arrived, she dropped her child off at the daycare facility on the right side of the factory gate. Afterward, she hurried into the workshop's changing room to put on her work clothes. For safety reasons, she had to put all her hair into a white hat and wear an apron with the words "No.3 Textile Factory." Then she went to her post to take over from the shift worker.

Taking over from the shift worker: First, she had to check how the previous worker had left things. The shift handover occurred with a workshop signal. When the signal light was on, the previous shift was completely finished, and any further production and quality issues would be the new worker's responsibility. Therefore, tensions always occurred during the handover. Sometimes there were quarrels, sometimes even fights. After the shift was over, the first task was to clean the machines thoroughly and sweep up with a large brush. In this respect, the inspection was very strict; failure to meet the requirements resulted in deducted points and thus salary deductions. After the handover, she started work on her own production plan for the day. As a turner, she thought about how she could exceed production and earn the overproduction prize, how she could avoid quality problems, and how she could get on well with the team leader and the quality inspector, so as not to be deducted points during the various inspections.

During working time: Between them, the quality inspector, the workshop inspector, and the factory inspector carried out at least three to four inspections per day. She knew that on-shift inspections were easy to handle as they occurred on the same shift. Sometimes the on-shift inspectors would make an exception if they found problems, or even disregard the problems if they had a good relationship. But if a room-level inspector found a problem, this would be very serious. Not only would the individual be assessed — the shift and group members would also be affected. The most stressful issue was the factory-level inspection as the assessment indicators related directly to the year-end evaluation and honors. If something were to go wrong, not only would the worker lose points, the entire shop floor would be affected. Many inspections did not leave her with much time to catch her breath, and she had to focus on her work very attentively. But when the inspectors left, she found time to talk with other workers next to her. The machine would run all the time, and she felt as though she was bound to the machine. But luckily, other sister-like friends helped each other by watching the machine in between short absences, like going to the toilet or fetching hot water. She knew that building good relationships on the shop floor was crucial.

Lunchtime: There was a forty-five-minute break at noon when the red signal light turned on. Workers from each shop floor went to the factory canteen in turn, beginning from the farthest shop

Figure 3.4: The blackboards on shop floors show the results of different levels of inspections in the new factory. The old factory had more blackboards showing individual results of everyday work. Photo taken by the author.

floor. Some workers brought their own lunchboxes to save time. When mealtime began, the noise of the machines suddenly disappeared and the shop floor became quiet all at once. Nevertheless, the team leaders often used the mealtime to hold a team meeting. Their discussion focused mainly on the inspections before mealtime and the team leader further conveyed the product requirements. If the production quotas were tight, the machine would not be turned off because of the additional spinning needed.

Before leaving work: When the signal light in the workshop turned on after lunch, she would go back to her post to continue working. The noisy machine made an endless racket, and then work on the second half of the shift began. There was less than an hour left before work would be over, but she felt very busy and restless. On the one hand, she was preparing for the end of the shift and for the handover; on the other hand, she had to check that her output met the production requirements. If not, she would have to make a final effort. She also thought about what to do after work, including picking up her child from the nursery and cooking dinner for the whole family. At this time, the workers were easily distracted, and so this was also the time when problems were most likely to arise, including issues with production quality and even safety issues. Half an hour to fifteen minutes before the end of the shift, the next shift workers would arrive one by one and the handover procedure would begin.

When the signal light turned on, the working day was over. On the way back home, she, like certain other workers, went to pick up the children as soon as possible. Others usually walked together and shared what had happened during the working day with one another.

Afterwork tasks: The first task after work was to check the individual production reports for the working day. She stood in front of a large, long blackboard and looked carefully at the result. The shop floor, shift, group and individual indicators were clearly written on the blackboard. There were some other requirements before leaving the factory. Sometimes, the shift leader or the group leader held a meeting immediately after work. This would usually last between forty-five minutes and an hour. There was also a shop floor meeting once a month. In addition, if a large cultural event was being celebrated in the factory, rehearsals would be held after work. These events motivated workers highly, as these activities were closely linked to honors awarded to individuals and to each shop floor. After a long day's work, with lint all over their bodies and heads, some female workers would take a shower and change out of their work clothes. Many younger workers dressed up in their own clothes and took a stroll together.

The night shift was tough. But when the night shift was over, she could not leave. In order to strengthen workers' operating skills, the factory stipulated that after the night shift, technical practice was to be carried out on spare machines on the shop floor at 7:45 a.m. for half an hour. Personal points would be deducted if workers did not participate. The best operator presented how to operate the machine more efficiently, and other workers stood around, observing and learning. Also, the workers practiced their basic skills. For example, they stood in a circle and practiced knotting the yarn to see how many knots they could tie in a minute and what the quality of the knots was. It did not matter whether they wanted to practice or not: everyone was used to it, as it was a compulsory task. She was very tired after the night shift; all she wanted was to quickly finish practicing and go home. She recalled:

> We have no complaints about the daily work. But the night work was so tough. Have you experienced the alarm clock ringing at midnight when you sleep so well? This happened twice a week. We worked from 11:45 p.m. to 7:45 a.m. It was very easy to doze off when I was doing the night shift. But I had to force myself to stay awake; otherwise, my workload wouldn't meet the standard requirements. I can't even imagine how I held up at that time.

The above description offers a snapshot of the morning and night shifts. The work process in the middle and night shifts was similar, but there were no after-hours extras on the middle shift and no meal times on the night shift. The hardest time was just before dawn, when the night-shift workers were particularly sleepy, and some workers even snoozed by the machine. The shift supervisors would walk back and forth at night to wake up the dozing workers in order to prevent them from being strangled by the equipment.

Although the daily work tasks were not easy, workers admitted that the factory did not lack a human side, and it did not only focus on production without concern for the individuals. In a socialist

factory, managers always cared about factory workers, especially when they encountered difficulties. One middle-aged woman, for example, had both family and work responsibilities. Sometimes, she asked for leave because of family issues, for instance, when an older family member or her child was sick, and she had to look after them. The shift leader and group leader not only permitted her to leave and rearrange the work tasks on those days, but the same leader also went to her home or hospital to visit her and to see if she needed any other help. The leaders at the shop floor or factory level would help workers with more complicated matters or big problems. This was a crucial activity taken very seriously in the textile factory.

The above description of the working day is not about "her" story. Rather, it portrays the experiences of thousands of workers over several shop floors and in relation to many production procedures. Although the workers always complained that they were bound by machines, they still persevered and did well in their posts. Not only did they accomplish their tasks, but they also tried to surpass the production quota. The "iron rice bowl" jobs not only provided them with a place to work, but also offered them security by satisfying their life needs, such as an allocated apartment, education for their offspring, quality health services, and retirement benefits. All these benefits provided for their welfare, and when coupled with various competitions, rewards, and penalties, they became a motivating force that pushed them to devote their whole life to the socialist construction.

Inside the New Factory

Xi'an Textile Group Co., Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as the Xifang Group) is a wholly state-owned enterprise. It has integrated and reorganized the textile town's four old factories — the No.3, No.4, No.6, and the Printing & Dyeing Factory. The Xifang Group is located in the Xi'an Modern Textile Industrial Park, which was established on the Bailu plain. The 312 national highway lies in front of the factory, and it takes thirty minutes to reach it by bus from the textile town.

After the old factories' bankruptcy in the textile town, a large number of workers chose to stay and continue working in the new factory. I have discussed the reasons for their choices in Chapter Two. In this section, I will describe my personal visit to the new factory, and I will demonstrate the factory's spatial arrangement and discuss some of the tensions present in relationships that link the new factory to the old factories in the textile town.

Changing Spatial Arrangements

Unlike the previous saw-tooth roof of the textile town's old factories, the new factory's roof is entirely flat and covered with air conditioning units. The layout of the new factory is basically the same as that of the previous factories here. This is because the orderly progression of the production process in a textile factory dictates such a structure. Therefore, the new factory's shop floors have the same arrangement as in the old factory, only the shop floors are now larger than before and the machinery and equipment are increasingly automated.

Figure 3.5: The Xifang Group's site and the surrounding landscape. Image from the factory brochure.

As for the machinery and equipment, from the first part of the production process onward, many machines and equipment are of the most advanced level in China's textile industry. For example, the spinning machines are larger and taller and have more spindles. Almost all looms in the weaving room are Japanese air-jet looms: the Toyota-type looms used in the old factories are no longer available. Only the finishing room is still basically the same as before, perhaps as examining cloth for defects still relies on manual work.

Although the new factory's spatial structure is similar to that of the old one, the underlying hierarchy and boundaries that the new factory establishes are noticeable. The new factory's front entrance was a long and automatic iron gate that defined a boundary between the factory's outsiders and insiders. The regulation of this boundary was rigid. I needed to ask someone who worked at the factory or show a recommendation letter in order that the door guard let me pass through the iron gate. Also, the entrance guard asked me to register my name, affiliation, and a contact number. On the first occasion, my main interlocutor, Han, took me to the new factory. While he had been a textile worker in the old factory, he nevertheless asked his former colleague Ma, who had become a shop floor director in the new factory, to permit us to enter. When not working, however, Ma took me to a side entrance and told me that I could enter via this gate as the guard at this small entrance was not strict like the guard at the front gate. After several visits, I passed through the side gate and also observed the front gate. I found that almost all the textile workers walked in through the side entrance, while the managers drove their cars through the front gate. The side gate was always open, while the front automatic entrance was always closed, except for when a car went through, and the guard used a button to open it.

The side entrance was a completely different phenomenon from the quiet, clear front entrance.

Figure 3.6: More automated equipment but fewer workers on the shop floors in the new factory, compared to the old factory. Photo taken by the author.

Textile workers laughed and chatted there when leaving for work. On one level, it was convenient for workers to go through the side entrance as its location was near the various shop floors, just as it was convenient for managers to drive through the front gate, which was close to the administrative building. The deeper reason was that the different gates divided off identities linked to different social statuses. Kim (2013) shed light on the hierarchical and discriminatory practices in a Korean-owned factory in China. He studied how spatial divisions and varying living conditions reinforce the factory's hierarchy and social distinction. In this Korean factory, workers were divided into three hierarchical groups: Korean-Chinese interpreters, urban Han-Chinese residents and rural migrant Han-Chinese women. As in Kim's analysis of the politics of division, hierarchical groups also existed in the new textile factory. Unlike the division caused by nationalism and ethnicity in the Korean factory, the division in the new textile factory was driven by differences in social and cultural identity, which were informed by historical solidarity, cultural collectiveness and work practices formed in different previous factories. The factory's spatial arrangement deepened the gap between workers and managers. There was less interaction between managers and workers, which also reduced the amount of social contact between them outside of the workplace. In contrast, the old factories only had one front gate, and everyone walked through the gate and exchanged greetings with one another. Therefore, the factory's physical arrangement in space created a boundary that led to estrangement and distance between workers and

managers in the new factory.

The spatial structure inside the shop floor was also different from that in the previous factory. In the new factory, the shop floor director's office was upstairs. From inside the office, there were no windows that looked directly onto the shop floor. Instead, the director supervised the work situation through computers on her desk. Thanks to the new technology, the shop floor director did not need to go downstairs to check on who was late or what problems had occurred — she simply saw a signal on her computer. Director Ma explained the difference between the old and new styles of work:

> When I was a textile worker in the No.3 Factory, the shop floor director walked back and forth to check on our work personally many times a day. But now, you can see my computer: the red signal means that something is wrong with this machine, and the green signal means that everything is going well. I don't even need to go downstairs. If workers are not able to solve the problems, they send me pictures through WeChat [a social media application], and I show them how to do it. If there is still a problem, I then go downstairs to check in person.

In the old textile factory, the director's office was on the shop floor, very close to the machines and frontline workers. When the director had to walk in and out of the office frequently, the door was open all the time. It seemed that the small office was integrated with the machines and workers on the shop floor as an intact whole. The office was not a boundary that separated the director from the other workers in the old factory. Rather, it provided more interactions that helped the director gain a better understanding of other workers and of the production situation.

Estranged "Renqing Wei" (Human Touch)

Director Ma admitted that the working conditions now were much better than in the old factory. She mentioned two important changes: one was the noise, and the other was the air quality. The air quality was better than before as the advanced equipment could deal with the cotton batting that floated in the air. In the past, there was so much cotton batting that workers often coughed or even developed occupational diseases. Also, thanks to the advanced machines, the noise on the spinning and weaving shop floors was not so great. Nevertheless, when I accessed these shop floors, I could not endure the indescribably loud racket, and I still needed to shout when I talked. Even after I left the shop floor, a buzzing sound rang for a long time in my ears. It was difficult for me to imagine workers being in such an intensively noisy environment for more than eight hours.

Although the work conditions were better, the workload was no less than before. The old factory implemented a "three shifts with four teams" model. That is to say, to ensure the factory could run continuously, the workers on each shop floor were divided into four operational teams, thereby ensuring that the production posts were occupied for twenty-four hours. The work system in the new factory continued this previous work system, but some shop floors even operated "two shifts with three teams." This meant that workers had to work for twelve hours a day. Because of this hard workload, it was

difficult to recruit people from urban areas. Director Ma stated, "How are urban people able to bear the work intensity with so little salary? Only those from rural areas could accept such a workload."

Technological progress is driving the pace of modernization in industrial enterprises. What surprised me a lot was that in my imagination, there were so many workers working busily in front of the machines. My speculative image was based on the old pictures and my informants' descriptions of their previous days working at the old textile factory. The truth was that, while there were fewer workers than I thought, until I walked between the huge machines I could see some workers walking around the machines, observing, waiting, and operating the machines unhurriedly. In the descriptions of shop floors in the old factory, workers presented a very busy, lively workplace, where one worker looked after many machines using semi-automatic equipment. Nevertheless, the workers had to change the spin bobbins and fix the broken threads all the time. Nowadays in the new factory, most of the machines were automatic and imported from Germany, Switzerland, and Japan. Their quality and standards were at one of the most advanced levels in China. Therefore, the factory did not require a large workforce. Machine operators always depended on the equipment's commands, and they used many buttons to operate the machines. Meanwhile, the shop floor directors relied on monitoring the systems via computers.

This resulted in a different working atmosphere and in estranged relationships between workers in the new factory. Director Ma mentioned the term *renqing wei* (human touch) many times:

> When I was a frontline worker, I looked after three lathes. I had to walk around them. The other workers worked next to me. We called each other sisters. Yes, our relationship was like that of real sisters. Although we had quarrels sometimes, these were just for work, they were not related to the person. The shop floor was full of *renqing wei*. Most of the time, when we walked around the machine and came across others, we caught up, spoke a few words, and so on until we met again on the next round. This didn't mean we stopped working; we chatted but we worked at the same time. We chatted about everything. Sometimes, if we went to the bathroom or got water to drink, other sisters wanted to help us to look after the machine for a while. We helped each other. Nowadays it is different. The machines are very advanced, but as you can see, the shop floor lacks *renqing wei*.

The movement in space diminished, and the distance between each worker caused physical estrangement. Thus, more independent work and less communication led to less *renqing wei*. This is a term that the former workers always mentioned. They admitted that they were very tired after a workday, but they felt it was normal and adapted to it. What they felt was memorable was the relationship between workers, neighbors, and even managers. The past was full of *renqing wei*, rather than nowadays, a time in which they felt a sense of alienation alongside other people in the new workplace. This sense of alienation could draw on Marx's (1844) definition, as the workers felt not only alienation from machines and products, but also a disconnection from others.

Cultural Tensions: "Your Face Reveals Where You Originally Come From."

The administrative building's layout in the old and new factories was the same — both were behind the front entrance. The new administrative building had five floors, and the offices were located on the first floor to the fourth floor. The ground floor was a corridor that made it easy for people to pass through to the various shop floors directly. The new building was taller and had more offices than the old factory. When I entered the building, it gave me a similar feeling to being in a government office. There were a few people walking in the corridor. Most office doors were closed. The wall decorations displayed the honors and awards that the factory had received and of which it was proud. These decorations also introduced the factory leaders.

I went to the third floor to meet Li. She was fifty years old and used to be a colleague of Director Ma. She was chubby and her slightly curly, shoulder-length hair gave her a clean look. She had a constant smile on her face and a loud voice. Li was a staff member of the labor union in the new factory. She had also previously worked as the league branch secretary at the old No.3 Factory. When I went to her office, she was tasked with arranging the medicine. Various common Chinese medicines were carefully arranged on a long table. She explained that every summer they distributed these medicines to workers to avoid sunstroke when they worked on the various shop floors. Distributing medicine was part of the workers' welfare activities inherited from the old factory. But the old No.3 Factory used to take more measures to deal with hot days. In addition to distributing medicines, the old factory also produced mung bean soup. The factory's canteen used to make two buckets of mung bean soup every day, which they delivered to each shop floor and handed to the workers individually. During the 1990s, the No.3 Factory even produced ice blocks and distributed them to each family. Members of the third generation often recalled this childhood memory.

There were tensions and contradictions within the new factory. As mentioned before, the new factory was a combination of the former factories, including the No.3, No.4 and No.6 Factory. Most of the top-level management came from the No.4 Factory. Li was a staff member from the No.3 factory, and she complained that her work often encountered obstacles and did not progress well. For example, the leaders preferred to use and prioritize the employees from the No.4 factory, but they asked people from the other factories to handle difficulties. Li used the concept of a different "factory culture" to summarize these contradictions.

She perceived a divergence in "factory culture" in three aspects. First, the work style was different. In the old No.3 Factory, the managers and shop floor directors set up a space of freedom for the workers. They made few changes, and arrived at decisions at the end when workers proposed suggestions. But in the old No.4 Factory, the leaders preferred to make sure that every single step went well from the beginning and did not allow it to be questioned. In addition, the relationship between leaders and workers was different. The leaders in the No.3 Factory liked to play on the workers' emotions. That is, when dealing with difficulties, the leaders or directors always let the workers understand what was going on, combining reasoning with emotional appeals, thus shortening the moral distance between them and the workers, in order to stimulate workers' motivation. They showed their caring side not only in the workplace but also in relation to workers' families, or when workers had personal

difficulties. If there was something wrong with the work, they would figure it out together and the leader would like to hear the workers' reasons. In the No.4 Factory, however, the leaders set strict rules and regulations for rewards and punishments, which everyone had to follow. If the workers operated machinery incorrectly or could not manage the workload, then they would have wage deductions, no matter their reasons. A mistake was a mistake and no excuses could be made; but conversely, if you did well, you were rewarded. The leader had the absolute authority and power to make decisions. Because of these strict rules for reward and punishment (jiangfa fenming), the No.4 Factory's achievements had been better than those of the No.3 Factory.

Thus, when the different factory culture and traditions collided, some contradictions occurred: the workers from the No.3 Factory were not used to how the No.4 Factory leaders managed the factory. Many workers from the No.3 Factory felt a sense of oppression while working. The boundary between these cultural differences placed limits on how much these factory workers could integrate. As Li summarized, "When you see someone, the first impression in your mind is that they are from the No.3 Factory, or they are from the No.4 Factory. It seems that the number 'three' or 'four' is written on your face." When she talked, she gnashed her teeth in anger and used her forefinger to point at her face. She kept saying, "Don't listen to them (the leaders) speaking of the 'fusion,' it is impossible!"

Nevertheless, some workers, like Director Ma, who was from the No.3 Factory but who later worked as a shop floor director in the new factory, took a different view and tried to understand the different strengths of the No.3 Factory and No.4 Factory working styles:

> The working style is different. In the No.4 Factory, their regulation was so rigid, with no way of negotiating or muddling through. Because they rigidly followed the regulations, their productivity was higher than our factory's. Our No.3 Factory was different because we had more humanity. We could negotiate with the directors. For example, if I found a new way to promote efficiency, I could discuss it with the director. But for the workers from the No.4 Factory, they had to follow the operational procedures, with no way of changing anything. That is why our No.3 Factory always had technological innovation. But it also caused problems, like laziness among workers who always found many excuses to relax. I'm now a shop floor director. The strict regulations make it easier for me to manage the shop floor. It is reasonable that leaders ask workers to follow the rules and regulations strictly. I can understand this, but some workers from the No.3 Factory cannot adopt such a way of working.

These divergences did not only reflect different ways of working. This disagreement often caused some tension. Chen, who had been a No.3 Factory worker, was now working as a shift leader on the new factory's shop floor. Chen believed that the No.4 Factory leaders had real authority, and the No.3 Factory workers were often the target of wrongful accusations when they encountered severe problems. Chen gave me an example of how he had been treated unjustly and become a scapegoat when there had been an accident in the workshop due to the actions of another shift leader. But because that person

had a relationship with the leaders from the No.4 Factory, Chen was ultimately given the blame and felt the consequences.

These contradictions remained and it was difficult to reconcile them because of the cultural differences underpinning the new, conjoined factory. Nevertheless, the factory managers no longer seemed to care about balancing the interests of all parties. As the workers from the old factories slowly reached retirement age, they left the new factory one by one. And the newly recruited young people worked in the factory with no prior expectations, focusing only on their tasks and not influenced by the old factories' traditions. The old workers, who complained and were not well integrated, always remembered the traditions, the culture, and the friendly past relations when they worked in their respective factories. These memories thus converged into a nostalgic feeling, accompanied by various emotions, that ended their life of struggle in the factory.

Conclusion

The varied labor process in the textile factory contributed to the complexity of working-class nostalgia. This nostalgia among the workers is a complex interplay between their actual experiences and an idealized perception of the past.

Nostalgia often entails a yearning for a past era that workers have lived through and formed memories of. This sentiment, intertwined with reality, manifests in two distinct aspects. Firstly, slight changes to the spatial layout of the new factory led to a greater boundary between workers and managers. This increased distance and estrangement caused workers to reminisce about the past, particularly the solidarity and *renqing wei* that characterized their relationships as "sisters and brothers" on the shop floor. In the previous shop floor, the supportive and caring interactions between workers and managers fostered a sense of belonging within the socialist factory, creating a bond that workers now nostalgically yearn for. Such nostalgia could encompass memories of feeling valued and respected on the shop floor, experiencing a strong sense of community with their colleagues, and enjoying a sense of security and relatively equal social status among workers.

Secondly, the traditional factory culture that the former workers inherited from their own factories generated contradictions and tensions in the working environment at the new, conjoined factory. Despite the improved working conditions and advanced, automated machines, the failure to address the underlying differences in labor processes led to a discordant atmosphere in the new factory. This prompted workers to reminisce about their past experiences in the old factory, where they had grown accustomed to its factory tradition and developed relationships with their former leaders.

On the other hand, however, nostalgia can also involve an idealization of the past, where workers selectively remember the positive aspects of a period and overlook or forget the negative aspects. For instance, while the old factory offered stability and benefits, it also had significant challenges including work pressure, physical discomfort, and inequality in the labor process. Workers were subjected to regular inspections, rewards, punishment measures, and reports on their daily work quotas, leaving them exhausted and struggling to balance their personal lives with work demands. Furthermore, the

various workers' tasks were not equal on the shop floor: the female workers who had guanxi with leaders could get lighter work, while the skilled male workers who controlled the resource had more bargaining power in the labor process.

The new factory presented further challenges, including division among workers from their previous factories and social hierarchies between managers and workers. It led workers to overlook the negative aspects of the old factories and idealize their memories of a better past. Thus, the sense of disappointment with the present could result in more idealized view of the past, which, in turn, can intensify workers' nostalgia as they feel that the reality of their current situation falls short of their idealized memories of the past. Therefore, workers' nostalgia is a combination of both experienced realities and an idealized world. This dynamic interplay can be a potent force in shaping workers' collective and individual memories, influencing their perceptions of the past, present, and future.

Chapter 4

Habitus and Guanxi as Heritage

When discussing industrial heritage, it is essential to recognize that heritage extends beyond physical objects or locations to include a dynamic cultural process. This process involves the expression and interpretation of cultural values, stories, memories, and significance (Smith 2006). Thus, industrial heritage encompasses not only factory buildings, machinery, and monuments but also aspects of working-class life and communities, such as festivals, oral histories, photographs, songs, and literature (Smith, Shackel, and Campbell 2011).

In addition to these heritage practices that reflect industrial traditions, I also consider less visible yet deeply internal and poetic aspects of life that can be regarded as heritage. Thus, in this chapter, I will explore how guanxi and habitus, as integral ways of life for working class, function as forms of heritage. I aim to demonstrate how guanxi and habitus enable workers to draw on their past experiences to navigate and adapt to contemporary shifts in class status. This analysis could offer a new perspective on linking heritage and class within the context of ongoing social change.

In this chapter, my focus shifts to workers who were laid off from their jobs in the textile town but managed to find new employment elsewhere. I will illustrate how workers' past experiences created new opportunity in new workplaces. This ethnographic chapter delves into the experiences of those who found jobs outside the textile town, detailing their commutes, tasks, and coping strategies in their new environments. Despite leaving the state-owned factory years ago, these workers' resilience and strategies remain deeply rooted in the habitus and guanxi formed during their time there. I will also examine how guanxi and habitus are reified and reinterpreted in various new ways within workers' new workplaces as they adapt to the challenges of transitioning from job security to precarious employment.

Workers' Precarity

When the factories went bankrupt, a large population of laid-off workers emerged, and the textile town could no longer provide workers with feelings of security linked to employment. Permanent jobs at state-owned enterprises (SOEs), which the previous workers called the "iron rice bowl" (tie fan wan) never returned. Instead, driven by a market-determined system of contractual employment, the laid-off

workers, especially the middle-aged ones, experienced significant difficulties in finding new forms of employment. On the one hand, they lacked the physical energy to do the labor-intensive work required to compete with young migrant workers from rural areas; on the other hand, they lacked the high skills and credentials to compete with those who held academic degrees and worked in high-skilled industry (Hurst 2009: 88). The laid-off workers blamed their misfortunes on inequalities linked to society and the regime, and they felt disappointment at having been abandoned by the state. After they lost their "iron rice bowl," they lost their sense of security and dignity, and were then caught up in an insecure and vulnerable life, which I will explain through the concept of "precarity."

Precarity or precariousness, as many scholars have maintained, has been a pervasive situation in the age of neoliberalism and globalization the world over (Kalleberg 2009; Molé 2010; Muehlebach 2013a; Procoli 2004; Standing 2011). For example, Molé (2010) analyzed how the effects and implications of neoliberalism affected labor exclusion and work conflicts in Italy, and examined the meaning of "precariousness" and "mobbing" to understand the imagining of neoliberalism through apprehension and anticipation. He particularly indicated that neoliberalism becomes a rising sense of apprehension and fear for Italian workers, and "the sensory and experiential apprehension of neoliberal change acts as a unique force, which, in turn, shapes practices, knowledge claims, and moral orders" (2010: 40). But the wide use of the term "precarity" has not resulted in a consistent definition of its concept and meanings. When "precarity" refers to forms of work, it involves elements of "vulnerability, injurability, interdependency" (Butler 2009: 23), or a type of job that is "part-time, limited in time, interim, subcontracting on a large scale" (Procoli 2004: 1). Allison (2013) rightly suggested that precarity referred to the loss of security. In her words, "Precarity marks the loss of this — the loss of something that only certain countries, at certain historical periods, and certain workers ever had in the first place" (2013: 5). Although researchers' analyses come from different perspectives and do not give a precise definition, they have offered an approach to understanding precarity in terms of labor relations, class, social reproduction, and social transformation in a variety of social contexts.

China's economic reform has not only increased economic growth but has also led to a shift in employment structure. Both global capitalism and national circumstances have provoked an increase in informal work that is unstable and pays less, and that lacks contracts, social insurance, and labor protections (Kuruvilla, Lee, and Gallagher 2011). Lee (2021) defined "precarity" not as a thing-like phenomenon with fixed attributes but as relational struggles over the recognition, regulation, and reproduction of labor. Lee rightly notes that precarity is a process, and that the content and meaning are not fixed to certain objective, universal indicators but are instead always relational, relative, and culturally and contextually dependent. It is true that when workers face the precarity that comes with a layoff, the challenges of finding new employment can further intensify their feelings of insecurity. Nevertheless, policy support and reciprocal relationships may play a significant role in mitigating precarity for individuals and groups. In addition, the workers' subjectivity struggling with precarity can deepen their understanding of this phenomenon. This involves recognizing that the experience of precarity is not fixed or static, but rather shaped by various factors such as cultural, social, and political circumstances. Thus, the complexity and fluidity of precarity should adopt a contextual and relational

approach to understanding and addressing this phenomenon.

The ethnographic part of this chapter is based on my fieldwork with two textile workers from the old factories who have found employment in new workplaces. Although laid-off workers suffered a precarity that existed in their daily life, I felt touched by their frequent comment, "Life should move on." Thus, in this chapter, my aim is to delve into how workers cope with precarity by drawing upon the habitus and guanxi inherited from their industrial past.

Two Previous Workers Working in the New Workplaces

One of the biggest changes for workers after the factory closed down was the shift in everyday spatial movements and its impact. Before being laid off, their everyday movements were between the social housing and the shop floor. They walked up and down the three-hundred-meter slope linking these two places, and their other activities were based in and around the textile town neighborhood, the factory cluster and the residential compounds. After being laid off from the factory, if they were lucky enough to be reemployed, most of their new workplaces were far away from the textile town. Since then, although they still lived in the factory community, their spatial movements from home to the workplace had changed, which correspondingly affected their life trajectory too.

Chen: Working in a Cell Phone Store

Chen was forty-eight years old. A vivacious and elegant woman, she always gave me the impression that she was much younger than she actually was. She had been a textile worker in the preparation room in the No.3 Factory. After the factory had closed down, she found employment as a staff member in the operating department at a large cell phone mall near the city center.

The store she worked at sold international and domestic brands of cell phones and accessories, and it also offered other services like fixing cell phones. The store had five floors. Chen's office was on the second floor. Her main duty was handling paperwork about merchants' information on this floor and maintaining orders to ensure the shopkeepers complied with regulations. If there were tensions or quarrels occurring among merchants or between merchants and customers, she also needed to coordinate them, placate customers, and solve the problems.

I accompanied Chen to the store by bus one day. She had light makeup on and wore a black dress with a laced collar. We took ten minutes to walk to the bus station on the textile town's main street. Five minutes later, the bus arrived. It was very difficult to move for a little while on the bus, as the crowded bus was full of people heading to work or school. After around forty minutes, we got off one stop ahead of our destination and walked to Chen's workplace. When walking together, I had a chance to talk with her. She was gentle and smiled sweetly when she talked. I asked her why she did not take the subway, as a new direct line to the mall had just opened. She replied that walking for a while was an opportunity to exercise. But after I argued that getting off one stop earlier on the subway would give her more exercise and would be a more efficient use of time, she gave an embarrassed smile and

replied in a lower voice, “But it costs more than taking the bus.” Indeed, this was the main reason to choose the bus over the subway. Taking the bus only costs 0.5 yuan, but taking the subway costs 2.5 yuan. For workers, although they no longer worked in the factory, the habit of commuting without payment was imprinted deeply in their minds. It was impossible to spend a very short time going from home to the workplace as they used to, but it was possible for them to save as much money as they could during the daily commute.

When Chen arrived at the mall, most of the cell phone shops were closed; only a few merchants were preparing to open. The opening time displayed on the mall exterior by the entrance was 10:00 a.m., but staff members had to start work earlier than the merchants. The first thing Chen did when she arrived at the office was to change into her work uniform — a light-blue shirt and dark pants. Unlike the dress she wore beforehand, the uniform looked very formal. She said her colleagues laughed at her because others seldom wore uniforms except for when attending special activities. But she ignored the friendly laugh and explained:

> Wearing a uniform was the first lesson I learned when I worked at the factory, and this habit has lasted nearly thirty years. When we entered the factory, the first thing we did was change into the work uniform. We couldn’t wear dresses or skirts because of safety requirements. So, when I work in this new place, I also ask myself to wear a work uniform.

Her colleague, a man nearly fifty years old, came into the office at this moment. When he sat behind the desk, he began to drink tea and read newspapers. Chen explained that this man had not been busy recently, while her tasks recently consisted of doing paperwork, like collecting information from merchants and asking them to fill out some documents. Chen and his colleague did not talk too much. But it seemed that they got along well with one another. As Chen described, “No matter if one of us gets off work earlier or is even absent for a day, the other one takes care of the office.”

Also, Chen built up good friendships with merchants. When she saw me using an old iPhone model, she asked me why I had not changed it to the newest model. I explained that I had two cell phones, but I preferred to carry this smaller one, as it was easier to hold. She then asked me whether I needed any accessories for the phone. I thought for a while and told her I needed to buy a protective case and recommend one to me. Then she took me to a shop near her office room, but it was hard to find a suitable protective case. After asking sellers at four shops, I finally got what I needed. She knew these sellers very well. She walked into their shops but did not ask them about the products I had first wanted. She talked about other things, like how the business was going these days, which product was better, or how the new phones functioned.

Chen’s work tasks did not just involve sitting at the office and dealing with paperwork. More importantly, she built good relationships with the sellers. She said this was a win–win situation. Her role was to make sure the sellers obeyed the store’s regulations. Hence, if the sellers respected her, they would give her face (mianzi). Then, if some tensions occurred among sellers or between sellers and customers, it was easy to deal with. Similarly, the sellers were also willing to build a good relationship with her as they rented shops in the mall, and Chen was a staff member in charge of the mall regulations.

Thus, both sides had their reasons for maintaining the relationship. But Chen said it was not just for personal profit. She understood that everyone's life was not easy, so she always offered them a hand when they needed help. For instance, when she walked around and found some sellers packaging products for wholesalers, she wanted to help them pack; or if there were no customers in the shops at that moment, she would chat with these sellers, and when the customers arrived, she would assist the sellers with promoting the products.

This reciprocity did not only exist in the mall. Chen extended the reciprocity to a larger space. When Chen sat in the office and collected the paperwork, she would sometimes keep looking at her cell phone and typing in WeChat (a social media application). She showed me that she was answering questions from her friends about the cell phone. Most of her friends were former workers from the same factory. She would reply and tell them which product was better and more suitable. If she was unfamiliar with the questions, she would copy them to the sellers and ask for their advice.

Chen played the role of broker. When her friends asked her about buying a cell phone, she would then turn to her familiar sellers to obtain the phone. Her friends trusted her because she knew which product was cost-effective, and which merchant could be trusted, and she even knew which purchase channels would ensure good quality. Thus, her friends always recommended that others buy phones from her. Meanwhile, the merchants were pleased with Chen and offered her a lower price than exclusive stores. Then, she handed over the phone to the buyers at a slightly higher price than she received them for, and she could thus earn a profit of about 50 to 100 yuan per phone, depending on the phone price. Her friends did not even need to show up; they asked Chen to bring them the phones after work, as most of the buyers were former textile workers living in the same community as Chen. The trading process was based on trust. In Chen's words, "We have known each other for more than thirty years, and although we are no longer working together, the trust is still there." But when I asked her whether she had the same friendship with the sellers, she said surreptitiously, "Everyone is astute. Don't forget they are the people doing business; they are not the same as those of us who come from the large state-owned factory."

After she finished work, we took a bus and went back to the textile town. Before she went home, she prepared to hand over a new phone to her friend who also lived in the No.3 Factory community. We waited in the housing community's yard. Eventually, her friend arrived. This was not the first time her friend had bought a phone from Chen. When they saw each other, Chen invited her to come home with her, but her friend said she had to go back to cook. They had a casual talk, and her friend complained that her daughter was always after the latest electronic gadgets. Chen comforted her and said it was very common for young people. Then Chen gave the phone to her friend and asked her to open it and check it, but her friend refused and said there was no need to do so. She made a joke that if there was something wrong, Chen "could not escape." I calculated that over one month, Chen sold five phones to other friends, and she also provided other services like fixing phones or purchasing accessories.

It is interesting to see that, on the one hand, Chen followed the rules. Every day she wore a uniform and arrived at the office before opening time. But on the other hand, this did not mean that she was

an inflexible person. To the contrary, she knew how to use strategies and convenience to build up guanxi bonds with both sellers and customers, which could be understood as reciprocity. Although her official work tasks did not include selling, her role was like one of a seller in a larger space. This larger space linked her new workplace in the cell phone mall to the living community in the textile town. And in this larger space, she reproduced the social space that turned the former workers into her potential customers. Chen's role in the workplace can be explained by using Herzfeld's (1993) analysis of bureaucratic behavior, which points out that bureaucracy's symbolic basis is based on notions of race and kinship as much as efficiency and rationality. Herzfeld rightly indicates that even though bureaucrats often appear indifferent towards their clients and their symbolic adherence to rules and conventions, bureaucrats are human beings who establish social boundaries to determine whether or not to assist clients. The performance of indifference acts as a way of providing a shield that allows bureaucrats to help clients even when this means breaking the rules. Chen's behavior reflects this phenomenon. She adheres to performance standards and utilizes the protection that her performance provides to favor her friends. Even though she has left the textile factory and now works outside the textile town, she still considers the previous workers as insiders.

Xu: Working in a Supermarket

Xu, who had been a team leader on the preparation shop floor in the No.3 Factory, later found work as a sales assistant in a supermarket. She was in charge of selling everyday home goods such as tableware, decorations, and cleaning products. Her work tasks in the supermarket included recording daily sales figures, arranging the placement of products, and sometimes designing sales promotions. After she was laid off in 2008, she searched for job opportunities and heard from other workers that a supermarket was recruiting people. Luckily, she got this job and has been working there for ten years. At first, she was in charge of setting up the product displays and assisting customers. She gradually became familiar with the products and accomplished the work very well, and then she was promoted to the role of sales assistant in the home goods department.

I visited her at the supermarket when it opened at 8:00 a.m. When I entered the entrance, I saw Xu and five other colleagues standing on two sides of the entrance area and welcoming customers. I was curious about this, as Xu worked on the second floor — why had she come downstairs and was standing here like a waitress? But she had no time to talk with me. When the queue of people then entered the supermarket about five minutes later, she and her colleagues entered the supermarket too. At this time, she walked over to me and explained that welcoming customers in the morning was her work task as well. Because she was not busy at that time on the second floor, the director asked her to go downstairs and show the customers the spirit of the supermarket. I asked her what the spirit was, and she replied, "I don't know, I think it's just to be warm and friendly to customers." But I noticed that the customers did not pay them any attention. They did not even look at their faces, and just rushed to purchase the fresh vegetables and fruits.

I walked with Xu to the non-food area on the second floor. There were fewer customers walking

around this area, as most were downstairs and purchasing fresh vegetables and fruits. People do not need products like tableware and cleaning products every day. Vegetables and fruits, meanwhile, are daily necessities. Although there were fewer customers on the second floor, this did not mean that Xu was relaxed. She began to arrange the daily work tasks. First, she checked yesterday's sales report and made a plan for today's sales. While she was working on this, the director asked her to go downstairs to be an extra cashier, as they lacked several cashiers. I had wondered about this, as she was not a supermarket cashier, but she explained that working in the supermarket was very flexible, and she was often asked to assist other colleagues in other sales areas. Later when she was not busy, I asked her if she felt exhausted because she always had to run up and down with no time to sit, and she replied:

> No, I am full of energy, and I am used to doing that. I am nearly fifty years old. If I do not work hard, it is very easy to fire me and recruit someone younger. When I compare my current job with my previous factory work, this is much better. I have time to talk with you, right? Also, I can walk around to other areas checking the discount items when I am not busy. In the factory, I had no time to go around chatting with other workers because I had to keep an eye on the machines all the time. And now the working conditions are much better. You see, we are working with music in the background now, and I like to arrange the exhibited area when we do sales promotions — this work is creative. And, as a staff member in the supermarket, I am part of the first group of people to know information about discounts and sales; I am very pleased because I like to buy things at good prices.

It was hard to understand what Xu meant when she said she liked to buy discount products — and then I visited her home. She lived in an apartment in the No.3 textile factory community. Her apartment had a similar layout to those of other former workers: two bedrooms and one living room, with a small kitchen and a restroom. What shocked me a lot was how her room space was occupied by lots of consumer goods. I knew Xu always bought something from the supermarket in which she worked, but I could not imagine that she would fill the room up with goods brought at the supermarket. It was not easy to walk from the living room to the bedrooms, so I needed to move around her apartment carefully. Before I asked, Xu explained to me with an embarrassed smile:

> I did not intend to invite you to my home because you can see now, what a mess it is here! My husband and my daughter always complain about it. You see, the items here are the products I bought from my supermarket, of course at good prices — I purchased most of them at under half price.

On the one hand, Xu felt embarrassed to show me her apartment space, and she was also self-critical of how she turned the original small room into a much smaller one in which it was hard to move. On the other hand, I could feel she was proud of possessing so many products acquired since she had started working in the supermarket, especially since she purchased high-quality items at low prices.

She showed me two unopened boxes that looked very new, and the images on the box conveyed that they were ceramic tableware. She indicated that she purchased these two sets of tableware last

year, but had not had an opportunity to open them. I asked her why she did not use them, and she emphasized that she was a frugal woman, and that she would not use the new one until the old one was broken or unusable. Then I noticed that the other boxes were tea sets, but I did not find a teapot on the table in the living room. She admitted that using a tea set was not easy and convenient. “Using the tea set is just for serving guests, but usually no one comes to our home, so we don’t need to use it.” She continued, “I just drink water, or just put boiled water into my cup to make tea, and so does my husband.” Then I was confused, as if they never used a tea set, then why did she purchase such useless things? But her satisfied expression and content tone when she introduced these items to me showed that although she had never used these products, she enjoyed the sense of possession. Even though such products had lost their use value for Xu, they still had symbolic value. Xu filled her space with these products to demonstrate the value of her current work, and they also provided her with a sense of security as an employee whose supermarket work had nice benefits attached to it.

She insisted on unpacking a new tea set and showed me the excellent quality of the tea set. It included one teapot and four teacups. They were blue and white porcelain, and the pattern was very typical for a Chinese tea set. Xu asked me to guess how much it cost. When I gave a general price of around two hundred yuan, she laughed and told me it was only forty-five yuan. “Because I am a staff member, I know the best time to get it at the lowest price.” She was very proud of that. Then she showed me other items including a pan, bowl, towel and quilt, all of which were new and occupied a large space in the living room. I felt astonished that she could remember the price of each item, even those purchased several years ago. When I asked her whether the lowest price was just for staff members, she explained:

> Being a staff member doesn’t mean that I can get the lowest price. But because I work in the supermarket, I understand the information. I know which product will be discounted. Before opening it up to customers, I can get the information beforehand, so I have the opportunity to select the best one.

From Xu’s description, her possession of such goods showed that she was satisfied with being a staff member working in the supermarket. The embarrassment of it being “such a mess” when I arrived in her home had faded away. This job gave her the opportunity to obtain high-quality products at a heavily discounted rate, and it also offered her the opportunity to use reciprocity and build guanxi inside and outside the supermarket. Inside the supermarket, as she was in charge of a small section in the non-food department, while her colleagues worked in other departments, she was able to exchange inside information with these colleagues in different parts of the store. Outside the supermarket, Xu helped her friends or neighbors who lived in the same community to buy goods from the supermarket at heavily discounted rates. One day after work, I accompanied Xu home. She was carrying a new pan to her friend who had previously been a textile worker alongside Xu on the same shop floor team. When they saw each other, Xu’s friend was very appreciative, and also thanked Xu for the pajamas that Xu had helped her to buy last time. She said that they were very comfortable. After her friend left, Xu said to me in a very proud voice:

> I never earn profits from helping my friends to buy something from the supermarket. The products they need are daily necessities, not expensive, so I help them just because they have been my friends for many years. It's not a big deal. They ask me for help because they think highly of me.

In fact, the help was mutual and reciprocal. For example, Xu's former colleague Yue asked Xu to provide beef from the supermarket for her toddler granddaughter, as Xu could ensure product quality and hygiene. Luckily, Xu knew which brand of beef was the best, and she even got on well with the supermarket butcher. The butcher selected the better part of the beef and gave it to Xu. Yue was very satisfied with the beef that Xu brought to him. In return, Yue's husband, Han, sometimes helped Xu to pick up her daughter on Friday by driving a car from college to the textile town, and sent her back to the college on Monday, as the college was around thirty kilometers from the textile town. Thanks to Han's pickup, she saved time and trouble on the road. In addition, the supermarket Xu worked in was close to the community where Han's mother lived, so after Han visited his mother, he could also pick up Xu from the supermarket and return her to the factory community by car. Thus, their reciprocity was not direct but was embedded in other ways of giving and receiving.

The concept of reciprocity plays a crucial role in understanding how gift exchange shapes social relationships and cultural practices. Ethnographies from around the world demonstrate the diversity of how different societies use gift exchange to establish and maintain social bonds (J. Davis 1992; Raheja 1988; Strathern 1988). Since the introduction of Mauss's concept of the spirit of the gift "hau" (2016) and Malinowski's principle of reciprocity (1922), the debate surrounding the motivation behind gift-giving has continued for a long time. For example, Sahlins (1972) identified three modes of reciprocity: generalized reciprocity, balanced reciprocity, and negative reciprocity, but J. Davis (1992) criticized Sahlins for reducing all exchanges to forms of reciprocity and Woodburn (1998) criticized Sahlins' use of the term 'generalized reciprocity,' arguing that it should simply be seen as sharing. Weiner (1992) was also critical of the concept of reciprocity. At the core of her theory of exchange lies the notion that gifts are inalienable. She argues that the underlying motivation for reciprocity is not the act of exchange itself, but rather the desire to retain something from the pressures of give-and-take. This "something" refers to a possession that serves as a symbol of an individual or group's social identity and reinforces the distinctions between them and others (1992: 43). Yan's research on gift-giving and exchange practices in China reveals that reciprocity is a more complex phenomenon than a simple exchange of goods or services. For instance, Yan (2003) argues that intergenerational reciprocity in China entails not only material giving but also emotional and moral components. Additionally, the "guanxi" network that underlies reciprocity in the Chinese gift economy is instrumental in reproducing social hierarchy and reinforcing existing power relations (Yan 1996).

While the discussion of reciprocity is complex, the different forms of gift exchange and the way it is carried out are highly dependent on historical conditions and the context of specific religious and cultural practices. In any society, it is critical to understand the meaning behind the act of gift-giving and how the relationship between individuals and the objects exchanged contributes to the formation of social bonds.

In the new workplace, former textile workers can engage in two types of reciprocity. Firstly, they may exchange information or economic benefits with their colleagues within the workplace, which aligns with Sahlins' (1972) concept of "balanced reciprocity." Such exchanges involve a clear expectation of receiving something in return. When these former workers help their friends from the old textile town, however, it is not a simple exchange of goods or services. Instead, it is an exchange of help that is partly related to Weiner's (1992) concept of "inalienable possessions." This type of reciprocity is not a "pure gift" nor an act of "altruism" but rather embodies a certain spirit or emotional attachment that arises from their shared experiences on the shop floor and in the factory community. This relationship between former workers can be viewed as "inalienable" since it is grounded in the long-term comradely friendship formed in the factory community, and it continues to exist in the new social space, even if the workers no longer work together. Later on, I will use the terms *ganqing* and *renqing* within guanxi to further explain the meaning of reciprocity in this context.

In the following analysis, I will show how the changing spatial movement affects previous workers, so that they reproduce the social space in the new workplace.

Changing Spatial Movements

The loosening of the *hukou* policy (a system of household registration) in the 1980s lessened the metaphorical distance between rural and urban areas in China. This is because a large number of rural residents left their hometowns and immigrated to urban areas for better work opportunities. In the 1990s, the closure of state-owned factories resulted in millions of laid-off workers who then encountered difficulties in the labor market (Cai 2002). To some extent, the laid-off workers were similar to migrant workers, as many had left their original home, workplace, or both, and were looking for jobs in other places. The difference is that most laid-off workers were still living in their social housing allocated by the factory, while migrant workers needed to find a new place to live in urban locations. Zhang (2002) compared migrant entrepreneurs and laid-off workers, showing how both groups renegotiated socioeconomic positions in the city and redefined the meaning of urban citizenship in social change. I was inspired by Zhang's description of how the two groups struggled with spatiality, and I found that through spatial movement, laid-off workers were forced to go outside the textile town to recreate a sense of spatial security similar to what they used to maintain in the factory. The state-owned factories had not only provided permanent employment and social facilities but also a sense of spatial security. Here, the "spatial security" in the previous factory community had three factors. First, it referred to a physical space with important socioeconomic needs, like social housing and schools; second, the sense of security included the spatial movement involved in traveling from home to the workplace, which was only roughly a fifteen-minute walk. Third, the social space embodied a sense of mutual trust and long-term friendship.

As I show below, the jobs outside of the textile town required those former textile workers to leave home and take public transport to their current workplaces. But they did not adapt to it at first. For textile workers, their typical commuting distance was a walk of around fifteen minutes, which means

they had more time to stay in one place, no matter whether at home or on the shop floor, and then they could devote more time to their family or work. Nowadays, however, they spent about two hours on the road, and during this period they also had to endure crowded passengers, traffic jams, and the commuting expense. For example, when Chen worked at a cell phone mall in the city center, she did her best to keep the cost of the commute down, although she could only save very little. Also, in the textile town, only a few former workers owned private cars, and most people took public transport to the workplace. If someone had a car and was willing to pick up others, just as Han picked up Xu or her daughter, there could be a debt of gratitude and the other would find an opportunity to demonstrate their appreciation.

Spatial movements change over time. Ten years after being laid off, the former factory workers had adapted to commuting from the textile town to their current workplaces without complaint. While the workers were not accustomed to travel via public transport at the beginning, they learned to adapt to the routine in order to balance work and life. If the journey to work took longer, then the responsibility for taking care of other family members would fall on someone who arrived home earlier. And during these routine movements, many former workers would use the time to keep healthy, for instance, by walking some of the route.

Despite the difference in commute between working at current workplaces and on the former shop floors, the commute also enabled them to create a sense of spatial security in the new workplace. On the shop floors, many textile workers who did not like working in an office sat behind a desk and computer most of the time; beforehand, they had been walking around the textile machinery all the time. The total distance they had moved per day might have been as much as ten kilometers. The habit of walking a lot on the shop floor made them get used to standing and walking for a long time in other workplaces, especially in the services sector, just as Xu ran up and down in the supermarket and other former textile factory workers stood up all the time in the shopping mall. Thus, they did not complain about the task because their previous everyday movements on the shop floors helped them adapt to movement in their new workplaces.

Moreover, changes in their everyday, work-related movements offered them a more flexible space and the opportunity to promote their subjectivity in order to extend the social space. For example, because Xu's kind of work was not restricted to one area of the supermarket, but rather required her to be more flexible to help other staff members when needed, Xu made use of this larger social network and exchanged information about available discounts with a larger group. Like Xu, in Chen's case, she took more time to walk around the stores in the mobile phone mall. Through talking with other sellers, she obtained useful information about cell phones, and even developed her own business.

In sum, leaving the factory and working in new workplaces were challenges but also opportunities for workers. They had to struggle with the difficulties caused by the spatial movements and by adapting to the changing atmosphere. The process that spans being laid off to finding employment in new workplaces is a dynamic one. It includes a shift from reluctance to adaption. During this process, both "habitus" and "guanxi" exhibit some level of adaptability while maintaining a sense of continuity with their historical practices. In the following sections, I will examine how the concepts of guanxi

and habitus can present flexibility in certain aspects while upholding a sense of continuity with their traditional practices, ultimately contributing to the reproduction of the social space.

Changing Guanxi: From "Ganqing" to "Renqing"

It is interesting to observe how the workers used the term guanxi. While they used this same term to describe their social relations with others, the meanings and implications of the guanxi formed in the factory varied from that in the new workplaces. In order to analyze the various meanings of guanxi, let me pose three questions here: 1) Over the years, how have the guanxi from the factory changed in relation to the workers' current social exchanges? 2) How do workers themselves recognize the differences between guanxi from the factory community and guanxi from their current workplace? 3) How can I interpret the contradictions that emerge when guanxi from the factory and guanxi from the current workplace mingle in practice?

Guanxi in the Factory

When working in the factory, textile workers addressed their colleagues as sisters or brothers. This involved a rich sense of affection, or in Mandarin *ganqing*, within their relations, and such emotional ties have existed in working and living communities over several decades. Specifically, the guanxi that formed in the factory were rooted in a comradeship that formed the specific cultural tie linking socialist workers in the state-owned factory. This comradeship was based on the collective identity of socialist workers striving together as part of the socialist construction efforts, and it turned such comradeship into an affection that existed among family members — like "siblings" — in how textile workers addressed each other.

Metaphors of siblings exist in many cultural traditions. For instance, Thai people refer to themselves as "phinawng kan," which translates to "older and younger siblings to each other." This metaphor is often used to express political relations that transcend hierarchical differences, and it represents an extension of the kinship idiom to a communal existence (Herzfeld 2016b: 45). By drawing on the metaphor of siblings, people in a group could emphasize a sense of community and mutual obligation, which can serve as a powerful basis for social cohesion and political cooperation. In the textile factory, female workers often form a sense of sisterhood among themselves, even predating the emergence of socialist factories. For example, in Shanghai mills at the beginning of the 20th century, female workers established a network of sisterhood to foster mutual support both within and outside of the mill. This network formalized a protective force that helped the workers struggle against harassment and oppression (Honig 1992). The way female workers help each other by viewing themselves as sisters creates a powerful bond of solidarity that transcends traditional kinship and regional barriers. This sisterhood not only serves as a means of mutual aid, but also as a powerful symbol of adaptation and resistance.

Thus, once a worker regarded that another worker as a family member, then the relationship would

include trust, dependence, and mutual help as was possible. On the shop floor, for example, when a worker finished her tasks, she would be willing to lend her sisters a hand; or, when a worker needed to go to the toilet or needed some water, others would help her to take care of the textile machinery to ensure operations continued without stopping. Such mutual help was not limited to the shop floor. In their living community, neighbors had similar emotional ties. The structure of work-unit housing in the 1980s and 1990s required most residents to share a cooking and toilet space. Their daily schedules were almost the same if they worked in the same factory. Thus, when they arrived home, they always cooked together and shared food while their children played in the yard. While children did grow up in nuclear families, the neighbors were similar to extended family members because they took care of one another. Thus, the relationship with the factory community embodied trust, reliance, and mutual help in everyday life. Workers played crucial roles not only in one another's important life events, such as weddings or funerals, but more often in simple, plain, even imperceptible interactions. Guanxi here implied how this emotional relationship was unconsciously embodied in practice, rather than "building guanxi" or "finding guanxi" purposefully. This is how guanxi were cultivated in the factory community. Even though the former workers were later employed outside of the textile town and rarely met one another, they believed that their guanxi had not faded, for as Chen said, their relationship had "experienced the test of more than thirty years."

Therefore, guanxi among "sisters" and "brothers" in the factory was based on long-term living and working together with a sentimental attachment. The meaning of guanxi here is more like *ganqing*, which could be translated as feelings of affection. This differs from what Yan (1996) described as *renqing* in a Chinese village. *Renqing* is an emotional attachment entangled with moral obligations, which plays the overlapping roles of morality and sentiment in motivating social exchange. The emotional attachment among workers, however, integrated the affection of their being colleagues, comrades, neighbors, and close friends. Workers addressed each other as "sisters" or "brothers," just as in Lin's (2001) conception of the pseudo-family tie, which refers to an intimate friendship, like pseudo-kin in such contexts. For example, some children even called their parents' best friends "gan ba" (pseudo-father) or "gan ma" (pseudo-mother), which combined the "high acquaintance, high intimacy and high trust" (Bian 2019: 22) of emotional ties between two workers' families.

Nevertheless, it would be impossible to argue that everyone in the factory embraced the work situation to the same degree. As Walder (1986) argued, the instrumental guanxi ties on the shop floor were manifest in the relationship between supervisors and subordinated workers. Indeed, I have also described the hierarchy and inequality on the various shop floors in Chapter 3. But after workers had left the factory and worked outside the textile town, when they compared their relationships with colleagues, they preferred to ignore the hierarchy and inequality in the factory, and placed a greater emphasis on their lifelong friendship. This is because creating a positive siblings-like atmosphere of relationships in a factory environment could have a powerful impact on workers, even those who may not have strong personal connections with each other. Such an environment was underpinned by a formal morality that fostered collective harmony and cohesion, which workers felt nostalgic for even after they have left the factory community. In the next section, I will examine the concept of guanxi

and how it has changed over time, highlighting how workers can adapt to changing circumstances while still maintaining continuity with traditional practices.

Guanxi in the Reform Period

The security of life in the factory community was disrupted as the factory's profit deteriorated in the late 1990s. The wages that workers obtained remained the same, and it was hard for them to catch up with inflation. The reform of the SOEs led to social inequality inside and outside of the factory. Workers ascribed the factory's decline to the corruption of factory leaders and the wider political regimes. Increasing protests occurred in the late 1990s throughout the country, especially in the northern part where most of the historically state-owned factories were located (Lee 2007).

Although workers were angry at the layoffs, they realized that it was necessary to find ways to reduce the associated feelings of loss. In the textile factory, workers could find guanxi with someone who had power; this was a strategy they could use to their own benefit. Such guanxi was manifest in two aspects. First, amid the layoffs, workers endeavored to seek out better compensation. But getting more compensation was difficult. According to the formula used to calculate it, the amount one worker could obtain depended on the number of years they had worked at the factory. This was very transparent, as workers knew how long each of them had been working there exactly. But when it came to retirement arrangements, there were two other options: early retirement and ill-health retirement. As with the number of years worked, workers' real age was transparent, so it was difficult to modify. The situation regarding ill-health retirement, however, was more flexible. According to the No.3 Factory's policy, only 0.4 percent of workers were allowed to obtain ill-health retirement. Some workers took advantage of this policy to find guanxi to get approving for ill-health retirement. Some workers thus pursued guanxi in two directions: they sought a certificate of sickness from doctors and approval from the factory leaders.

Second, guanxi played the most important role in their reemployment in the labor market. Although the local government provided various training classes, these were ultimately ineffectual. Workers relied most of all on their friends' or relatives' recommendations and their reemployment largely depended on this. Workers followed recruitment information carefully. When they heard of someone who had found a job, they would ask those who had guanxi to recommend jobs for them. When one worker was reemployed, they may help their friends find work there too. Most of the interlocutors with whom I talked obtained jobs like this. Xu's experience is a prime example of how networks of friends and acquaintances can help people find new job opportunities. After being laid off from her factory job, Xu turned to her network of friends who were working as shop assistants. And one friend told her the supermarket the friend worked at was hiring because the supermarket would open a new subbranch and require people who were hard work and resilience. So, her friend recommended Xu to the manager. And then Xu conducted a simple interview and was eventually hired. After Xu was employed, she then recommended the job to her other factory friends, and they, in turn, recommended the job to others. This network of referrals helped many laid-off workers find new jobs outside of the textile

town. Indeed, because of vacancy limitations in the job market, better jobs relied on good guanxi ties. Others who did not have guanxi could only find jobs as cleaners or doorkeepers for example. From that period onwards, the complexity of guanxi tore apart the relatively equal situation among workers, and those workers who had more guanxi could obtain relatively stable jobs while others only worked as casual workers. Their life paths then began to move in different directions.

Guanxi in the New Workplaces

In the 1990s, the Chinese government embarked on a series of economic reforms aimed at modernizing the state-owned enterprise (SOE) system. As part of this effort, the textile industry underwent a radical transformation, shifting from traditional management practices to a more capitalist mode of production. Specifically, the official documents outlining the implementation measures for this reform included a range of measures aimed at improving efficiency, such as encouraging mergers, standardizing bankruptcy procedures, and reducing staff. Nevertheless, the SOE reform had a significant impact on the labor market, leading to a rise in precarious forms of employment and increased job insecurity for many workers. After the layoffs and later reemployment, workers experienced a precarity grounded in uncertainty, insecurity, and vulnerability. When reemployed, they had to struggle with all these difficulties to adapt to the new work.

When starting a new job, workers often strategically use their agency and negotiate to interact with their colleagues and managers. Specifically, they needed to cultivate new guanxi in new workplaces, which entailed changing patterns they had learned in their tough days during the reform of the state-owned factories and resultant layoffs. Thus, they tried to maintain good relationships with managers, colleagues, and customers. In practice, they had to prove themselves to be hardworking employees who followed the rules and took the regulations very seriously. They also knew they had to maintain a low profile and rarely make mistakes. When a manager assigned them work, it was hard to hear any complaint in public. Rather, they were earnest and steadfast in following instructions. When other colleagues talked to them, they were good audiences and provided advice to younger colleagues. By presenting themselves in this light, they earned the trust of employers, colleagues, and customers.

These actions can be explained by Goffman's theory of self-presentation (1959), which suggests that individuals construct and present different versions of themselves in social situations and interactions. Workers may present themselves differently to current colleagues on the "front" stage versus former factory friends on the "backstage" stage. Nevertheless, their self-presentation is not always stable, the workers' subjectivity and poetic intelligence align with Michael Herzfeld's (2016) concept of "social poetics," providing the creative ways in which individuals negotiate and adapt to their social situation in social performance. According to Herzfeld, "Social poetics is…the play through which people try to turn transient advantage, a quick grasp of some official discursive or symbolic form, into a permanent condition of social advancement" (2016: 31). Workers often use the practice of guanxi, or social connections, to navigate their relationships both within their current workplace and with former factory friends. For example, they admitted that good working manners and attitudes were inherited

from their experience in the factory. But they also stated that they needed to be careful because their current work was often not a permanent position. Instead, it was on a casual contract, and if they made mistakes or did not get along well with others, they would be dismissed easily. While these relationships may differ in nature, they are also interconnected and adapt effectively to various social contexts. I will elaborate further on how the practice of guanxi serves as a form of social poetics for workers.

Building guanxi was the process of developing a mutually beneficial social network that emphasized ways of giving, returning, and reciprocating. The ethnography of the two textile workers discussed in this chapter showed that there were more social exchanges and situations of reciprocity when they worked in the new workplaces compared with the factory beforehand. Since they had been working in these new workplaces for several years, they had built guanxi ties. Besides their using guanxi to maintain a good relationship with managers and other colleagues, they knew how to find guanxi or build guanxi through reciprocity. Chen and Xu, as discussed in the ethnography, extended their guanxi ties in business: Chen cooperated with cell phone merchants and took on a broker role to sell phones; in return, she offered these merchants smooth cooperation in her everyday management of them. Xu, meanwhile, purchased good quality items at a discount and shared this information with her colleagues and friends both inside and outside the supermarket. It shows that why guanxi is not exactly the same as patron-client ties. Patron-client ties are characterized by a vertical power dynamic, where one party holds a higher status or authority over the other. Although asymmetrical, this relationship is still mutually beneficial, as seen in the example of the Sarakatsani in Greece who developed patron-client relationships with lawyers, presidents, shopkeepers, and cheese-merchants. These relationships were established to exchange resources and favors, and both could gain prestige from these relationships (Campbell 1964). In contrast, guanxi relationships are more reciprocal and horizontal. They allow people to maintain a form of egalitarianism within a society that tends to be hierarchical. Thus, while patron-client ties can be useful in certain contexts, guanxi relationships offer greater flexibility and complexity and are better suited for building long-term and mutually beneficial connections.

Intermingling with Guanxi from the Factory and From the Current Workplace

The guanxi ties were not confined to the current workplaces. Among the workers, two kinds of guanxi ties intermingled in the process of social reproduction — guanxi from the current workplace and guanxi from the factory. This was the process of turning *ganqing* (affection) into *renqing* (favor). *Renqing* is always accompanied by reciprocal social exchange, but here it was still based on the previous affectionate attachment to the factory community. When workers were reemployed, many female workers found work in the marketing and sales industry. They were able to benefit from economic information circulating in their new workplaces, which helped them pursue favors and engage in social interactions. Working in such an industry required them to build interpersonal relationships. This meant that they not only had to get on well with their new colleagues and managers, but they also had

to use existing resources to link their previous guanxi networks with their new guanxi ties.

Mauss (2016) noted the disjuncture between the ideology and practical implications of reciprocity. In pre-modern Europe, for instance, lords and tenants engaged in reciprocal performances that thinly veiled the entrenched inequality in their relations. As Holmes (1989) discussed "onoranze," the gifts given by peasants to their lords in exchange for protection, in an idiom that barely concealed the harsh reality of inequality. Similarly, the concepts of *ganqing* and *renqing* cannot be dichotomized as the mere performance of reciprocity. The transition from *ganqing* to *renqing* is a vague and dynamic process without a clear boundary. Moreover, this reciprocal relationship may involve both complex guanxi ties simultaneously. The intertwining of *ganqing* and *renqing* illustrates how guanxi adapt to new social contexts and maintain reciprocity in a sustainable way. From the ethnography, we can understand how the former factory workers used the older guanxi from the factory instrumentally to gain reciprocal favors. For instance, Chen acted as a broker selling phones to her friends and neighbors from the factory community; and Xu helped Yue to get discounts and better-quality items from the supermarket. In return, Yue's husband, Han, sometimes drove cars to pick up Xu or her daughter.

Cultural Intimacy and Guanxi

While how the workers linked guanxi from their new workplace with that from the previous factory community seemed like "sociality with a purpose" (Brković 2017: 8), how they addressed the guanxi formed in the factory community was very much distinct from their approach to guanxi in their new workplaces. They emphasized the distinctive qualities of the factory guanxi. Indeed, I always heard them say, "Our guanxi has a solid foundation," or "We trust each other because our guanxi is not like what is on the outside." In this situation, they categorized their guanxi into separate spaces of inside and outside guanxi. For them, inside guanxi entailed intimacy, trust, pureness, and long-term affective interaction within the same community. Outside guanxi, however, entailed hypocrisy, untrustworthiness, and utilitarian relationships. But while separated, the dichotomy would sometimes become blurred. In practice, guanxi on the outside and inside always interacted and intermingled with each other, and it seems that both kinds pursued reciprocity on purpose. So, why did they still address this difference between them?

Here I borrow Herzfeld's theory of "cultural intimacy" to explain this. He defined cultural intimacy as "the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality" (1997: 3). The common sociality for workers is their collective experience and memory of working in the factory and living in the same community, which provided them with an identity that not only came from the same physical space but that was also formed from the "moral space." Steinmüller (2013) discussed the moral frameworks of family, which are linked to different spaces, both material and conceptual. Although these workers have been working outside of the textile town, they still maintain the illusion of guanxi in the "moral space." Thus, when they used guanxi strategically to explain different relationships among colleagues, they simplified the complexity of guanxi: they denied

the consistency of guanxi as being either inside or outside, and they kept emphasizing the purity of guanxi in order to conceal the purpose present in utilitarian reciprocity.

The variety and complexity of guanxi in Chinese society increases social stratification, and it is suggestive of a growing inequality of work opportunity as well as of income. After ten years of working in other workplaces and dealing with various difficulties, the former workers had learned how important guanxi was, and they had built new guanxi to extend their social space. Then they realized that all of society has become inundated with a crisis of confidence. People do not trust one another, and they always assert that other people's purpose is only driven by self-benefit. In this new environment, the unsophisticated relationship present in the past was considered rare and commendable. There was nostalgia, but this did not mean that they wanted to return to the past. Rather, they used such a sense of nostalgia tactfully in the current situation to varnish the pure aspect of guanxi with a mutual trust and innocent affection grounded in the moral space of the former factory. Nevertheless, guanxi in the factory community had already changed and were no longer similar to those of the past.

Habitus in the New Workplaces

Although the layoffs ended the workers' previous secure life in the state-owned factories and placed them in precarious conditions, there was no disconnection between the past and the present. Rather, to some extent, the past continued in the present. In Chen's story, she arrived in the office early, saved on commuting costs, and insisted on wearing a uniform to work. When I compared the details of the past experience in the factory and the current work in the new workplaces, I constantly encountered some similarities among the workers. The term "habitus" (Bourdieu 1977, 1984; Mauss 1979) provides an effective way of explaining how the body, mind, and emotions are trained simultaneously. I use this concept to explain how workers' habitus was inculcated in the factory, and how this habitus was manifest in their everyday life when they left the factory and worked in the new workplaces.

The difference between habit and habitus is that, according to Bourdieu (1977) and Mauss (1979), a habit is a mechanical concept based on repetitive behaviors, whereas a habitus is a flexible disposition that includes practical knowledge and understanding, strategies, and purpose (Crossley 2013). Mauss stated that a habitus could be understood as the "techniques and work of collective and individual practical reason," while a habit is "in the ordinary way, merely the soul and its repetitive faculties." But a habitus is not always the same, as they do "not vary just with individuals and their imitations; they vary between societies, educations, proprieties and fashions, prestiges" (Mauss 1979: 101). Bourdieu further situated habitus in social space in order to analyze the social distribution of taste, and he used the concept of habitus to discuss how to reproduce a social structure consisting of "structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (Bourdieu 1977: 72).

Bourdieu's concept of habitus has gained popularity as one of his most widely cited ideas and has been applied to a range of lived experiences (Teman and Ivry 2021). His perspective offers a comprehensive overhaul of the traditional dichotomy between objectivism and subjectivism (Wac-

quant 2016). Despite its widespread adoption, "one does not see the habitus but rather the effects of a habitus in the practices and beliefs to which it gives rise" (Maton 2008: 62). Much empirical research has used adjectival additions to generate the effect of habitus in lived experiences. For example, "circumferential habitus" was used by Teman and Ivry (2021) to explain the routines, attitudes, and dispositions of pregnant women, while "emotional habitus" was used by Gould (2009) to explain how the queer community produced and reproduced through emotional practices. Verdery (1991) has written about how Bourdieu's model needs to be modified for a socialist environment as Bourdieu's analyses are based on a capitalist society, but Wacquant (2016) stressed that Bourdieu's concept of habitus is dynamic, multiscalar, and adaptive in practice, never a replica of a single social structure. Therefore, to use the concept of habitus effectively, we need to go back to the social context and "field" to observe how agents navigate and act within a given social space (Bourdieu 1989).

Ethnographic research offers a dynamic perspective on how habitus is embodied in everyday life. Wacquant's (2006) study on boxing investigates how boxers are trained to utilize their bodies in specific ways, which become deeply ingrained in their posture. Harrison, Collins, and Bahor (2022) utilize Bourdieu's framework and qualitative research to analyze the effects of flexploitation on Roma workers, highlighting how their habitus and capitals provide a unique perspective on precarious employment. In my fieldwork with textile workers, I observed how workers' habitus manifested in their daily lives and evolved with changes in their workplaces to evaluate how the factory-inculcated habitus was manifested in workers' everyday life, and whether their habitus changed as their workplaces did. Bourdieu's original concept of habitus is overly static and deterministic, reducing individuals' agency and capacity to adaptive. Thus, in this section, I will show the textile workers' ability to adapt and accept changing circumstances stood out as a key feature of what Harrison *et al.* refer to as "social capital on the move" and how they react intuitively to the social environment (Reed-Danahay 2005: 5), revealing that habitus becomes more useful when one realizes that it can change through time.

In the following, I will analyze three aspects of habitus inculcated in the factory: punctuality, working hard, and a sense of responsibility. Although the workers' habitus has continued to manifest itself in their new workplaces, I also reflect on reifications of and changes to their habitus.

Punctuality

How do people create and express time? And how are representations of temporality culturally expressed? Ethnographies of sociocultural time are useful here. In Nuer society, for example, people follow two types of time: ecological time, which is physical and pertains to the environment; and structural time, which refers to kinship and other social structures (Evans-Pritchard 1951). How does industrialization, then, affect workers' everyday life? Thompson (1967) examined how a shift in sense of time affected labor discipline and the inward perception of time among working people. He argued that in the preindustrial era, work related to natural change and followed "natural" work rhythms. Industrial society's task-orientation, however, "becomes greatly more complex at the point where labor is employed" (Thompson 1967: 61).

On the various shop floors of the textile town, such time restrictions also affected workers' everyday work and life. The time restrictions required workers to follow a schedule, and shift work entailed workers conducting a smooth handover. Time was a deliberate tool used to limit freedom in the workplace. At lunchtime, for example, workers needed to plan how to use the forty-five minutes to go to the cafeteria, and they considered which food choices could save them time, while some female workers also used their lunchtime to go home, for childcare, or to feed their babies. Some workers complained that the group leaders would turn on the machines earlier to urge them back to work as soon as possible. All of these requirements had trained workers to be punctual.

This punctuality continued in the new workplaces. Workers believed that punctuality was a basic quality of being an employee. This meant that they would not only arrive at their workplace on time, but that they would also arrive earlier than their other colleagues. They were never late for any appointments because they reserved enough time to avoid being late. Punctuality became part of their habitus and demonstrated their obedience in following rules too.

Working Hard and a Sense of Responsibility

Why do workers work so hard? Do they simply work to earn a piece-rate salary? Burawoy (1982) provides a rich and significant ethnographic description of how workers consented to work during the labor process. He revealed that workers treated activities on the shop floor as games, which meant that workers did not only earn money that acted as an incentive, but they also reproduced social relations that shaped the organization of work.

"Consent" in the socialist factory had more meanings attached to it. On the textile factory's shop floor, besides being driven by the piece-rate system, another important factor that prompted workers to work harder was a sense of honor, and this transformed into a sense of responsibility. On the shop floor, competition was often present at every level — between individuals, groups and shop floors during the labor process, which I have discussed in Chapter 3. The result of such competition was that the winner did not only earn honors but also became a symbol and model worker. The publicity such workers received from the factory's radio broadcast, newspaper, and banner helped to enhance this sense of honor. It compelled everyone to learn from the winner and to endeavor to become eligible socialist workers.

This "game" was not the only reason pushing workers to work harder. Another important factor was the relationship between individuals and the state in socialist China. Every week, workers participated in political study activities organized by the factory, which were completed in groups on the shop floors. The purpose of political learning was to enhance the consciousness of working-class collectivism that linked closely the fate of individuals, families and the state. The logic was that individuals' honors did not only belong to this one person but to the collective, and then to the state. Thus, if you tried your hardest, this meant that you could not only earn honor for yourself but could also contribute to the factory and the socialist construction of China. Equally, if you failed to complete work tasks, others would look down on you and make you feel ashamed.

The importance of individuals' work was thus associated with the collective and the state on a larger scale. A sense of responsibility linked to long-term working therefore formed. Though jobs in the state-owned factory were permanent and workers were rarely expelled, the workers feared getting behind in the labor process. Thus, working hard and having a sense of responsibility that was cultivated and that formed during the labor process on the various shop floors became part of the workers' habitus.

After switching to the new workplaces, this habitus grounded in being hardworking and responsible continued, and it could help the workers adapt to the new surroundings. As many textile workers said proudly, "Wherever we work, we workers from the textile town can bear hardship. In the new workplace, we can earn the trust of managers, because we try our best to do the job." Their working attitudes were deeply influenced by this sense of responsibility, wherein they did their best to work hard in order to be competent at the job, just as they had done in the factory, even though the work task was different from in the past. Because of this habitus, they were able to tolerate obstacles and find strategies to deal with difficulties in the new workplaces.

Changes of Habitus

For Bourdieu, the concepts of capital, field, and habitus help us understand how social inequality is reproduced (1977; 2011). When the textile workers left the shop floor to work in new workplaces, like supermarkets, shopping malls, or other service industries, the field changed. I have summarized what kind of habitus formed in the factory and continued in their new workplaces, but ethnographically speaking, I could then also search for some changes in the habitus after the field had changed.

First, I described how workers continued to emphasize punctuality in the new workplaces. But what came next? When they arrived in their new workplace on time or earlier than others, this did not mean they devoted themselves to work as quickly as possible. Rather, they talked with others, surfed the internet, and drank a cup of tea until the managers came to check on them, or other issues arose and they had to start work. In this situation, the meaning of punctuality is not similar to their following the rules and operating the machinery as soon as they arrived on the shop floor.

Second, in the new workplace, certain previous workers still followed the rules and wore uniforms, as Chen said this behavior conveyed a working attitude. But they also learned how to beautify their appearance: for instance, Chen dressed up and wore makeup and an elegant black dress. The old pictures depicted the textile workers as almost the same, all in white hats and blue uniforms. Chen's dressing up shows that some parts of her habitus had changed in her new workplace. For Chen, as she now worked with human beings rather than machinery, her new job demanded that she make a good impression on customers, colleagues, and managers.

Also, the noise of the textile machinery on the shop floor required workers to speak loudly. Otherwise, it was hard for them to hear one another clearly. But in the services industry, they had to change their way of talking and speak softly and tenderly to customers. This is what they learned in their training, and it became their habitus in their new workplaces.

Conclusion

The working-class way of life can be regarded as a form of heritage. Their lived experiences provide valuable insights into how past experiences shape the present and how these ways of life continue to influence contemporary practices. In this chapter, guanxi and habitus have been examined as examples of such kind of heritage that originate from industrial culture and tradition, evolving in response to social change.

The factory layoffs and shift to working outside the textile town did not entail a cut between the inside and outside. Instead, it linked the past and present by reproducing social space. In this chapter, I have presented detailed narratives of two former textile workers now employed in new workplaces, and I have illustrated how workers struggled with precarity. I compared their current work with their former factory work, and I showed how their strategies intertwined with the guanxi and habitus that formed from their previous experience, albeit reflected through various forms of reification in their new workplaces. I uncovered three findings:

First, I demonstrated the relationship between changing spatial movements and subjectivity. In contrast to the workers' former factory life, their current workplaces were far away from home. Thus, they had to overcome difficulties linked to the commute, which included choosing a form of public transport, saving on costs, and saving some time to walk a little and exercise on the way. But the change in routine urged them to find opportunities to reproduce the social space, which gave rise to the second finding: the meaning of guanxi should be considered in relation to the changing situation when they work outside of the textile town.

Next, I have focused on how the meanings and practices of guanxi have changed, which I suggest is marked not only by a shift from *ganqing* (affection) to *renqing* (favor), but also intertwined with each other, which means the reciprocal relationship may involve both complex guanxi ties simultaneously. The intertwining of *ganqing* and *renqing* illustrates how guanxi adapt to new social contexts and maintain reciprocity in a sustainable way. Therefore, guanxi relationships are more reciprocal and horizontal. They allow people to maintain a form of egalitarianism within a society that tends to be hierarchical. The way the workers addressed their colleagues as "sisters" and "brothers" demonstrates the comradeship of collective identity involved in having been socialist workers collaborating in the socialist construction effort. Here, guanxi is used to describe how the emotional relationship is unconsciously reproduced in practices based on trust, reliance, and mutual help in workers' everyday life in the factory community. In contrast to the guanxi formed in the factory, the guanxi formed in the new workplace entail the workers' developing a mutual social network that emphasizes giving, returning, and reciprocating. From the ethnography, we can see how they intermingle with two kinds of guanxi ties — guanxi from the new workplace and guanxi from the factory — linking together in the process of social reproduction. In practice, the two kinds of guanxi interact and link together to enable reciprocity and deliberate benefit. But the workers still asserted that their factory guanxi were purer, simpler, and full of trust, and so different from the guanxi outside the textile town. The strategic use of the term guanxi and the denial of a consistency to guanxi demonstrated a contradiction

to guanxi that played out in the workers' moral space.

Another argument is that although the workers' habitus was inculcated in the factory, it was still manifest in everyday life after they had left the shop floor and found employment in the new workplaces. I stated that punctuality, hard work and responsibility were the three aspects of habitus that formed from the factory experience. These aspects of habitus became an advantage in helping workers adapt to new workplaces. And because of this habitus, many workers have done very well and have earned compliments and promotions in their workplaces. Recognizing that habitus is not a fixed entity and can change over time provides a valuable perspective on how individuals can develop adaptive and flexible capacities. The habitus is not stable all the time; it has changed because of the changing field. Such a changing habitus draws on adaption, resilience, and negotiation in order to find a sense of security in life, but the sense of security that formed in the factory never came back.

Chapter 5

Strategies of Adjustments: Generations, Genders, and Friends

Imagine if you worked and lived in a place for half of your life, then one day, that place suddenly stopped providing you with a job and guaranteeing your life security. How would you feel about it, and what would you do? The policy's implementation may end after a fixed period, but the impact on the life course of those who experienced it will endure. Yurchak's book *Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More* (2006) is a vivid narrative of ordinary people facing a moment of crucial change and collapse. But when you realize that what happened to you actually already exists in everyday life, then a paradox emerges: as Yurchak stated, "they had been prepared for that unexpected change" (2006: 282). Like the Soviet people, the textile workers also experienced a paradox. On the one hand, they could not imagine that the textile factories, which had been established with the founding of the New China, had closed down after more than half a century; on the other hand, they had realized long ago that the factory had been in decline since the late 1980s. The factory's benefits, the workers' welfare and salary, the impact of the national reform policy, the contract system, and the atmosphere at work, all foretold the eventual end. Nevertheless, this paradox existed not only before the factory's bankruptcy; it also lasted for a long time, and even deeper contradictions emerged when everything changed.

In this chapter, I will build up a picture of the changes to investigate the inherent paradox and its intricate dynamics. Nevertheless, my exploration will reach beyond the surface layer of paradox. I will delve into the strategies that textile workers employ to navigate these changes. Employing the term "strategies of adjustment," I intend to illuminate their paths of resilience, compromises, and negotiations as they engage with shifting circumstances within the context of social changes. Their life experiences will vividly show how the microscopic life can calibrate with the crisis, ruptures, and contradictions, while grappling with intergenerational relationships, gender dynamics, and friendships.

Specifically, I will start with the ethnography of three generations in one worker family, showing how working-class identity and belonging changed. I will employ Borneman's (1992) concept of generations with notions of crisis and rupture and show how the microscopic life histories in the textile town can calibrate both generational time and the formal time of official history. In terms of

gender relations, I will discuss changing gender roles in the workers' families, and I will present the difficulties encountered and strategies on which workers drew when dealing with such shifts. Finally, in the last section I will discuss the changing relations among textile workers after a period of working in different workplaces. I will present three instances wherein a textile worker strategically changed their ways of talking in line with whom they were talking to. Also, I will describe two events at which two groups of former workers gathered in order to highlight their strategies to deal with certain differences and paradoxes through their conversations and interaction.

Generational Change and Ruptures

Borneman (1992) explored the different life experience and kinship transformations among individuals of two generations from East and West Berlin. According to Borneman, kinship played a foundational role in shaping the constitution of "nationness" in both the FRG and the GDR. He emphasizes that the construction of kinship and a sense of belonging throughout an individual's life is deeply intertwined with their everyday experiences, playing a pivotal role in establishing the legitimacy of a state. His findings show that the two Germanies evolved as diametric reflections of one another. Specifically, during the 1950s, West Germany pursued the restoration of patriarchal kinship structures, while East Germany aimed to realize socialist principles of egalitarianism. By the 1980s, however, a shift in societal dynamics became evident: younger East Germans increasingly embraced sentimental connections, while their peers in West Germany leaned toward more practical and less sentimental relationships. The state's discourse and identity strategies, as well as each generation's reactions to these narrative tactics, vividly illustrate the nation-building process. This process involves reshaping patterns of belonging that are integral to cultivating a feeling of being "at home" in a particular place, as opposed to elsewhere (1992: 287).

Borneman's ethnographic exploration of life in two Germanies introduces fresh perspectives on the concept of generations. When considering "generations" in this context, it becomes evident that specific historical junctures significantly influence their characterization, differing from the traditional family-based understanding of generations. Consequently, the analysis of "generations" serves as an effective lens for comprehending processes of social and cultural transformation.

Amidst the recent surge in discussions regarding the concept of rupture, a deeper understanding of how Borneman's generational concept intersects with the idea of crisis and ruptures can be achieved. In anthropology, rupture is often described as a "radical and forceful form of discontinuity" (Holbraad, Kapferer, and Sauma 2019: 1), aptly characterizing situations where established relationships or structures are fractured. Rupture has gained attention in portraying a world experiencing disruption, including the rise of populist politics and the increasing protests and violence (Humphrey 2019). While "rupture" may initially appear to be a form of crisis, it introduces a fresh perspective, prompting us to reconsider the underlying factors contributing to social or political crises. For example, many Anthropocene scholars have adopted the concept of rupture to explore the profound nature-society crises amidst the global rise in social and environmental challenges (Mahanty et al. 2023). Furthermore,

a number of ethnographic studies consider ruptures as a way of enactment and representation, revealing the consequences that unfold during episodes of revolution, significant transformations in populist electoral dynamics, or profound spiritual awakenings. These studies highlight the moments as instances of rupture (Holbraad, Kapferer, and Sauma 2019: 12), such as the dismemberment caused by the guillotine during the French Revolution (Humphrey 2019) or the significance of temporal ruptures in shaping the Christian worldview and imagination (Farnetti 2019; Robbins 2007).

Ruptures also have two sides; on one hand, they signify a break with past history, but on the other hand, they also hold the promise of future change. As suggested by Rowlands, Feuchtwang, and Zhang (2019), the emancipatory and universalizing claims of civilization manifest as a future-oriented temporality, achieved through repair and rupture projects. For example, China has undergone numerous instances of redefining state sovereignty authority since 1900, highlighting that periods of repair often coincide with moments of rupture (2019: 53). It offers us insightful lenses through which to observe how ruptures impact the perception of the concept of generations.

In my fieldwork in the textile town, most of my interlocutors belonged to the second generation. This was not because they were the offspring of the first batch of workers in the textile town. Rather, they were labeled as "the lost generation" who had experienced a series of state policy changes. The lost generation, who were born in the 1950s or 1960s, were heavily influenced by the Cultural Revolution. In a response to the state's appeal of "up to the mountains and down to the villages" (*shangshan xiaxiang yundong*), approximately seventeen million urban youths were sent to rural areas. This rupture deeply affected them: it deprived them of the opportunity to continue their education, live with family members, and pursue a better life. It could be said that xiaxiang shaped a whole generation (Bonnin and Horko 2013). Nevertheless, this lost generation has been repeatedly disadvantaged by state policies over their life course. The biggest life difficulties after the Cultural Revolution occurred for them when they turned forty or fifty, a time when xiagang, or layoffs, changed their life trajectories again (Hung and Chiu 2003). Hence, xiaxiang and xiagang can be regarded as forms of dismemberment and rupture that profoundly influence the lives of individuals in this generation. These experiences contribute to shaping them as "the lost generation," illustrating how personal experiences unite with official narratives within a shared interpretive framework, effectively setting them apart from other generations.

Thus, in my study, the second generation in the textile town consists of workers who belong to the lost generation, who experienced xiaxiang at a young age and xiagang in their forties or early fifties. Their parents who came to the textile town belong to the first generation and their children belong to the third generation. Much research has provided details of how the xiagang policy affected workers' lives and workers' attitudes to the policy (Lee 2000; Cai 2006; Hurst 2005, 2009), but the research has lacked microcosmic perspectives on personal life histories during these social changes. In the following section, I delve into the ethnographic details of three generations within a working-class family. Within these narratives, each individual's lived experience serves as a microcosm of the broader generational narrative, vividly illustrating how personal experiences both mirror and contribute to the collective identity forged in the wake of cataclysmic events. These narratives come to life, particularly during moments of repair and rupture in their life courses. This examination not only deepens our

understanding of how individuals are shaped by ruptures but also underscores how these individual stories collectively guide the trajectory of an entire generation. Additionally, I will demonstrate how individuals employ strategies to adapt to profound social and cultural transformations. It is within this dynamic intersection that I uncover the intricate relationship between Borneman's concept of generations, the notions of crisis and rupture, and the calibration of microscopic life histories within both generational and formal historical timeframes.

Three Generations in the Textile Town

Three Generations in Yao's Family

Yao is a member of the third generation living in the textile town. She works as an accountant in a real estate company in a western suburb on the other side of the city. When I met her, she had returned to live in the textile town for three years. Every morning, she would leave the textile town in her Toyota, taking about one hour to drive to her office. She said she had now got used to this routine, but that she had earlier thought the textile town was in too marginal a location to get to other places in the city.

The implication of Yao viewing the textile town as "marginal" or "marginalized" incentivized Yao to study hard when she was in middle school. Her mother, Wang, who was a textile worker in the No.3 Factory often stressed her out. Yao said she always heard her mother complaining about how tough the work was on the night shift and how low the salary was during the 1990s. Wang's discontent with the situation and her resentment at being a textile worker made Wang place all her hope in the next generation — in Yao, her own daughter. Wang always reminded Yao to study hard in order to leave this place in the future; otherwise, Yao would become a factory worker like herself, which was the last thing Wang wanted. When Yao was in middle school, her mother asked her to attend extra school classes (a cram school) at weekends, and the off-campus sessions focused mainly on mathematics and English. Although there were some cram schools in the textile town, Wang felt they were not good enough, so she found better educational resources for her daughter. Yao took the bus alone every weekend. She would travel for more than one hour and then arrive at a very popular cram school on the other side of the city. Finally, Yao was admitted to a good university in Xi'an, where she studied finance and economics. She lived in a dormitory on campus, and went home every weekend. Wang was very proud of her daughter and felt that all her efforts had not been in vain. Her unfulfilled dream of being a university student became a reality in her daughter's generation.

Both of Wang's parents are members of the first generation in the textile town in the 1950s. Much of their generation devoted all their lives to China's industrial construction, which they viewed as a great mission. They made work the first priority, and they always neglected their children's education. Wang, as the first child in her family, took up the great responsibility of looking after her little brother. Wang was good at studying, but the situation in China did not permit her to continue during the Cultural Revolution. She experienced the "up to the mountains and down to the countryside movement (shangshan xiaxiang)" and had been working for three years in the countryside in the neighboring

province of Henan until this policy changed. In the early 1980s, Wang was allowed to return from the countryside, and she took her mother's place at the No.3 Factory.

At first, Wang felt satisfied with the factory job after her tough days of hard work in the countryside. But then she found the work repetitive and boring, while the night shift was tough. She then decided to take the college entrance examination. But this decision was cut short. Her parents asked her to stay at the factory, encouraged her to treasure her present work, and reminded her of the responsibility she had to bear. She knew her parents' attitude viewed sons as better than daughters. Indeed, she, as the first child in the family, was expected to take care of the others. Her brother just went to college, and he needed his sister's economic support. As her parents had retired, she had the only main source of family income, which was necessary to cover daily expenditures and her brother's study, and therein ease her parents' burden. Son preference in China is a complex cultural and social phenomenon deeply rooted in traditional beliefs, particularly the "Filial Piety" (xiaoxin) ideology. This preference originates from the strong desire to continue the family lineage and ensure economic support in old age (Wang 2005). In Chinese traditions, family lineage and ancestral heritage predominantly follow the male line, establishing the cornerstone of a patrilineal structure. This framework is deeply rooted in Confucian traditions and has played a significant role in shaping Chinese kinship patterns and social structures (Fei 1985). Despite efforts by Mao Zedong's revolutionaries to weaken the patrilineal structure, the influence of kinship organizations remained potent in China's rural areas (Wolf 1994). Even in contemporary rural China, son preference remains deeply entrenched within the framework of patrilineal family structures and practices, such as those related to village clan composition and engagement in ancestral rituals, although ongoing socioeconomic transformations, educational advancements, and gender equality initiatives are gradually diminishing its influence (Murphy, Tao, and Lu 2011).

While Wang was eager to go to college, this situation compelled her to give up that dream. Also, many years had passed without her receiving an education during the Cultural Revolution. This made it hard for her to have an even basic knowledge of many subjects, and after the heavy work, she found it difficult to prepare intensively for the examination. In addition, her parents introduced her to a man — their friend's son — as a potential marriage partner. This man was also a textile worker on another shop floor in the same factory. Both families were satisfied with this marriage, and Wang finally dedicated herself to working in the factory and focusing on her own family. She thought:

> I admit that we belong to a lost generation, but we couldn't change history, right? The only thing I could do was to help the next generation avoid such difficulties. But we textile workers are neither rich nor have guanxi; the only thing I could do was ask my daughter to study hard, to use her knowledge to change her fate. This is the only way to leave the textile town.

Wang realized that her effort along were too insignificant to contend with the fate, prompting her to resign herself to destiny ("renming" in Chinese). Nevertheless, she clung to the hope of helping her in escaping the confines of the textile town. Leaving the textile town was not only a hope that the second generation placed on the third generation — it was also a bright future for members of the third

generation who wanted to pursue it. But the idea of leaving the textile town did not occur to them at first. When the third generation recalled memories of their childhood in the textile town, this childhood was filled with happiness, joy, and freedom. Their parents were always busy with work, and so they had more time to play with their peers. In addition, they liked to stay with their grandparents who were not as strict as their parents. But this happy time was short-lived because Yao's free time was filled with an excess of homework from when she went to middle school. Then the hope of leaving the textile town for a bright future arrived along with the decline in state-owned enterprises across all of society in the late 1990s.

Yao described what she felt when she told others that she came from the textile town: *diu ren* (lose face), which means she felt inferior to others who came from middle-class families and lived in better places. Thus, she always dressed up, wore branded clothes, and put on beautiful makeup to conceal her original hometown. Yao's endeavor provided her with a good position as an accountant in a real estate company. She rented an apartment near her workplace and lived far away from the textile town.

Nevertheless, this did not mean that she cut her connection with the textile town. On the contrary, she had an emotional connection with the textile town. When she met a colleague who also came from the textile town, for example, she felt that their similar background could narrow the personal distance between them. As peers who had grown up in the same factory community, it was easy for them to find common topics and share memories. It was a reversal of sorts: during her university and early career years, her aspirations for a higher status had kept her at a distance from the textile town, but after several years of work, it seemed that she was willing to acknowledge a part of her. This indicated her desire to reestablish a connection with the textile town, a sentiment akin to nostalgia. It presents the social representation of feelings and the way these feelings influence their interactions and relationships of whom who come from the textile town and share common memory and knowledge of the past. Their shared identity demonstrates how a common nostalgia fosters a sense of belong, facilitating the repair of the connection with the textile town that had once been severed. This becomes especially evident when they acknowledge the current atmosphere in the indifferent and hypocritical workplace, making them cherish their common memories and affection from the past even more.

Also, this sense of belonging influenced Yao's marriage. Yao's husband had been her classmate in middle school. His parents had also been textile workers in the No.3 Factory. Yao met him again at a class reunion shortly after starting work, and they fell in love. At first, Yao's mother was dissatisfied because she had tried so hard to encourage her daughter to leave the textile town, but finally her daughter had married someone else who was also from a worker's family in the textile town. But because Yao's husband had a stable and decent job working in the electric power sector, and his parents were very nice to Yao, Yao's mother finally agreed with the marriage.

After they married, they lived in a rental apartment in a southern suburb of Xi'an near their workplaces. Yao's rental apartment was in a district that only had a supermarket. Yao's mother thought the supermarket food was too expensive and not fresh. Thus, she often bought fruits and vegetables at the open market in the textile town and took them to her daughter's home. Sometimes she cooked for them because the newly married couple was busy with work and had no time to cook. This situation

lasted one year until Yao's husband's family purchased a new apartment in the textile town for them.

There were three reasons for their return to the textile town. First, the textile town's apartment prices were much cheaper than those in the district near Yao's workplace. Second, the new apartment was built on the former site of the No.4 Factory, so it was very close to Yao and to the home of her husband's parents. This then saved on cooking time after work for this young couple. When the working day ended, and they went back to the textile town, it was very convenient for them to have dinner at their parents' home. After dinner, they could walk home. Two years later, Yao's daughter was born. Such a lifestyle offered them more convenience as the two families could take care of the baby together. When they worked during the day, the baby stayed with the grandparents, and at night the baby stayed with them in their own apartment. This way of living in the neighborhood for two generations provided both sides with relative freedom and independence, and they also offered reliable and trusted mutual help to each other.

Although they lived in the textile town, this did not mean that they gave up on a better education for the next generation. One day, Yao and her mother discussed kindergarten because Yao's child was nearly three and attended kindergarten. There were three kindergartens in the textile town: one belonged to a private educational group while the other two were former kindergartens that had belonged to the factory but were then nationalized when the factory went bankrupt. Yao and her mother were very familiar with these two public kindergartens because Yao was in one of them when she was little. But after they visited those kindergartens, they thought the public kindergartens' facilities had changed little in thirty years since Yao had attended. But the price of the private kindergarten was more than two thousand yuan per month — significantly more expensive than the public kindergarten, which was about five hundred yuan per month. Nevertheless, they finally chose the private kindergarten. They said, "We know the education situation in the textile town is not good as in some other districts, but since we have already settled down here, we must select the best one for our child, then she won't lose at the starting line."

Yao was not the only member of the third generation who had returned to live in the textile town. During my fieldwork, I found that although many members of the third generation worked outside of the textile town, many also lived in the textile town or close by. Yao's family is an example. It shows how the worker's sentimental attachment to the place changed. The complexity of staying in or leaving a place is not solely an individual's choice; rather, it is subject to social and cultural influences. I will utilize the concepts of marginality and suzhi to elucidate how individuals in the textile town are influenced by these ideas.

Marginality and Suzhi in the Textile Town

Marginalization is a complex and ongoing process that occurs at various levels and regions. For instance, Bolten (2012) described how the civilians in Sierra Leone accepted ex-combatants as different which resulted in their socially and economical marginalization, and the ex-combatants' rejection of manual labor and elder control, along with their adoption of reintegration discourse, lead to

their social and economic marginalization. As Harms (2011) has pointed out, however, this term lacks an active verb form and therefore may not fully capture the agency and experiences of marginalized communities (2011: 4). To address this limitation, Harms suggests using alternative terms such as "edge" and "edginess" to convey a more accurate image of the everyday realities and complexities of those living on the border between rural and urban areas, which can more accurately convey the potential opportunities and risks faced by Hóc Môn residents. Indeed, people are not marginal in themselves, rather, they are marginalized.

Kim's (2013) ethnographic study of a Korean factory in China furnishes further evidence, vividly depicting the manner in which Chinese laborers undergo marginalization. This phenomenon illustrates how Chinese laborers experience marginalization through both spatial segregation and their position within the hierarchical structure of the factory regime.

Marginalization, as applied to the textile town, was manifest in both spatial and social-structural marginalization. There is no such thing as a marginal town. Instead, a town becomes marginalized for diverse reasons, such as industrialization, urbanization, neoliberalization, or gentrification. But behind those reasons, we should first ask: who marginalizes whom, how, and why? Based on comments from my informants regarding local economic development, they expressed dissatisfaction with the municipal government's allocation of support. They noted that the government seemed to prioritize high technology and service industries in other districts, while neglecting the development of the textile town due to its perceived lack of economic potential. But when I probed deeper and asked how they came by this information, they acknowledged that it was derived from their assessments comparing the development of the textile town with that of other districts. Contrarily, local government media statements showcased substantial investments dedicated to the revitalization of this aging industrial district. Local residents, however, expressed discontentment with what they perceived as the local government's incompetence and criticized the investments as insufficient in meeting their daily needs. They concluded the discussion with the statement, "It seems to be the destiny of the textile town." The town becomes more marginalized as a result of ongoing and unsatisfactory interactions between residents and local officials, ultimately leading to a consensus where residents reluctantly accept their situation and the town's marginalized status.

Moreover, they also mentioned that the social status of being a textile worker was inferior to that of other jobs, like working in schools, banks, or high-tech companies. The textile town thus came to symbolize a "backward district" to outsiders. Being a worker entailed having a low economic and social status. Unlike the first generation, who believed that the best way for the second generation was to follow their path of becoming workers, few of the second generation wanted the third generation to become workers. Many workers themselves looked down on the atmosphere in the textile town. During the fieldwork, I often heard the second generation complain that the social ethos (*fengqi*) in the textile town was low, because, in their words, "workers' suzhi (quality) is low."

The Suzhi discourse acts as the ideological facade of a socio-political reality enforced by the Chinese party elite. This discourse encompasses the intricate facets of human quality, bolstering the government's objectives and consolidating political control over moral values and social stability. This

discourse first appeared in the 1980s and has spread from national policy to public everyday use over the last three decades. It demonstrates a shift from population quantity to quality (Anagnost 2004). As a discursive context used in governing and everyday interactions, suzhi discourse occurs in many social environments (Kipnis 2007). In the textile town, for instance, during the era of the second generation, job security within the factory was often sufficient to alleviate most concerns. By the 1990s, however, the third generation was adopted suzhi education as part of their schooling, which entailed a curriculum emphasizing not only academic excellence but also ethical values and physical education. The school took an active role in regulating students' behavior, employing suzhi discourse to underscore both rewards and penalties, thereby embedding the concept of suzhi in everyday life.

Suzhi, as a tool in the hands of the powerful, is used in myriad ways by actors ranging from the state to individuals in the textile town. From the 1990s onward, the suzhi discourse appeared in the textile factory community. On the shop floor, finding ways to improve workers' suzhi became a guiding principle, and this referred to working behavior, attitudes, and achievement. When I interviewed with a middle-level director who worked at the No.3 factory, she gave a reason why the workers' suzhi should be improved:

> The textile industry is known for its labor-intensive nature and, compared to other sectors, it has lower technological demands and fewer prerequisites for workers. So, entering the textile industry is relatively accessible. Thus, the overall educational and suzhi of textile company employees tend to be relatively low. Most have completed only junior high school, with a minority holding vocational or high school degrees. This poses certain challenges for management.

Hence, when the director oversaw the shop floor, she might readily conclude that the workers had a low level of suzhi and should work on improving it. Nevertheless, the challenge of how to enhance it posed a significant question. Consequently, even though the state had set objectives to enhance public suzhi, the factory's managers remained primarily focused on the production tasks at hand. As a result, the suzhi discourse gradually shifted towards casual conversations and lighthearted interactions in the daily routine. Workers, as well, found it hard to give an explicit definition of suzhi. But everyone could give their own view of what was "high suzhi" or "low suzhi." The workers believed that suzhi could encompass many aspects of behaving and talking. In the factory community, whispers of "someone with low suzhi" would always circulate as gossip in the neighborhood. My interlocutors complained that, for example, many workers' suzhi was too low because they played mahjong every day. Indeed, there were many workers who, after receiving their buyout compensation when the factory went bankrupt, did not look for work and instead spent their days playing mahjong and relaxing at home. When I walked around the residential part of the textile town, for example, I often heard the clack-clack of mahjong tiles in the apartment buildings. The former workers linked low suzhi with the low level of education in the textile town, and they emphasized that workers were enthusiastic about playing mahjong yet disregarded their children's education. Therefore, in the factory community, the utilization of "suzhi" as a discourse for self-deprecation, gossip, and sarcasm has evolved into a form

of "self-marginalization." Nevertheless, it is crucial to understand that this was not their true intentions. Instead, it demonstrates how the elite employ this discourse to perpetuate the marginalization of individuals who are economically disadvantaged and less educated, thereby exacerbating to reinforce their own marginality.

Three Generational Identities

- The Identity of the First Generation

As the founders of factories, the first generation of workers had a special social status. Their status was a supreme honor bestowed by the state on the industry established in the New China. Their collective identity formed as a result of their contributions to their work units and the country. In the textile town, many first-generation workers were in their eighties and nineties. When I talked to them, the topic they were most willing to discuss was their experiences in the early days of the factory's establishment. This topic not only presented the economic benefits that being a first-generation textile worker brought to the country, but it also emphasized their emotional connection with the factory, such as the fact that they had constructed many of the buildings brick by brick. Despite the hardships of the 1950s and the poor material conditions, they were very proud and full of hope at that time. Their looking back was not only a way of retracing the factory's history but also a way of emphasizing their identity, as they believed they were the most qualified to speak about the history of the textile town. The changing factory policies later on, the layoffs, and the textile town's newfound situation during the fieldwork period left them feeling pessimistic. This feeling was based on a contrast between the present and the past, which reinforced their historical contribution and their previous status, wherein working-class people were "masters" of the country.

- The Identity of the Second Generation

As the "lost generation," the second generation has experienced social suffering during their life courses. According to Kleinman (1997), social suffering encompasses the human predicaments arising from "what political, economic, and institutional power does to people, and reciprocally, from how these forms of power themselves influence responses to social problems" (1997: ix). The experience of social suffering among the second generation of textile workers exemplifies how political transformation influenced their social and economic standing, ultimately leading to their social marginalization. When they deliberated on the life difficulties faced by the working class in their daily lives, Bourdieu and Ferguson (1999) illuminated how "social suffering" permeates daily existence. Their interviews with working class individuals emphasized the social divisions and sufferings of contemporary France. I encountered parallels to these descriptions in the narratives from the textile town by reading the Bourdieu team's interviews. These accounts vividly convey the nuanced details of social suffering that are embedded in everyday life. It is this enduring voice of anguish that helps to explain why the second generation of textile workers often perceives themselves as a "lost generation" (shiluo de yidai), grappling with the consequences of limited economic, social, and political influence.

In the past, workers in state-owned enterprises were given a unique and privileged status by state policy and ideology, and welfare policies offered them a sense of pride as workers. Their class identity was expressed in their identity with working-class leadership and with the sense of belonging to the work unit. After the transformation of the social and economic system, their identity underwent a new change. When the work unit no longer existed, there was a break in the transmission of working-class culture and tradition. In my field research, the second generation in the textile town had been laid off for more than ten years, and when they looked back on their experiences, they seldom complained to their units or the state, but more often complained about their "unlucky fate." They still had a deep attachment with the textile town as they had worked and lived in the community for most of their lives, and were nostalgic for a time when the factories were more efficient and had better benefits. At the same time, however, they also ridiculed themselves for the low status of being working class and were strongly opposed to their offspring becoming workers. This phenomenon vividly illustrates the Gramscian concept of hegemony, as Gramsci himself defined it as "intellectual and moral leadership" (1971: 57). In the context of the textile town, the textile workers have been willing to make sacrifices to reach a consensus with the government, acknowledging their lower social status and marginalization. This seemingly paradoxical logic shows exactly how they have used their lifelong experiences to reflect on their identity as working-class people. This willingness to conform appears to help the "hegemonic class" in maintaining a semblance of equilibrium between themselves and the subaltern classes. This exemplifies how political domination influences subaltern populations through a complex interaction of economic, political, moral, and cultural ways.

- The Identity of the Third Generation

What members of the third generation who grew up in a factory community missed the most was a carefree childhood. They remembered helping neighbors, playing each day with their friends, and living with their parents and grandparents, which all formed part of the workers' collective memory in the textile town. But after the factories had started to decline and the textile town had become increasingly marginalized, the third generation's common goal was to leave the town. Outside the town, they tried to shed the textile town's stigma and become new, urban white-collar workers. Nevertheless, they had a natural affinity with their peers from the textile town. This sense of identity was based on their common upbringing in the community and the empathy that came from a similar identity crisis when they had left the textile town. When they returned to the textile town and continued to live with their parents, the convenience of such living arrangements allowed them to ignore the marginalization and reproduce a new kind of connection. This connection, however, did not create a new sense of identity with the working class. Instead, it focused more on their own life choices. Nevertheless, the cultivation of the next generation (the fourth generation) formed a rupture with the past and the history of the textile town once again.

The above analysis clearly reveals how the sense of belonging to one generation sometimes led to a rupture between two generations. Identity, values, and relations varied from one generation to the next.

In addition, when a place was marginalized and the people were deemed "low suzhi," this also caused a break in the memory chain connecting one generation to the next. The break in affective relations also entailed a break in the transmission of knowledge. Thus, the three generations of workers' attachment to the textile town is complex and demonstrates shifts in working-class identity. To manage the generational dislocation, workers have struggled against their destiny to resist, compromise, negotiate, and seek balance in their entire life. The first generation sacrificed the "small family" for the "big family" (she xiaojia wei dajia). Here, the phrase "small family" literally means a household, including all family members. The "big family" is a metaphor referring to the collective group, which ranges from the work unit to the whole country. Their first priority was the socialist construction of the country, and they neglected the second generation's personal demands. The second generation, however, paid more attention to mutual assistance among family members, and they especially placed all their hope on the next (third) generation. After the state-owned enterprises' downturn, the work options for the third generation were different to those of their parents. Instead of being factory workers, they have made every effort to escape this marginalized place. The third generation achieved the goal of working and living outside the textile town, but many finally returned to live there again because of mutual assistance and family-related demands. This seems like a paradox on the surface, but living in the textile town became an economical, practical, and convenient way to help the third generation balance their work and life, and thus enhanced their attachment to this place.

Conjugal Relations and Gender Inequality After *Danwei*

Re-employment opportunities became available for workers after the difficult experience of being laid off. The search for jobs, however, did not go well for all workers' families. Compared with the male workers, female workers found jobs more easily. In the textile factory, most of the frontline workers were female, while their husbands were skilled workers or worked in the factory's security department. After the factory closed, many female workers found jobs in the service industry, for instance, in shopping malls, supermarkets, and hotels, or they provided household services, as there had been a rising demand for female laborers since the expansion of marketization. Some female workers even earned much more than when they worked in the factory. A female textile worker, for example, who trained as a maternity matron after being laid off, told me that she was awarded the title "golden maternity matron" and her salary was up to ten thousand yuan per month. Compared with their wives and other female workers, the male workers had difficulties finding satisfying jobs. In general, the jobs they could find were low-skilled, low wage jobs that required intensive labor. I often heard the complaint, "Besides working as security guards or repairmen, what else could we do?" This expressed their discontent and helplessness. There are many parallels here around the world — men, faced with a situation in which their wives earn more than they do find themselves to have become an object of ridicule and contempt. This challenges the dominant gender ideology, illustrating how traditional notions of masculinity impact men's social status and gender relations (Connell 2005). It also provides evidence of how gender identity is constructed and altered by social performance (Butler

1990). In China, gendered aspirations for improved economic and social status among women illustrate the impact of a market-driven, capitalist-oriented economy on traditional gender norms. Younger women have been migrating from their villages to urban areas in pursuit of better living conditions. Despite encountering challenges and enduring gender inequality, their desires exemplify the evolving ways in which Chinese women's desire and experiences have adapted in response to these changes. This transformation also prompts a deeper exploration of the broader implications for identity and subjectivity in post-socialist China (Rofel 1999, 2007).

The phenomenon wherein women's incomes have become the main economic support for their families is very common in the textile town. Do female workers improve their status and attain social equality by earning higher salaries from these new jobs? In Chinese society, economic determinism is very popular. On this view, the idea that the "economic base determines the superstructure" is a cornerstone of mainstream thinking. Within this logic, the common sense view is that when women earn more, their social status can be correspondingly improved. In my study, however, I question such a simplistic economic determinism, and I use ethnographic methods to investigate whether female workers have achieved gender equality in domestic and social life in the textile town.

Lin's Story

Lin had been working as a textile worker since 1982. After twenty-six years of work, she was laid off. Then she worked at a kindergarten for five years. After that, her friend recommended she work at an old people's home in the textile town as an office manager. She helped the director operate the old people's home. After four years in this workplace, she was promoted to vice director and managed the old people's home.

I heard about this promotion when I visited her office on the second floor of an old building in front of the old people's home. This old people's home was located in a quiet place inside the textile town, surrounded by trees and walls. It had around three hundred older people and about thirty staff members. I congratulated her and told her she deserved it because she was a very kind staff member who was attentive to the older residents' needs. Lin looked very happy, though she was too modest to admit that she was competent. She emphasized that it was just because her working attitude helped her to get the promotion. She said, "The older people are not only a group of people who need help, but they are also other people's parents; how I treat them is similar to how I take care of my own parents. If you take this working attitude, you will not find this work difficult."

One month later, however, when I asked about her recent situation, she said she had quit her job and now stayed at home to look after her mother-in-law. I felt that it was a pity that she had quit the job, but she repeatedly explained why she had given up on the promotion and quit the satisfying job. Her mother-in-law was more than eighty years old and had recently been sick, but she could not find a perfect carer to look after her. Her husband, who was a security guard in a housing estate far away from the textile town, did not want her to continue working in the old people's home. Instead, he wanted her to stay at home and look after his mother. Lin's salary was higher than her husband's salary.

But because she also received a retirement pension, even though she quit the job, the pension could assist her family as well. Therefore, her husband asked her to fulfill her filial piety (*xiaoxin*) to the older family members, and she consented. Confucianism, which has deeply influenced Chinese society, places a strong emphasis on filial piety. This core value aligns seamlessly with the patrilineal structure, where the male lineage holds authority over economic and social roles. As a result, the practice of filial piety typically became the primary responsibility of women, involving the care of the elders and thereby allowing men to maintain their economic and social dominance within the household.

Gender Inequality

Several cases, like Lin's, show that former textile women — even those who earned more than their husbands after working in new workplaces — continued to undergo a gender hierarchy that favored men within domestic life. Dinnertime conversations, for example, were always dominated by husbands, and their wives just filled the gaps in the conversation. When a wife told stories, her husband would always interrupt her, correcting the details and expressing his opinion. When I attended a family dinner party with Han and his in-laws, for example, when his wife, Yue, was describing how she had organized a dance performance with children at the kindergarten and had won a prize, Han interrupted her and asked her to speak less, as he believed that no one was interested in the details of her work.

Equal income, or even a situation in which women earned more than men, could not promote equal status in workers' families in the textile town. Instead, this sometimes increased the gender asymmetry in new ways. On the surface, husbands always neglected their wives' favorable outcomes and the confidence they gained from new workplaces. The deeper reason, however, was because their wives' success and confidence mirrored their own failure and sense of loss. Losing face (*diu ren*), a male worker told me, encapsulated what he felt as a failure to demonstrate his masculinity in domestic and public life. I knew a male worker who did a part-time job while his wife worked in a hotel as a cleaner. In his spare time, he always played mahjong with other male workers in the textile town. His wife was not only the main earner in supporting her family, but she also took care of the youth and older family members. When I asked this male worker whether he would like to ease his wife's burden, he replied with an embarrassed smile:

> At first, I was not supposed to do so, but I couldn't find a stable job: what could I do? ... I know that she has taken care of our family and our parents very well in recent years. She is good at it. I can't. I am a man, I don't have this gift. I know it is very hard for her, but what could I do? I can't find a stable job, just a casual one. When I don't work, I can't stay at home all day because it makes me crazy. As master of the family, I don't want to admit I am useless. But this is the real situation. Playing mahjong can help me get rid of this annoyance. I don't have a job, but I have friends. I can talk with them when we play. It just looks like smoking or drinking; playing mahjong is very common in the textile town.

This was his explanation. He admitted that his wife was working really hard and had contributed more

to the family, but he could not accept having lost his essential capacity of being the master of the family (*yi jia zhi zhu*).

Zhang (2001: 116) analyzed how, among Wenzhou migrants in Beijing, “control over family business, manipulation of spatial boundaries, and value transformation in women’s work” interacted and affected gender relations. She focused on how spatial boundaries were socially constructed and resulted in gender inequalities forming. Although working wives played crucial roles and had a decision-making power in economic production in households, compared with their husbands’ outside work, the value of wives’ work was still underestimated. In Zhejiangcun, the working wives were in charge of domestic work, while their husbands were responsible for “outside work” and “men’s” work. The absence of boundaries between work and residence limited the working wives’ power, a process that Zhang quotes as the “domestication of production,” which described the invisible, natural, and feminine domestic work.

The female workers in the textile town were very much like the working wives who were the primary producers but who still had a lower social status in their households in Zhejiangcun. Unlike those Zhejiangcun working wives whose activities were limited to the household, the female workers in the textile town moved across a wider area when they worked outside the textile town after being laid off. But why did the gender hierarchy still exist? When I talked with female workers alone, I could feel their confidence regarding domestic and outside work. Especially after they left the factory, they felt that their perspective and horizons had become wider. They told me all the details of their work and described how they had dealt with difficulties and personal relations in the workplace. But when I asked them about their husbands’ work, and whether their husbands’ jobs were as good as theirs, some wives remained silent; some wives were ambiguous and reluctant to tell me more about their husbands’ jobs, and others complained about the current employment environment and their husband’s reluctance to try to find a way forward. But in the end, most of them accepted the status quo.

In the factory community, the traditional conception of “the man is the master of a family” had been deeply ingrained in the gender relations, and they reached a consensus wherein men had decision-making powers, while women were in charge of domestic issues like taking care of family members. Although men’s incomes and women’s incomes were almost equal when they were working in the factory, the women still had a lower social status than the men. Thus, the principle of male household leadership became embedded in their daily practice. This is the outcome of the lineage structure shaped by the enduring patrilineal tradition in Chinese society. This consensus has continuing even since women have begun to work outside the home and have provided the main economic resources for their families. Although women have contributed more than men, the status and the traditional family ideology have not changed. Men blamed their loss on social change, and they complained that they had been abandoned by the state, which had resulted in their being laid off. But they seldom paid their wives compliments. If they did so, this would be an admission of their failure and loss of real authority.

Quarrels were inevitable, and they often occurred in the early years after being laid off. Marriage breakdown was also a common phenomenon in workers’ families in the early years after the factory

closed down. I talked with a male worker whose marriage had broken up two years after the layoffs. At that time, they had to go outside the textile town to find jobs. Thus, not being in the same place, combined with the persistent poverty, had made their marriage unstable. In the end, his wife left the family for another man in a better financial position. Eight years had passed after these events when I talked with this man about his former marriage. His tone was peaceful:

> The failure of marriages for couples like us is actually neither a problem of a weak marital foundation nor a matter of who is right or wrong. In fact, it was because, as family members, we didn't care enough about each other. For laid-off workers, failed marriages have a common feature: distance. We could not see each other very often, as we went outside the textile town to work. So communication was not enough, and mutual support and understanding were not enough, and the poverty situation did not change. At last, she could not bear it, so the outcome for us was divorce. But I don't blame her.

At this moment, the man's friend, who had worked with this man on the same shop floor, interrupted him and told me his opinion. I could feel he was still angry about his friend's divorce:

> My friend is too naive and gullible. You know, women outnumber men in the textile factory. Where there are women, there is trouble. When they are on the shop floor, they like to gossip and complain about their husbands. It is hard to change one's nature. Especially when the factory closed down and she went out to work, she was very easily tempted by the world: it's full of temptations (*hua hua shi jie*). So she was unfaithful to her husband. She is a bad woman.

Divorce was widespread in the early years after the factory closed down in the textile town. But during my fieldwork I observed a declining trend in divorce rates. After the first few turbulent years, more families found effective ways of dealing with the difficulties. Like those women with whom I talked, although their husbands were no longer the breadwinners, the wives were still willing to take on economic and domestic burdens. As one woman told me, "As members of one family, we should get through all the difficulties together."

Therefore, the female workers' re-employment not only enhanced their income but also broadened their horizons, confidence, and independence. Despite this, gender inequality and hierarchy still existed in domestic and social life in the textile town. Wives' success and confidence after leaving the factory and working in other workplaces mirrors their husbands' failure and increases their sense of loss when husbands find unstable, part-time, and low-paid jobs. This contrast is probably an important factor underpinning new kinds of gender asymmetry. Even though women contributed more than men, they did not contest the gender inequality. Instead, they tried to handle the family burdens and maintain their husbands' dignity as "the master of a family."

The Complexity of Friendship

Despite the state-owned textile factory having closed down, the factory's workers still live in the factory community. While their surrounds have not changed much, the workers' life trajectories shifted when they were re-employed outside the textile town, which gave rise to new, different spatial movements. Some workers found relatively stable jobs in private enterprises, some became self-employed entrepreneurs, and others would move from job to job without a clear progression. For those people who had worked together and known one another well in the factory beforehand, what would happen when they met up nowadays? In this section, I present three encounters that show how textile workers strategically changed their way of talking depending on their interlocutor. In addition, I describe two events at which two groups of previous workers gathered, and I do this to indicate the differences articulated through the content of their conversations and interactions.

The Strategy of Talking with Previous Workers

Workers' diverse experiences in various workplaces after being laid off and re-employed may explain their changing attitudes toward previous colleagues or friends. Some people had good jobs, but others still struggled with poverty. Their economic and social status was not as equal as it had previously been on the textile factory shop floor. Thus, when they met up again, their conversational style would change to reflect this. To discuss such subtle changes and their implications, I use Han's case, which covers the following three occasions.

When I talked with Han downstairs in the yard of a residential neighborhood (*xiaoqu*), I observed the interaction when Han came across previous colleagues. There were three patterns of greeting in these encounters, as follows:

Pattern 1: if Han came across someone he knew but with whom he had had little contact for a long time (just a loose acquaintance) their greeting was as follows:

> Acquaintance: Hey, Han! How have you been recently?
> Han: Hey, Acquaintance, long time no see.
> Acquaintance: What do you do now?
> Han: (Sigh ...) I just work for others (*da gong*).
> Acquaintance: I heard from others that your job is so good.
> Han: Don't believe it, it's not as good as what you heard, I just found something I can do.
> (Then they would say goodbye to each other. This interaction would last for one or two minutes)

Pattern 2: if Han met a colleague and they had had a good relationship on the shop floor, he would volunteer more details about his own job.

> Acquaintance: Hey, Han, where are you working now?
> Han: Hey! I am working in Chanba district, in a private factory.

> Acquaintance: Are you busy? What do you do at your job?
> Han: (Sigh ...) Don't mention it, I'm too busy! I deal with Party affairs (dangwu gongzuo). There's a lot of things to do.
> Acquaintance: It sounds good!
> Han: Not at all, it's so boring!
> (Then they would say goodbye to each other. This greeting would last for about five minutes)

Pattern 3: if Han met someone who had been his close friend on the shop floor, and they had got on very well, he would usually prefer to say more:

> Close friend: Hey, Han, How are you doing? Where are you working now?
> Han: Hey! I'm still working for a private company in the Chanba district, XXX Company. I am in charge of Party affairs.
> Close friend: It sounds very good!
> Han: Not bad. What do you do now?
> Close friend: I am working in the XXX ...
> (At this moment, if someone's job sounded good, Han would ask for more details and give some feedback from his own experience. But if someone's job was not good, Han would not ask for more details, and he would also stop describing his own job.)

I told him about my observation of the subtle differences between these three kinds of occasions, and he explained the different approaches as follows:

> If your situation is better than that of others, they will be jealous of you; if your situation is inferior to that of others, they will look down on you.

Han's strategy in conversations shifted depending on the specific former workers he met. As he said, if their situation was not as good as his, he would not give them more details about his job, for fear that they would be envious of him. His goal was to avoid others' envy. Equally, if his job was not good as that of others, he would offer more details and even exaggerate the importance of his job to place it on an even footing with that of others, so that they would not look down on him.

Han's strategy of maintaining an equal position with others can be linked to wider cultural logics, such as the desire for social harmony and conflict avoidance. For example, interpersonal harmony reflects the core principles of Confucianism, which has influenced the attitudes of Chinese people towards social interaction (Bond 1996; Ge 2020). Moreover, this approach to social interactions may also stem from a collectivist mindset, which is linked to socialist values that emphasize economic egalitarianism and democracy in both the economic and political realms, as asserted by Christensen (1998: 348).

Han's method of balancing equal relations was not static or one-size-fits-all; rather, it was a dynamic process that considered others' work and life situations. The conversation strategies had two tendencies: one of modest understatement, and one of exaggeration. When people were modest and

understated the importance of their jobs, they could avoid unnecessary trouble. Those workers who could only find temporary, casual, and part-time jobs always relied on others to recommend them for jobs. Thus, they would ask for help from someone with a better job and more guanxi. In this situation, well-connected workers (such as Han) with better jobs were reluctant to provide help because they had no expectation of reciprocity. Thus, they understated the importance of their jobs in order to avoid such embarrassment. Equally, by intentionally exaggerating one's job, a person could save face, or in Han's words, "maintain their dignity." In the past, for instance, Han had been a foreman on the shop floor, so the frontline workers had had to follow his instructions. Nowadays, however, one frontline worker had a better job, and this person's social status and economic condition were better than Han's. In this situation, Han exaggerated the importance of his work for fear that he would lose his standing as former foreman. Although the circumstances changed with the passage of time, Han still viewed maintaining his dignity as a priority. Thus, conversation strategies with former colleagues and friends formed a dynamic process that was calibrated to the specific situation and moment.

In the past, the former factory workers had not been so significantly separated economically and socially from one another. Now, however, they experienced the inevitable trend of widening the gap in the uncertain labor market. Although they still lived in the former factory neighborhood, they had fewer opportunities to meet one another because they were all busy working outside the textile town. But since they still lived in this factory community, they all still knew one another. Information about jobs would travel very fast in this acquaintance-based society. When former colleagues and friends came across the factory community and began talking, even if they had not met for a long while, they would still share details about their current situation, and strategies like the above were present in the conversations.

Gatherings

I attended some parties organized by the retired workers. The most frequent reason for these gatherings was that when workers reached retirement age and could access the social welfare system, their good friends from the factory community would ask for an invitation to a restaurant to celebrate this significant life moment with them. These gatherings were always small, often just including five or six workers. The invitees were the inviter's former colleagues or good friends with whom they had worked for a long time. One textile worker described this sisterlike relationship:

> We came from the same team when we worked on the textile shop floor. When we got off the night shift, we still had lots of energy. We took the No.8 bus together to the inner city. We didn't buy anything but just hung around. After everyone got married and had children, we still helped each other. We were sisters. Since the layoffs, we have been working in different places. Everyone is too busy to see anyone else. Even so, we still find excuses to get together. For instance, when someone reaches retirement age, gets an increased retirement pension, has children getting married, or has grandchildren, any of

> these events could prompt us to organize a gathering. If we have time and want to get together, we can always find reasons. We meet up two or three times a year.

These gatherings always occurred in restaurants inside the textile town. The gatherings happened on weekends, and the restaurants were close to where they lived. The workers took turns at paying the bill. Hotpot was the favored meal at these workers' gatherings, not only due to its affordability but also because it allowed workers to convene around a communal pot, cook their preferred ingredients, and engage in lively conversations while relishing their food. The atmosphere in the hotpot restaurants was lively and not too formal, which helped them feel relaxed and cozy when chatting. The entire gathering was full of talking and laughing, with rarely a moment of silence. The topics discussed were not fixed — they would often chat about their appearance, family members, job, and other people's lives. At the gathering, they always recalled previous experiences and compared them with the current situation.

Nevertheless, how they talked and interacted demonstrated differences between various groups of workers. I attended two gatherings with two different groups of workers: one consisted of frontline workers from the same team, and the other one consisted of middle-level managers on one shop floor.

I accompanied Xu to her frontline workers' gathering in a hotpot restaurant two blocks away from the factory community. Xu was a little bit overweight: she had chubby cheeks, big eyes, and a kind smile whenever she spoke. Before we headed to the restaurant, I asked her what she planned to wear to dress up for the occasion. But she felt confused by my comment and asked me why she needed to dress up. She joked that she was not going on a date, but that she was just going to see her old friends who had known one another for several decades. So, she dressed in her everyday clothes: a black short-sleeved shirt and brown pants. When everyone met in the restaurant, the group members made jokes and laughed at each other. They criticized one another's appearance and a comment on body shape formed their first interaction. When one of Xu's friends saw her, she laughed at Xu and said, "You look fatter, why don't you lose some weight?" She paused, then continued, "Your skin is not smooth and looks older, why don't you go to a beauty salon?"

Xu did not get angry at all, but replied to her friend, "Fatter means life is better, you still look thin — why don't you take good care of yourself?" Then they laughed together. They then discussed their breasts and which kind of bra was good for their respective shapes, and they even showed one another their bras under the table. At first, when I heard them talking, I felt a little embarrassed. But, as I observed everyone expressing their joy and friendship in this manner, I came to realize that it was not a satirical interaction; instead, it was a way of expressing their close friendship and sisterlike intimacy. This intimacy that made me feel embarrassed but that allowed them to feel relaxed quickly returned a sense of a close friendship to them, despite their not having met up for a long while.

Compared with the frontline workers' gathering, the gathering of former middle-level managers was rather different. Han retired in September 2018. When handling the formalities, his former colleagues from the factory community asked him to invite them for dinner to celebrate his retirement. Besides Han and one other male worker, the remaining five workers were female. None of them had been frontline workers — they had all worked in the same office on the shop floor. When they met up,

their style of communication was different to that of the frontline workers who had laughed at one another. In contrast, these female workers began by complimenting each other on their appearance, with comments such as "Your coat looks smart, where did you buy it? How much was it?" or "You changed your hairstyle, it looks younger and suits you well!" While these conversations were different from how the frontline workers expressed themselves, they also put everyone in a good mood and everyone was very excited to meet up. I noticed that unlike the frontline workers, who wore T-shirts and pants, they dressed more formally, for instance, the women wore colorful dresses with boots or leather shoes, and light makeup.

The whole atmosphere at the frontline workers' gathering was more relaxed and less restrained than the middle-level managers' gathering. When eating, the main topics focused on their work and life. The frontline workers knew the details about one another's current work. After they had left the factory, they had found similar jobs, mostly in the services market, such as working in shopping centers, restaurants, supermarkets, or hotels. Thus, they had similar experiences, difficulties, and strategies that they shared with one another. When one person complained about her work, for example, another would echo the sentiment and let the first person continue venting her grievances. Others would then give some advice or complain about their own difficulties. Complaints about current jobs and colleagues formed one of the most welcomed topics at these gatherings. They shared views on the inequalities they had encountered in workplaces, and gave advice to one another on dealing with difficult situations and people they disliked. This could enhance their friendship, as in their words, "True friendship stands out in difficult times." Complaints about marriage partners formed another common topic. They complained that their husbands were lazy or useless, and that the pressure the family put them under was heavy. The content of complaints also expanded to include economic tensions with relatives, their children's education, and the situation and difficulties they were currently encountering. It seemed that these complaints strengthened their friendship and sisterly sentiment through sharing their experience and feelings. Furthermore, the complaints also helped them to recall how stable their previous work in the factory had been, how proud they had been to possess a sense of belonging to the working class, and how easy getting along with the other workers on the shop floor had been. Gathering in this way provoked a collective nostalgia, which was manifest in the comparison between the past and the present situation.

But the topics discussed by the middle-level managers did not go any further. They were sensitive about their current jobs. Some had good jobs while others did not. Thus, engaging in such conversations, especially if one boasted of having landed an especially good job, might have triggered greater discomfort than would have been the case in the old factory setting. Discussions about jobs did not seem to be as informal and casual as the discussions about appearance they had had when they met. When they discussed the details of their work tasks and work experience, some said more, while others shared less. But when they discussed humorous stories related to their work, everyone was very happy to participate in the discussion. For example, Hu worked in a nursing home for older people in the textile town. When the workers met up, she liked to share humorous stories about happenings in her workplace with everyone present. Besides, during the gathering, there would always be gossip about

others' work and life situations. The content of this gossip also concerned others' appearance, work, and family members. In this acquaintance-based society, even if one kept a low profile, others in the textile town were able to receive as many updates about this person as they wished.

The above description clearly shows that although the frontline workers' gathering was more relaxed and emotional than the middle-level managers' gathering, in both cases these social events were a productive way of bringing former workers together. Specifically, the similar experience and difficulties that the frontline workers have in their current work and life helped them recall the collective nostalgia of their former days in the factory. At the same time, they shared humorous experiences and expressed appreciation, which helped the former middle-level managers create a more convivial atmosphere at their gathering.

The strategies of adjustment employed by former workers come to life during their interactions and gatherings. These interactions are rooted in collective memory and a sense of nostalgia, serving as vital links to address the current economic and social disparities among them. Whether it involves delicately addressing sensitive topics or bridging emotional distances, the former workers navigate these challenges through the art of recalling the past, and the exchange of anecdotes and humorous stories. Through these practices, they find effective ways to adapt and negotiate the social and economic changes that have shaped their circumstances.

Conclusion

The strategies of adjustment represent a dynamic and adaptive process marked by resilience, compromises, and negotiations, all in response to the profound shifts brought about by social and cultural transformations. In the specific context of an industrial community, these strategies reflect the textile workers' capacity not only to adapt to these changes but also to establish equilibrium in their relationships among generations, couples, former colleagues, and friends.

In times of disruption and crisis, these strategies shed light on how the microscopic scale of daily life recalibrates our perception of generational time and official time. Societal ruptures tend to fracture the collective identity within the framework of generational time and challenge the legitimacy of official time when individuals confront life difficulties. The strategies of adjustments, however, provide a resilient force that enables workers to maintain their foothold amidst the torrents of change. They allow workers to revisit their past experiences as members of the working class, delving into the depth of generational connections and shared memories of the past. In doing so, these strategies offer a sense of continuity, empowering workers to inherit their collective heritage and shared memories in their everyday lives.

These strategies are not deliberate skills that can be replicated, but rather represent a life philosophy that has evolved over years of lived experience. This life philosophy incorporates aspects of classical Chinese Confucianism and contemporary discourses like "suzhi," yet it transcends them. It serves as an expression of the workers' individual initiative, reflecting their approach to change as a pursuit of equilibrium rather than direct confrontation.

This equilibrium arises as a result of varied interactions between generations, couples, and friends. Within these interactions, it is the inherent resilience of the working class that consistently shape and enhances these strategies of adjustment. The identity and the sense of belonging of the working class is essential to the strategies, as it structures people's memories of the past and therefore structures attitudes to the changes taking place in the present. Thus, the strategies act as a bridge to the depths of generational connections and shared memories, offering a sense of continuity amidst the social tensions of disrupted time.

Chapter 6

Making Industrial Heritage: Art District and Soviet-style Street

From this chapter onward, I shift my focus from descriptions of workers' everyday life to their relations and attachment to objects and place. I have previously examined what happened to workers before and after the state-owned factory closed in the earlier chapters. The lived experiences of workers enhance our understanding of the stories behind industrial heritage and their working-class legacy. In this chapter, I will delve deeply into how an industrial community has transformed and consider the contradictions that have emerged during the urban renewal process, giving rise to industrial heritage.

Unlike many studies that have discussed how to protect industrial heritage and reuse industrial resources (Alfrey and Putnam 2003; Douet 2013; Landorf 2009; Rautenberg 2012; Xie 2015), in this chapter, I will focus on how and why the heritage discourse, the reuse of industrial remnants, and the renewal of the factory community do not speak to working-class people effectively in the textile town. I present ethnographic details that demonstrate the complexity and contradictions of different actors engaged in the heritage discourse. To examine the impact of the renewal of the industrial remnants and the factory community, and to answer the question of "whose heritage?" and "whose nostalgia?" I will focus on two projects in the textile town, namely, the art district and the Soviet-style Street.

The Textile Town's Art District

The Birth of the Art District

The textile town's art district was established on the former site of the Northwest First Printing & Dyeing Factory (*Yiyin*). Yiyin was the first modern printing and dyeing factory designed and built by China during the First Five-Year Plan (1953–1957), and it was also the largest printing and dyeing factory in Asia at that time. Nevertheless, it became the first factory in the textile town to go bankrupt in July 1997. More than 10 000 square meters of the factory plant were then unused, which provided opportunities for certain artists who were seeking lower rents, a unique historical place, and a tranquil

environment that would inspire their creative activity. This empty huge Soviet-style factory became their ideal choice.

Baiye was the first artist to stay, and then his artist friends settled down and reconstructed the unique industrial ruins. These local artists became the first eleven residents of the art district, and then some students and teachers from the Academy of Fine Arts joined them later. In early 2007, more artists moved to the district, and they gradually reworked the obsolete factory space into separate studios. In total, more than sixty artists established thirty-five open studios and art spaces (Tong 2008). In 2008, the total number of artists rose to around one hundred. The artists engaged primarily in painting but also in ceramics, sculpture, photography, installation, and performance art. The usable area expanded to 13 000 square meters over the first five years, distributed across Central Avenue and the A, B, C, and D areas, and it became the largest art district in Northwest China (Peng and Wei 2016: 363). The emergence and rise of the art district were entirely initiated by artists. The artists played an essential role in redesigning the factory building's interior and in transforming the vacant factory building surrounded by grass into a lively, creative art space. Furthermore, some curators and art organizations promoted the art district, and it became well known for hosting exhibitions for the public. Since then, the art district in the textile town has become a cultural symbol representing Xi'an's contemporary art.

The Connection Between Artists and the Industrial Past

On June 25, 2007, the first Xi'an Contemporary Art Documentary Exhibition opened in the art district. It was curated by Yue Luping, who is both an artist and curator. He made and displayed a film called *Echoes of Workers*, which presented the social problems linked to the factory's bankruptcy and workers' layoff. This work was first created in response to an invitation from a UK art exhibition. He explained the meaning of this work:

> So far I have collected about 150 voices of laid-off workers. In the video, they tell their own stories. Since they use Chinese, the British audiences don't understand what they are saying. But I'm not going to translate it. The only thing I want to do is ask the British audiences to hear the abstract "voice" of the Chinese laid-off workers. Meanwhile, I have also made an "intelligible" version, which I post on my blog in the form of daily stories for Chinese audiences. In this way, these two visions form the complete work *Echoes of the Workers*.

The background music for this exhibition was a popular communist song "We Workers Have the Strength" (*wo men gongren you liliang*). A power plant in northeast China created this song in 1948. With a solid, powerful, and enthusiastic melody, the song portrays a heroic image of Chinese workers standing up to be masters in the socialist construction of the country. Over this background music, Yue Luping recorded more than one hundred workers' voices together to reproduce the historical fragments of industrial memory. This compressed the historical glory and decay of the textile town into an

exhibition that strongly recalled the everyday life of the industrial past and reinforced the attachment present between people and the industrial heritage (Peng and Wei 2016: 369).

The exhibition's purpose was to create an atmosphere in which visitors could immerse themselves and encounter the glorious working-class history. Nevertheless, it became a lament for the factory's closure and the worker layoffs. Yue Luping's exhibition showed his concern for the relationship between physical objects — the factory plant and site that bore witness to the industrial history, and people — the state-owned factory workers who had been working on this shop floor for most of their life, but who were finally abandoned by the state. Therefore, the workers' voices not only reflected their sense of pride and loss at being socialist workers but also echoed the social and cultural transformation of the industrial past and present.

Like Yue, when the art district was first established, the artists paid much attention to the relationship between art and the industrial past. They used the industrial heritage discourse to show how they were inspired by Chinese contemporary art, history, and industrial culture. This art district is based on an industrial site that had experienced borne the weight of working-class history and industrial development for half a century after the foundation of China. The artists believed that its actual value far exceeds the space's original meaning. For the artists, the art district offered them not only a physical space to work in but also a cultural space for them to pursue cultural reproduction, which combined the protection of industrial heritage with the creativity of art. It seems that they inherited the spirit of the industrial past, and then gave it a new form through redesigning the space.

From then on, when people talked about the textile town, the art district became an inevitable topic. It was presented in various tour brochures attracting visitors to this new cultural landmark. Most visitors looked round the district. They took pictures and visited artists' workshops, but only a few bought works of art from the studios and the interest they displayed did not prevent.

From the Textile Town's Art District to the Banpo International Art District

Although the artists gave this old industrial site a new lease on life, this did not mean that they could permanently settle down in the art district, which they felt was a utopia for their art creations. As the district became famous, more galleries and commercial shops arrived. These commercial activities increased the art district's value, thereby driving up property values and ultimately facilitating gentrification (on which, see Harris 2012; Zukin 1989). In China, when the local government intervenes in the management of art districts, it usually incorporates the "cultural district" into the urban plans for the "creative industry" or the "cultural industry." It then begins to renovate facilities and manage the area holistically. The logic behind the practices in the cultural industry, however, is that the state and the local government's interests are often prioritized over culture or local interests (Fung and Erni 2013). For example, Beijing's 798 District was established originally by artists, but when Beijing recognized the symbolic importance of the arts within its financial system and for its urban image, it then used the art district to promote Beijing's cultural diversity as a global city (Currier 2008).

The art district in the textile town could not escape the same fate. In 2012, the local government

cooperated with a company to invest 150 million yuan to renovate and upgrade the art district, and it changing the district's name from the textile town's art district to the Banpo International Art District. The local government initiated a set of proposals for renovating the art district. According to the plan, the original dilapidated buildings in the art district would be demolished or altered, and a new large area would be built with a high standard of greenery, water features, and sculptures. Also, a textile heritage museum would be built inside the original factory building. In addition, restaurants, bars, stores, hotels, and other service facilities would be constructed in the surrounding area so that visitors could eat, stay, play, and shop while visiting the art district. In summary, the renovation was intended to create an art park integrating historical heritage, contemporary art, cultural industries, architectural space, and leisure, as the local authorities asserted.

The proposal sounded very attractive. But it was a nightmare for the artists who had been settled in the art district for five years already. The artists did not own the art district; instead, the artists were only tenants in the art districts. When the art district was established, the artists had signed a rental contract with the factory's property management. The factory land and buildings were state-owned property, and so the artists and the owners of galleries, art institutions, and other commercial shops could only be tenants. The rising rents were their main headache. The rent in 2007 was only 6.5 yuan per square meter per month. In 2012, however, the rent rose to 12 yuan, and the utility bills increased significantly. Thus, the high rent prices forced some artists to leave the art district. Besides, the artists thought that the commercial atmosphere had distorted the original intention of being the center of Xi'an's contemporary art. Furthermore, a depression in the Xi'an art market had led to artists having difficulties surviving in the art district. Ultimately, their meager income and the increasing rents resulted in the artists leaving the art district that they had built up themselves.

Tensions and conflicts occurred during the renovation. In September 2012, the art district's "new owner" — the Jingbang Cultural Development Company — sued six artists over lease disputes. The plaintiff claimed that the six artists had refused to move out of the studio when the contract expired. The defendants — those six artists who were among the first group of artists in the art district — responded as follows:

> We were the first artists who came to this place. Why did we come here? First, we wanted to build a contemporary art district. Second, we wanted to preserve the industrial heritage. The textile town's art district resembles the Beijing 798 Art District; it has historical value, and we want to preserve it. That's why we want to build a contemporary art district.

Nevertheless, the artists were unable to beat the developer who had gained support from the local government. On Christmas Day in 2011, the Fifth Retrospective Exhibition of Xi'an Contemporary Art was held at the art district. This was the artists' last opportunity to organize a contemporary exhibition. After this exhibition, the textile town's art district no longer existed and was replaced by the Banpo International Art District. Here, Banpo refers to an archaeological site containing the remains of several well-organized Neolithic settlements. This is a type of site associated with Yangshao Culture from more than 6000 years ago. Since the Banpo museum was established in 1957, it has become

one of the top ten tourist attractions in Xi'an and is rated a National First-Class Museum by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage. Banpo lies next to the textile town, and the shortest distance between Banpo museum and the art district is only one hundred meters, where there used to be a freight railway separating the two sites. The local government hoped to exploit Banpo's reputation to stimulate the art district's development. Thus, the local government and developers believed that changing its name could attract more tourists and investments.

When discussing whether the original name — The Textile Town's Art District — should be changed, the artists conducted an opinion poll. The result showed that thirty artists had taken a strong stand against changing the name, while only one artist supported it. The original name not only conveys that the art district is located in the textile town geographically, but it also demonstrates a cultural connection with the industrial past. As the art critic Tong Yujie said, "The Textile Town's Art District established on a bankrupt state-owned factory bears witness to the shift from a failing industrial park to an art park. The title conveys both the industrial history and contemporary culture in China."

The artists expressed their sense of loss, disappointment, and anger in their own ways. Baiye, the first artist who settled in the art district, exhibited his installation "Sanjia Mache (Troika)" to express the relationship between the three stakeholders: the artists, the government, and the developer. Since the interests of the three parties were different — the government wanted to develop the local economy, the property developer sought to obtain land for profit, and the artists needed a place to rent cheaply — the relationship between the three parties was essentially full of contradictions and inconsistencies. Although the artists had made an effort to preserve the art district's assets and to protect the industrial heritage from demolition, they were still members of vulnerable groups, and they could hardly fight the other two parties who possessed capital and power in an unequal relationship.

The Current Situation in the Art District

Since 2012, the government of Baqiao District and a cultural company have redesigned the art district, a process that began with the name change discussed above. They planned to invest more than 150 million yuan in retaining and transforming the main industrial zone's core area and in rebuilding and redesigning the surrounding area. The local government sought to integrate the project into "a collection of industrial heritage, contemporary art, cultural industries, architectural space, entertainment and tourism in one park, making it the largest and most comprehensive and influential cultural and artistic base in Northwest China."

I then wondered how the art district had changed over the years. I imagined that the unique change in historical circumstances, the Soviet Union-style architecture, and an environment conducive to art activities may attract more artists, cultural workers, and shops to settle there. Then, the working-class residents who lived in the textile city and young people who were fond of art could be the main visitors. To my surprise, however, I saw only the economic depression of the sparsely populated art district. Fewer people, not only tourists but also artists or shopkeepers, resided or worked in the art district.

Figure 6.1: The three textile machines placed in the art district. Photo taken by the author.

According to the signposting board there, the two sides of the main hall were separated off into an art gallery, art workshop, teahouse, coffee room, photographic studio, and various workshop classes. But when I walked along the hall, I found that some spaces were vacant and just posted advertisements on the windows for rent. In contrast, educational classes for children such as dancing and drawing were popular and many parents sat outside to wait for their children. A few art shops were open to the public, but only the shopkeepers were inside, sitting behind the desk, and staring at computer screens. When I looked at the paintings and artworks, they seemed apathetic and did not talk much to me. It was a warm winter afternoon, but I was not sure if either the weather or the factory interior made me feel cold. Everything looked lifeless and dull, except for two older people playing badminton in the middle

of the long hall. At the end of the long hall, there were three textile machines. These had belonged to the No.3 Textile Factory and had been imported from Japan in the 1980s. But these machines looked inconspicuous; only a few visitors stopped to see and take pictures when they walked by.

When I left the main hall, I saw seven large Chinese characters written in red on the wall: "ren ren dou shi yi shu jia" (Everyone is an artist). This slogan originated with the German artist Joseph Beuys. In 1973, Beuys explained his universalist approach to human creativity and the power of art to bring about social change. Interestingly, a German artist's most famous statement was written in Chinese handwriting and in red, in a style similar to the *dazibao* (big-character posters) in the Cultural Revolution. I do not know who wrote this statement on the wall, and I am not sure whether they know the phrase's origin. But what I did remember was that when I came here ten years ago, I saw every visitor standing by this wall, taking photos. Fewer visitors now come to the art district, and yet everyone who came here had their picture taken. Ironically, the artist who wrote this slogan left the art district in the end. Some elements of the Cultural Revolution period were visible in the art district. As Fang summarized the Beijing 798 Art District: "the tall factory buildings, industrial machinery, slogans from the Cultural Revolution, and quotations from Chairman Mao are all scenes from the Cultural Revolution and the planned economy that are burned into the minds of Chinese people" (2016: 23). Similarly, visitors to this art district, especially those who experienced the Cultural Revolution, could find a visit here evokes memories of the past, even though the slogan on the wall originally comes from the Western world and the content relates to art and artists.

Before I left the art district, an old brick house outside the main hall attracted me. It was a coffee shop. I rewarded myself with a short break, sitting inside this warm house and drinking a cappuccino. A few young people sat in this café, reading books or talking with their friends. I asked the waiter why so many art shops and galleries were closed, and he replied that it was mainly because the rising rent had made the situation practically unbearable for some artists and shopkeepers, especially after the cultural company had taken over the art district.

Zhang, who had been the shop floor director at the Printing & Dyeing Factory, now worked at the factory's community office. Although the factory had closed, the factory's community office still played an important role in managing all the community's residents. He was one of the team members who had visited the Beijing 798 Art District in 2007 to learn about how a bankrupt factory could become an art district. He gave me his understanding of why the art district was not popular in the textile town:

> Our textile town lacks a cultural atmosphere. Generally speaking, most residents are laid-off workers. Who would want to spend twenty yuan on a cup of coffee, or be interested in buying a painting? No one. Their educational level is not high as well; they don't understand what art is. The textile town is not like the Qujiang district.

The Qujiang district he mentioned is a new cultural zone in Xi'an and has become a National Cultural Display Zone with a diverse range of cultural heritage, tourism, and leisure facilities. The local government has rebuilt the Qujiang district as an imagined ancient capital of China. It relies on

the location, which was once a large royal park area in the Tang dynasty, and on other famous cultural heritage sites there, such as the Giant Wild Goose Pagoda. It obtains policy support from the government and investments from developers, and it attracts increasing numbers of visitors. Zhang believed that if the textile town wished to attract young people to settle down there, it should create more job opportunities. Yet the textile town and its art district are unattractive and lack commercial value, and even young people who grew up there do not wish to stay.

The Workers' Visit to the Art District

I went to the art district several times over the year with my interlocutors who had once worked at Yiyin Factory or at other nearby textile factories. Here are a few reasons why we visited the art district together. First, walking inside the former factory space makes the working-class history come alive. It offers former workers an opportunity to describe their everyday life in the physical space when they recall their memory of previous days working in the factory. When we entered the main hall, which was once a textile shop floor, my interlocutors were excited to explain the structure of the shop floor. They pointed out the high roof and told me that the shop floor did not turn on the ceiling lamp on sunny days because the large windows allowed the natural light in. They also showed me how the textile machines worked, and they described their work tasks and everyday routines.

Second, when the former workers stood inside the building — especially when they saw just the three old, rusty, shabby textile machines and the building's transformed interior — the current situation made them feel nostalgic for the busy and lively shop floor of the previous days. The factory building's framework had not changed much, but the building's function and essence were different from before. Their memory and the new reality intertwined in that moment, and it sharpened their sentimental attachment to the place. On the one hand, the art district offered them a real and visual experience that helped them recall their memories. On the other hand, however, the combination of the present and the past could lead the former workers to feel disillusioned and alienated.

Before I invited them to visit the art district with me, most had been there just one or two times. They displayed their indifference to the art district, and emphasized that they did not understand art. They thought art was far removed from their everyday life, and they regarded art as entertainment for the middle class or for rich people. But when they stood inside the art district — especially in the main hall, which was once a shop floor — their attitudes and emotions linked to the art district changed. It is interesting to note the difference in the conversations that occurred within and outside the art district. When I talked with my interlocutors in their homes or other places, they did not stress much interest in this topic, and the conversation went like this:

> Me: What do you think the factory ruins should be turned into? Do you think the art district is a good project?
> A worker: I don't know. The art district is not bad; at least it is a place for entertainment.
> Me: Do you think the government should preserve the factory buildings and change them into an industrial museum?

> A worker: This would be good. But I think the government should pay more attention to our daily life first. Do you know the biggest landfill site is near the textile town? If the local government can solve the disgusting stink, this would be a really good thing for us.

Indeed, the divergence in views between workers and the local government emphasized the contradictions inherent in this industrial project. The residents cared about their everyday life, which was associated with their living conditions and immediate interests, while the local government paid more attention to "face projects," such as the beautification of the textile town. Similar conversations happened all the time. When I talked about the current governmental project of rebuilding the railway theme park, a worker used the term "eye candy" (hua er bu shi) to complain about the project at first, and then criticized the slow progress in the construction of a roundabout on the edge of the textile town instead. He complained that the roundabout area had been under construction for at least ten years and was still incomplete. It always caused traffic jams during the rush hour, and there was damage from water pooling after torrential rain. The residents in the textile town sarcastically called it the "century project" to show that it might take a century to finish.

Nevertheless, when they walked across the shop floor they used to work on, and when they looked around the surroundings that looked familiar but different, they were eager to talk more about their past sense of security:

> When you ask me whether the factory ruins should be protected, for me, it would be nice if so. I feel happy to be here because it takes me back to my youth. At that time, I did not feel the work was hard. I had good friends, and we helped each other all the time. Although we were not wealthy, everyone was happy, because our work was stable. We did not worry about sickness or children's education. The factory provided us with real social welfare. If I was sick, I just went to the factory clinic. I didn't even pay, our factory just deducted little fees from my salary. And more importantly, we did not worry about the children's education. Our factory offered education from kindergarten to high school, and we just need to register when the kids reached the appropriate age. And the factory also distributed an apartment to us. Hence, what I need to do is just focus on my work.

Such nostalgia made my interlocutors very emotional. When they stood on the former shop floor, the changes in the place's structure and functions provoked them to tell me more details about their everyday work and their ordinary life in the factory. But when I asked them whether they would like to go back to the past and still work in the factory now, most of them refused:

> When I recall the previous days working on the shop floor, I also remember suffering because of the tough work: the night shift, the noise of machines, repetitive boring tasks, an unhealthy body, and limited time with family. I admire my perseverance in my youth, but if you were to ask me to work in the factory now, I couldn't persevere with the work for more than three days. So, I don't want to come here often because it makes me

> remember the tough days I experienced. But as for the factory itself, I still think it should be preserved to remember our history and to educate the next generations.

The complex sense of pride and loss that the factory endowed them with is manifest in their transformation from the security of possessing an "iron rice bowl" (tie fan wan) job in their early years to a precarious life after being laid off. The contrast between the prosperity of the heyday when thousands of workers gathered together on the shop floors and the depression of the sparsely populated art district demonstrates the social and cultural transformation that occurred amid the historical progress.

The workers' sense of belonging to the factory changed. In the early years of their working in the factory, all their activities — work, talk, and social interactions — happened on the shop floor. They felt that they were "masters" of the state as members of the working class. But at this moment, as visitors from "outside" visited the art district, they lost their autonomy, power, and security from the factory. When they walked inside the main hall, except for the structure of the building and the three obsolete textile machines, they could not find anything else related to the textile shop floor. The reconstruction and recreation, which turned their shop floors into an art district, alienated them because their identity as former factory workers had little to do with "art." Therefore, the interplay between the former workers and the art district gave rise to some ruptures: a rupture created by the government and developers who have transformed to factory ruins into a cultural landmark without consulting or including the former workers in the process; a rupture in the workers' experience of their former everyday life inside the factory compared with their current work and life outside the textile town; and a rupture in the memory chain linking one generation to the next.

The Soviet-style Street

Soviet-style Buildings in the Factory Community

Everyone in the textile town is familiar with the Soviet-style apartment building. The Soviet-style buildings are villa-style residential buildings designed by Soviet experts when the first textile factory — the No.3 Factory — was built in 1953. The red roof and black brick exterior become the typical residential buildings in the textile town from the 1950s onward. Although the structure and appearance of the Soviet-style building were designed according to the blueprint provided by Soviet experts, the internal structure was not the same as the original plan. According to the original blueprint, one household occupied two to three rooms in one apartment. But when the building was used for the textile workers, it was divided into single dormitories and four workers lived in one dormitory. Or a single apartment was separated into different rooms: three families lived in one apartment and four or five people formed a household that occupied one room. The kitchen and shared bathroom were their public spaces. Despite each unit being overcrowded, the living conditions were much better than the traditional bungalows found in the textile town a half-century ago.

Nowadays, although many of the Soviet-style buildings had been demolished during the urban regeneration of the area, about fifty buildings remained within the factory community. In the No.3

Factory community, the Soviet-style buildings had two stories in line with the original blueprint designed by Soviet experts, while they had three stories in the other factory communities. About twenty households lived on each story of the Soviet-style building. New residential buildings have been constructed in the factory community since the 1990s, and so these Soviet-style buildings gradually fell into disrepair. The black bricks on their exterior started to crumble, and the red roof leaked when it rained. Some window frames were broken, and so it was hard to protect the residents from the wind and rain. Inside the building, the dim hallway was devoid of sunlight all year round. The wall paint peeled off, and damp air mixed with the smell of urine and a musty smell. The aging heating, water supply, and drainage systems made the conditions there very poor.

Figure 6.2: The original Soviet-style buildings. Photo taken by the author.

The residents who now lived in the Soviet-style buildings could be divided up into three categories: older textile workers, tenants from outside the textile town, and local institutions. The Soviet-style buildings have witnessed three generations of factory community members moving in and out. From the 1980s, the factory built new residential apartments for the workers. Then, most of the workers moved to other apartments, but because some workers had insufficient money to purchase new apartments, they continued to live in the Soviet-style buildings. Several decades passed, and as these workers became older, their children grew up and moved away from them. Besides the older workers, people from outside the textile town became the main tenants. They came from other places and worked in the textile town. Some were self-employed entrepreneurs operating small businesses. Although the

living conditions were poor, the rent was cheaper than in other buildings in the textile town. Thus, besides renting an apartment to live in, some rooms were used as warehouses.

In addition, some Soviet-style buildings were commandeered as sites for administrative institutions, such as the neighborhood committee (ju wei hui), the subdistrict office (jie dao ban), the factory clinic, or various training classes. The neighborhood committee (ju wei hui) in the No.3 Factory community, for example, is responsible for the administration of residents who live in this xiaoqu. It is a smaller administrative division open to its residents, and is therefore an agency that is part of the local government. Thus, to protect the "face" of the local government, despite the building's exterior appearance not changing too much, the inner conditions were much better than in the other, residential Soviet-style buildings. The wall was painted white, and slogans like "core socialist values" (hexin shehuizhuyi jiazhiguan) and "harmonious community" (hexie shehui) were placed on it. These showed the public the latest state policies. Besides the slogans, a display board exhibited some activities and events that the neighborhood committee organized.

Making a Soviet-style Street

In 2017, the local government planned to make a Soviet-style Street, which was based on reconstructing the Soviet-style buildings. Although several rows of Soviet-style buildings lay in the No.3 Factory community, only eight buildings along the street were chosen for this project. The local government's planning documents were ambitious:

> The Soviet-style street project will be located on both sides of the Fangsan road, with a planned investment of about 200 million yuan and a total construction and renovation area of about 29 000 square meters. There will be a commercial area integrating special heritage sites, a museum, and other leisure businesses. The main construction will be completed before June 30 and with a trial operation no later than September 30.

The residents felt excited. One reason was that the Soviet-style Street was located within the factory neighborhoods, and it would thus be very convenient for residents to visit. This was especially the case for the residents of the No.3 factory community, who could walk along the street as soon as they reached the community's gate. The plan to construct a Soviet-style Street became much hoped for. According to the plan, the Soviet-style Street would not only be a commercial and entertainment site but would also have several public sites like a museum and bookstores. The residents thought it could be an opportunity to promote the old industrial community's renovation.

According to the official plan, the function of the Soviet-style Street was to be a cultural and commercial site that would help to enrich the residents' cultural lives. In the beginning, the local government signed a contract with Xinhua bookstore — the largest and only country-wide bookstore chain in China. According to the contract, 4600 square meters of buildings were to be used as a bookstore. Besides the logo "xinhua shudian" in Mandarin and the word "bookstore" in capital letters at the top of the building, a cuboid was also erected in front of the building. Each face of the cuboid

had about twenty-five titles of world-famous books engraved on it, such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Les Misérables*. There were about one hundred book titles and authors on the four sides in total.

The residents were glad that the textile town would finally have its own bookstore. I always heard residents complaining that the textile town lacked a cultural atmosphere. Almost one hundred thousand residents lived in the textile town, but there was only one small bookstore located near the No.5 Factory. Although most workers did not read books regularly, they still believed that more bookstores were necessary, in particular for the young generations. Thus, everyone was looking forward to the bookstore in the new Soviet-style street.

Nevertheless, the reality differed from their expectations. More than three years passed, and the project was not completed and opened on schedule. The most disappointing thing was that the bookstore could not be opened because the Xinhua Bookstore Company had terminated its collaboration with the textile town's local government. No one knew the real reason, but there was constant gossiping about the useless local officials.

The residents passed by the construction site each day. They witnessed how the buildings' interior was completely demolished, leaving only the exterior frame. The project was finally completed in 2020. Upon completion, the new facade resembled the original, but one part of the building has been covered with a transparent glass shell and a glass corridor linked the buildings in the middle. The internal structure of these buildings had also been changed: it was no longer used for apartments and small residential rooms, but as a separate space for business tenants.

According to the local government's (2018) planning document, they made the Soviet-style Street in order to "build a specially themed commercial area integrating special business, leisure dining, a museum, and a display in the old building's style." In 2020, the local government announced what they called Project Investment Proposal. The introduction was similar to the 2018 plan; it even showcased more encouraging content related to the textile town's features:

> The project fully explores and demonstrates the unique historical and cultural features of the development of the new Chinese textile industry. It makes good use of the Soviet-style buildings that have left us with an indelible mark of a bygone era, to integrate and utilize the historical, cultural, and special architectural resources of the old industrial area in the textile town. It will develop a special cultural demonstration and a tourism theme; it will integrate itself with and develop alongside the art district, the Sanmian International Creative Culture Block, the Double Creation Base and the Railway Theme Park, to build a new landmark as part of a cultural and creative district in Xi'an city.

Nevertheless, when the target of the 2020s Project Investment Proposal was mentioned, its practical implementation had apparently changed:

> At present, the project has been completed, and the investment area is about 2190 square meters. It intends to recruit branded coffee shops, Chinese and Western restaurants, light

Figure 6.3: The reconstructed Soviet-style buildings. Photo taken by the author.

> meals, wine and light food, a family restaurant, a hairdressing salon, a fragrance and flower art shop, baking and simple food shops, a handicraft workshop and other related business, and the mode of cooperation is an overall operation or commercial lease.

The above inconsistency demonstrates a shift from a cultural preservation blueprint to a commercial and entertainment practice. The blueprint showed that the Soviet-style Street would play an important role in protecting cultural heritage and promoting economic development. This investment proposal, however, left only the commercial elements without any cultural content. Ironically, the real situation

was even worse than the expectations described in the 2020s investment proposal. In the proposal, the targeted merchants involved mainly middle-class entertainment and consumption, such as Western restaurants, light meals, wine bars, and salons. But in 2021, the merchants that finally moved into the Soviet street were only two small grocery shops, traditional local restaurants, a cell phone store, and a children's extra-curricular class, and there was still a large vacant area.

The residents were not satisfied with the Soviet-style buildings. First, from the building's appearance, they felt that the glass framework and the glass corridor were highly unusual because they were not like the original buildings, and so they lost the spirit of the Soviet-style building. Second, they felt very disappointed that there was no museum as originally planned. They thought their past experience working in the factory should be memorialized because they believed that the development of state-owned enterprises in China was a history of working-class people who had devoted most of their life to the socialist construction. They blamed the local government for ignoring their past experiences working at the factory and for only focusing on the economic benefits. Third, they felt that the textile town lacked a cultural atmosphere, and that the younger generation should live in a place with cultural elements. In the original plan, the local government had promised to build a very large bookstore, but the final version only included highly commercial elements. The original intention was for the Soviet-style street to promote the community's cultural and economic development; the current situation, however, evinced a compromise with their economic needs. Thus, the Soviet-style street lost the historical working-class spirit it had in the past. Instead, it consisted of Soviet-style architecture filled with a commercial atmosphere rather similar to other commercial districts.

Three Sculptures

In addition to the Soviet-style buildings, there were three iron sculptures placed along the Soviet street. The first one was of a Soviet expert. He was a textile expert named Sibiryakov who came from the Soviet Union in the 1950s. He offered his professional skills and helped to solve many problems during the construction of the first textile factory in 1953 in the textile town. The sculpture showed a tall, Western-looking man in a suit, holding a blueprint in his hand. Behind him, the sculpture's background depicted the factory building's saw-tooth roof and a crane towering behind it.

The other two sculptures were two female textile workers — Li Fengqin and Hou Xiumin — who were both model workers. They were from the first batch of textile workers in the textile town, and they had been working in the factory since the factory was established in 1953. The two sculptures depicted these two model workers at work. They were dressed in the typical female textile workers' workwear — aprons and white caps — and were working at a textile machine. Hou Xiumin had one hand on the loom while smiling slightly, and her head was gently bowed as if she were thinking. The top half of the loom depicted the heald frames in weaving process. The middle was a gray fabric that had been rolled up by the weaver's beam, and the bottom half depicted the loom's body. Li Fengqin, another textile worker, had her head slightly tilted. She was grinning, with one arm holding a yarn bobbin above her head. Behind her were various yarns. The action this figure showed was a little

Figure 6.4: Sculpture 1: A Soviet textile expert. Photo taken by the author.

Figure 6.5: Sculptures 2 and 3: Two model workers. Photo taken by the author.

exaggerated because it was not an everyday action completed as part of her job.

The three sculptures represent the industrial history in the textile town: the Soviet expert represents the history of Soviet support and help for the new country's industrial construction during the 1950s, while the other two sculptures represent exemplary workers, that is, ideal socialist workers during the industrialization process. The three sculptures were built to showcase significant figures in the textile town's glorious history. The Soviet expert shows that the textile town's construction was grounded in the top standards of that time. Also, the Soviet expert is a response to the Soviet-style street concept,

as it emphasizes the Soviet element. The other two sculptures of model workers show that the labor of workers in the textile town has been recognized and honored at the national level. They represent not only individual achievements, but also collective memory and a sense of pride in being textile workers in a socialist factory.

The residents, who were former workers living in the factory community, walked by the sculptures every day. Their attitudes to the sculpture were different from official expectations. First, they could not relate emotionally to the Soviet expert. They wondered why they had to commemorate this man rather than certain Chinese experts and workers. They admitted the help and support received from Soviet experts, but this figure was far removed from their work and life, both spatially and temporally. On the contrary, they believed that other Chinese experts and the first generation of workers were real heroes and should be remembered and commemorated.

The sculptures of the other two model workers provoked complex feelings in them too. On the one hand, the sculptures struck a chord with the textile town's oldest residents, who were among the first generation of textile workers. When they passed by the sculpture, a sense of pride made them eager to share stories with me about what they had learned from the model workers, and how they were proud of working with these national-level model workers. On the other hand, for the second generation, who had experienced both the glorious past and the decline and closure of the factory, the model workers' sculptures gave them a sense of loss. When they finished reading the introductions to the sculptures, they made comments like, "Don't you think it's useless? Even if the past was good, look at the present!" Indeed, despite all these sculptures representing the glorious history of the textile town, no sculpture could represent other textile workers' real experiences — especially their difficult life after being laid off.

"Bureaucratic Nostalgia" and "Social Nostalgia"

The Soviet-style street shows the contradictory perspectives present among the residents and the local government officials. The local government's approach to reviving the textile town involves using heritage discourse to attract investments and improve the local economic development. In their original blueprint, they claimed the industrial heritage's significance and made designs that integrated the industrial heritage with other cultural elements. They reconstructed the Soviet-style buildings, and despite the inner structure changing, the buildings' exterior remained the same as before. In the local officials' logic, heritage is a constructed entity. They believed that if they did not reconstruct the Soviet-style buildings, these buildings would inevitably be ignored, abandoned, and would ultimately disappear from people's memory. A similar logic was at play with the sculptures. They thought the Soviet experts and two model workers were the most important representative examples of the textile town's glorious history, and so these examples would help to evoke working-class people's collective memory and a sense of belonging.

The government's logic is similar to Herzfeld's concept of "bureaucratic nostalgia." Herzfeld (2021) illustrated how the official state seeks to erase all traces of the old lifestyle, replacing them with

a sanitized version that those whose lifestyle is affected would not even recognize as their own. Based on findings from one of his main field sites — Pom Mahakan in Bangkok — Herzfeld criticized the political logic of eviction during urbanization, and gave a further explanation:

> Bureaucratic nostalgia is a forced eviction from the present, which evacuates the community from historical time just as the authorities have banished it from space ... The bureaucrats' nostalgia is a weapon of structural violence; they use the mockery of those monumentalizing little notices about vanished streets to exorcise any trace of the lived reality and to deny it any hope of return. (2021: 154)

The construction of the Soviet-style Street showed how bureaucratic nostalgia was performed in the textile town. The Soviet-style buildings had been established for more than half a century, and they had witnessed the rise and fall of the textile town. But when the new apartment buildings had been built, the Soviet-style buildings were demolished one by one, and they finally faded out of historical consciousness. Although several buildings still existed, the residents lived in very poor conditions. Some residents were older working-class people who were among the first factory generation, while some were members of the second generation who had experienced being laid off. For many reasons, they did not have the opportunity to move to other apartments with better living conditions. These people had also been abandoned along with the Soviet buildings. In recent years, the state had begun to focus on protecting industrial heritage, and then local governments responded to these calls. In the textile town, to make a Soviet-style street, the local officials evicted the residents who had originally lived in the Soviet buildings, and they then changed the inner structure and reconstructed the buildings as part of plans for the street's economic development. The local government thought the street might attract visitors from outside the textile town who wished to see how unique the Soviet-style buildings are. But in fact, there were very few visitors to the textile town, let alone to this Soviet-style Street.

Besides the chosen buildings, there were forty other Soviet-style buildings in the factory community. For instance, there was another row of Soviet-style buildings behind the Soviet-style Street, and many textile workers still lived there. The Soviet-style Street and the original Soviet-style building were only twenty meters apart, but the government made a boundary with an iron fence separating them. The residents living in the community could not enter the Soviet-style street from the inside; only after they exited through the community's gate could they walk to the Soviet Street. The residents complained and said, "Same buildings, different treatment." Indeed, the area around the Soviet-style Street was tidy. It was decorated with flowerbeds, and the ground was covered with black stones. Another row of Soviet-style buildings next to the Soviet-style Street, however, was dilapidated. The road was dirty, and there were always puddles there when it rained.

The iron fence became a boundary that cut the connection between the working-class people and the industrial heritage, and also separated out two kinds of nostalgia: bureaucratic nostalgia and social nostalgia. Bureaucratic nostalgia is neither an innocent nor a romantic sentiment. Rather, the official government asks people to remember the beautiful aspects and forget the painful past, thereby building a positive image that draws people into a fixed, singular, and selective version of history. In reality,

bureaucratic nostalgia is a strategic tool used by the state to disguise its destructive actions. Faced with the economic decline of the textile town, local officials proposed plans to revive it by evoking memories of its socialist heyday. They highlighted elements such as the Soviet-style buildings, the contributions of Soviet experts, and the model workers, all of which symbolized the town's critical role in socialist construction. Yet, this nostalgic narrative is a veneer for their actual actions: evicting long-term residents from the Soviet-style buildings, concealing the precarious realities faced by laid-off workers, and transforming the community into commercialized spaces.

But for the working-class residents, the construction of the Soviet-style street evoked what I refer to as "social nostalgia." Social nostalgia is rooted in social memory (Connerton 1989). For the residents, social memory represents their collective past and the enduring memory of living within Soviet-style buildings. When the excavators hit the brick walls, leaving a pile of bricks and tiles and broken doors and windows on the ground, it evoke their social nostalgia of their everyday life in the Soviet-style buildings. These old Soviet-style buildings not only witnessed the rise and fall of the textile factory but also gathered the hearts and souls of several generations of textile workers and their pursuit of life. The memories that the working-class residents recalled were not of the building facades or of the model workers in the factory. Instead, what they felt nostalgia was their everyday life in those buildings, how family members lived together, how they got along with their neighbors and shared the public space. For example, a female textile worker shared her memories:

> In the past, living here was quite lively. At first, all the people who lived here were single workers, so the building was used as dormitories for single people. When everyone got married, it was used for small apartments for couples. And then when they had children, the family atmosphere became stronger. We shared the public space, water room, and toilet. We all cooked in the corridor and shared delicious food all the time.

In addition to this positive nostalgia, however, they also recalled dealing with poor conditions that evoked a sense of bitter nostalgia. One older textile worker described the situation as follows:

> Four family members lived in an apartment: my parents, my sister, and I lived together in one room. The biggest inconvenience of living in an old Soviet-style building was that several families shared the toilet, and because of the irregular water supply and water interruptions, the toilet often either flooded or overflowed with feces. Besides, as there was no heating pipe in winter, we had to find our own way to heat our home, either by making a stove or buying an electric heater. Our using a stove for fear of gas poisoning, and using an electric heater, often caused the plug to trip because of the aging wiring, and so everything needed to be done extra carefully.

The residents who still lived in the Soviet-style buildings strongly felt that the Soviet-style Street was a "face project," like other projects in the textile town. They complained that if the local officials wanted to strengthen solidarity, then they should pay attention to the living conditions and renovate the old buildings. When I went upstairs to visit an interlocutor's mother who had lived in the building for

almost half a century, I noticed that the living conditions were very poor: there were broken windows, rotten wooden doors, dilapidated staircases, rusty faucets above the public sinks, and peeling, grimy walls. These buildings, which looked like they had been forgotten for a long time, were now extremely dilapidated.

Sad news about an old Soviet-style building aroused people's wider concern. In May 2020, a fire broke out in a building in the Yiyin Factory community. The building on fire had been built in the 1950s. It was three stories high with a wooden roof. After the fire started in a room on the third floor, it spread rapidly, with over 700 square meters on fire, engulfing more than thirty households. Unfortunately, two older people were unable to escape and eventually died. This caused great sadness for the residents who lived, or had lived, in the Soviet-style building. It evoked feelings of mourning, resentment, anger, and also a longing for the past — for a time when everyone had felt a sense of security and happiness when living in the Soviet-style buildings.

Therefore, social nostalgia is a dynamic process that changes along with social transformations. It is an emotional need based on social memory. Social nostalgia partly originates from the everyday life of the past, while another part is a reproduction of memories based on the ever-changing life. This nostalgia is not simply collective nostalgia, nor is it a complete rejection of bureaucratic nostalgia. It partly share the positive aspects of bureaucratic nostalgia, but more importantly, it is a reflective collective emotion that reflects on the changes between past collective life and the experiences of the present.

Whose Heritage and Whose Nostalgia?

In this chapter, I have introduced two industrial heritage projects conducted in the textile town to reveal why the industrial heritage does not speak to working-class residents effectively. The first project was an art district launched by artists but then taken over by the local government and investors. For artists, the industrial space offered them a space in which they could pursue cultural reproduction. They felt empathy toward the factory ruins, and they were eager to breathe new life into the factory site. The artists connected the special value of the industrial ruins with their artistic creativity. They showed how the spirit of the industrial past could become present again in their works of art. They evoked the public's longing for the industrial past by reconstructing the inner space of the shop floor, and they drew connections between their works of art and the industrial past, and advocated their mission to protect the industrial heritage. Nevertheless, cruel reality impinged on the artist's utopian space. Rent became the trickiest problem, and then most of the artists were evicted and other cultural businesses settled in. In the end, the "art district" existed in name only, and its real value eroded dramatically.

The second project was a Soviet-style street in the textile town, which was based on the reconstruction of the seventy-year-old Soviet buildings. The project retained the buildings' appearance but changed the interior and transformed the original function of accommodation to a cultural street focused on entertainment and consumption. Meanwhile, three sculptures — a Soviet expert and two female model workers — were placed near the Soviet-style buildings and became another essential

element of the Soviet-style street.

Both cases elaborate how the heritage discourse was used by different actors during the reconstruction and regeneration of the industrial ruins. For the local government, protecting and developing "industrial heritage" in the textile town was their main urban regeneration policy. On the surface, the art district and Soviet-style street projects were intended to protect the industrial ruins and show the public the importance of these industrial sites and their history. In reality, however, economic interests and development were a crucial consideration, as the textile town had fallen behind in urban development compared with other new and competitive districts. Thus, the government mainly focused on using the physical place and the "art" or "Soviet" labels to attract investment, while failing to consider the essential question: what is industrial heritage? The local government excluded the artists who founded the artist district, and they ignored the working-class people who were once masters of the socialist factory. Ultimately, heritage had become a source of legitimacy for the local government when pursuing urbanization projects.

The artists founded the art district. They believed they were the masters of this cultural site. But they were later abandoned and evicted. Their use of "heritage discourse" accompanied the art district's development. When the art district was initially established, the lower rent, the unique historical site, and the tranquil environment offered them an art utopia that they constructed themselves. The artists used "industrial heritage" to give meaning to these industrial ruins. In turn, this became a form of cultural capital for their art creation, thus attracting visitors to this cultural landmark. When they lost out to gentrification, they also used a heritage discourse to defend their rights. They claimed that they were protecting industrial heritage through artistic ways, and that they therefore had a right to stay. Thus, "heritage" became a weapon for artists to defend themselves against external, more powerful subjects.

For workers, the meaning of industrial heritage became more complex when they used heritage discourse. In the case of the art district, when they visited the place in which they worked, they felt both alienation and familiarity. In terms of a sense of alienation, they felt a distance between their own experience and their understanding of art. The reconstruction that changed the structure and interior design of the previous shop floor alienated them because their identity as former factory workers was far from "art." Nevertheless, this physical place was familiar to them. When they stood inside the art district, their memories of working routines and of the people with whom they worked emerged immediately. In that moment, they were no longer strangers to the art district; rather, they were the masters of this place long before the artists settled down there.

The ignoring of workers' voices and the neglect of the working-class people's everyday life connected to the industrial heritage is the deep reason why workers do not recognize the art district and Soviet-style street as industrial heritage that bears their memory, experience, and nostalgia. When the government and developers reconstructed the art district and made a Soviet-style street, the meaning of the industrial heritage changed. The workers felt disappointed in the art district because it lacked tangible objects related to the industrial remnants: except for the three old machines and the remaining shop floor interior, nothing else can be seen as "heritage." They felt disappointed in the Soviet-style

Street too; after all, except for the building's similar appearance, the essential Soviet-style elements were no longer present. And the local government even built a boundary that cut the connection between the real Soviet buildings and the Soviet-style Street.

In addition, both cases demonstrate different layers of nostalgia. The artists in the art district had a romantic nostalgia, and their longing for the past came from a specific imagining of the socialist legacy. This offered them meaning in their mission to preserve the industrial heritage and reconstruct the factory plant as a utopian space. For the workers who visit the art district, however, there is no simple nostalgia; they do not want to go back to the past and experience it romantically like middle-class "urban explorers" (High and Lewis 2007); rather, it is a place that brings forth in them a sense of both pride and loss. They remember the feeling of security and the dignity in being a textile worker, but the sense of loss makes them reluctant to return to the past because of the associated mental and physical trauma. This is similar to the social nostalgia when workers saw how the Soviet-style Street had been made. The social nostalgia relates to something really painful for people, but what the official state does is generally conceal the painful side; it only depicts the beautiful surfaces and evokes a nostalgic imagination. Thus, the construction of the Soviet-style street reveals how bureaucratic nostalgia has covered up the poor condition of other old Soviet-style buildings and the precarious situation of the workers who still live in the Soviet-style buildings.

Conclusion

Despite the reuse and reconstruction of industrial heritage sites becoming a form of urban renewal, the exclusion of working-class people in this process resulted in conflict between the authorities and residents. The cases of the artist district and the Soviet-style Street reveal how heritage politics lies behind "urban renewal." Indeed, as Smith (1996) analyzed, the term "urban renewal" is often a euphemism for the brutality of gentrification. The irony is that although workers admitted the inclusion of the art district and the Soviet-style Street as industrial heritage in official and public discourses, both sites built boundaries that alienated and ignored the workers who were the main actors in creating industrial history.

Industrial heritage and nostalgia extend beyond the confines of the working class. Through interaction with other groups and the collective experience of heritage, the notion of industrial heritage has been broadened. In this chapter, I have examined two examples of industrial heritage reproduction that cannot be deemed failures yet are not entirely successful, generating numerous contradictions. Amidst these conflicts, debates over whose heritage and nostalgia, coupled with governmental initiatives for urban renewal in aging industrial areas, have become increasingly intricate. Moreover, these cases illuminate distinct layers of nostalgia — bureaucratic nostalgia and social nostalgia — providing profound insights into the social and cultural dynamics underpinning heritage. In the forthcoming chapter, I will delve deeper into how collective and individual memory within such nostalgia serves as an effective means of understanding the significance of industrial heritage for the working class.

Chapter 7

Sharing Nostalgia: A Retrospective Exhibition

In this chapter, I will argue that understanding collective and individual memory within nostalgia is an effective way of learning what industrial heritage means for working-class people. In the ethnographic part, I will show how the government and working-class people share a sense of nostalgia, but even though their presentation of how they remember the past is similar, especially in relation to the glorious heydays, the meaning of their nostalgia is not the same. Indeed, significant variation even exists within the working-class community. If we no longer see that it is the community that shares one single memory, then what is the intellectual significance of a variety of different memories and different kinds of nostalgia? Thus, how working-class people used nostalgia to interpret, remember, and commemorate industrial heritage through interacting with and negotiating the present is my main concern. It is in this framework that I will analyze the relations between heritage and nostalgia.

Here, I raise three questions in order to analyze the relationship between memory, nostalgia and heritage. First, what do people remember and how do they represent their lived experience when they recall the past that happened here? Second, how do people relate to nostalgia during a period marked by social and cultural transformation? Third, how do people understand the past through heritage as a form of cultural memory that represents and reconstructs the past within a larger society? In this chapter, I will describe a retrospective exhibition in order to explain the complexity of nostalgia and industrial heritage.

In the textile town, many workers know the term "cultural heritage" because of the frequent official publicity stating that many of China's heritage sites are on the list of world heritage sites. Especially in Xi'an, a very famous historical city in China, many well-known heritage sites have become a symbol of the glorious past because the local authorities use the past to restore an imagined ancient imperial city (Zhu 2018). "Industrial heritage," however, is an unfamiliar and abstract term for them. In fact, during the fieldwork, workers in the textile town rarely used the terms "heritage" or "industrial heritage" and other related Chinese words of their own accord. Instead, they communicated the details of their working life and lived experience, and they told background stories about the factory ruins by discussing people, events, and places in the previous factory community. This demonstrated what parts of the past they had remembered and memorized in particular. Therefore, to understand industrial

heritage, we have to delve deeper into who has the power to define this concept, and how local people's experience has become embodied in heritage practices. In this chapter, I will show that working-class people have capacity to express their thoughts and feelings on the past and interpret the present. Their previous experience of working and living in the factory community was worth remembering and should be passed on from generation to generation.

A Retrospective Exhibition in the Textile Town

Reproducing Collective Memory

In April 2021, the textile town's subdistrict office (jie dao ban shi chu) planned to hold an exhibition. It launched a call for the community and working-class residents to collect documents, photos, and other objects about the history of the textile town since the founding of China. The year 2021 was the one-hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China. All levels of government and public institutions conducted various activities to celebrate this unique and meaningful year. As part of this, the textile town's local government planned to make an exhibition of industrial history to celebrate the centenary of the Communist Party's founding.

As part of the plans to exhibit a wide variety of objects, the local government published a leaflet, promoted the event online, and called on the factory community to participate. The subdistrict office left their contact details and promised to reward those who could provide something for the collection with commemorative certificates or souvenirs. The objects the organizers asked for included two categories. The first category was written materials, split into five types:

1. Archival materials: historical materials of the Communist Party in the textile town area, documents, letters, diaries, flyers, and other important materials that related to the textile town.
2. Tickets: documents and tickets with distinctive characteristics of the times and historical traces of the textile town.
3. Honors: all kinds of collective and individual honors, medals, certificates, medals, prizes, and souvenirs with distinctive characteristics of the times and historical traces of the textile town.
4. Books and magazines: newspapers, publications, books about important events and historical figures related to the textile town, factory chronicles of the work units, company histories, and internal publications.
5. Images and pictures: photos, documentaries, recordings, videos, pictures, posters, etc., about the production, construction, education, research, sales, and workers' lives and cultural and sports activities of the textile town.

The second category consisted of material objects, split into four types:

1. Production facilities and equipment: small-scale production equipment or production tools marked with historical traces of the textile town.

2. Main products: industrial products and civilian consumer goods produced by the textile town's enterprises with distinctive features of the times and marked with historical traces of the textile town.
3. Production supplies: labels, tags, trademarks, badges, seals, protective work clothing or accessories and work uniforms with features typical of the times.
4. Daily necessities: Everyday objects needed as part of family life with features typical of the times.

The leaflet's title was *The Textile Town at That Time* (na shi fang zhi cheng), written in red. Its subtitle was *Wrap and Weft Shuttle, the Fiery Years* (jing wei chuan suo, huo hong nian dai). The local government emphasized historical values as certain words were always mentioned, such as "historical traces," "marks of the era" and "features of the times." Such terms highlighted the history of the socialist experiment conducted in industrial communities. The officials believed that the collections presented the glorious past and brought the community a sense of pride that once made an enormous contribution to China's industrial development.

The local official published another four posters to publicize the exhibition. All the posters used historical photos as background, and the title "The Textile Town at That Time" was displayed vertically in the middle. The first poster showed many female textile workers leaving work and walking out of the No.5 factory gate. Most workers wore dresses as they changed clothes after work. Some dresses were bright yellow or green, and the style looked fashionable. The second poster's background image was very simple: a white apron. It was not just a plain apron but an everyday object that textile workers were familiar with. The third and fourth posters both showed scenes on shop floors. The third poster showed a worker sitting in front of the winding machinery and spooling, while the fourth poster presented many warp beams neatly arranged on the floor. These four photos were taken in the 1980s, and they revealed the textile factory's busy, lively, thriving, and prosperous heyday. Although the textile town started to go downhill after the 1990s, the exhibitions' main concern was to show the glorious past because this heyday echoed the achievements of the Communist Party of China's leadership.

Despite the local government conducting this activity, the working-class residents were pleased to contribute to the exhibition. Many residents, especially older ones, provided the organizer with precious photos, documents, souvenirs, and other objects. In total, the organizer collected more than one thousand objects from the public. One retired worker told me why she was willing to provide her certificates of merit and other materials to the exhibition:

> These things represent the past, our past, the period of our youth. The honors proved that I worked hard to contribute to the country and that I did not fail to live up to the country's expectations. But now, no one knows it, and no one cares about it. I want to ask the next generations to see our past, and to know what we have done for the country.

The exhibition was displayed in the textile town's artist district. The building's interior, which

occupied almost 1500 square meters, was once a shop floor of the Northwest First Printing & Dyeing Factory. More than seven hundred objects were exhibited, and they displayed the social and cultural history of the textile town over the last seventy years.

Before visitors entered the exhibition hall, they would see a large board in the lobby, with a sentence in the middle of it that read, “The textile town is the model of China’s first round of industrial construction.” The board had a black-and-white photo in the background, which depicted a typical workday scene on the weaving shop floor: many female workers dressed in white caps and white aprons sat beside the machines and weaved. A sign celebrating the Party’s centenary was in the board’s top left-hand corner.

The reception was opposite the large board. Three desks were arranged in a row as the registration area. Two young staff members from the local government, who wore white shirts and black pants, were in charge of the reception area. A white-haired woman in her late sixties was writing her name in the registration notebook.

Beside the reception was a large screen playing a video promoting this exhibition. The main part of the video was a series of interviews with older workers who talked about their experience of being textile workers. Each visitor could watch the interviews on the large electronic screen and hear various voices from many older textile workers, like:

> My name is Liu Donglan. I was recruited to the No.3 factory when I was seventeen and attended the opening ceremony of the first factory in 1953 ...

Several visitors sat in front of the screen and watched the video attentively. They felt very touched. An older visitor said excitedly, “Only courageous, selfless, ordinary textile workers like these are the real backbone of China and our idols.”

When entering the exhibition hall, a preface to the exhibition displayed the following text:

> These photos, medals, documents, and old objects represent the scenes of construction, production, and life of the textile city over the past seventy years, witnessing the pace of the times. In the 1950s beneath the Bailu Plain near the Chan River, tens of thousands of young men and women actively responded to the national call, and they came here together from all over the country. They built new factories every year between 1953 and 1958 and finally completed the construction of the Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Textile Factory and the Northwest First Printing & Dyeing Factory, and so this area became known as the textile town. From then on, several generations in the textile town have worked hard, dedicated themselves, and strived to achieve first-class quality, and they have made remarkable contributions to improving people’s lives, revitalizing and developing the textile industry, and bringing about socialist modernization. The history of the textile town’s endeavors is an important microcosm of the development of industrialization in new China and is a vivid example of learning about and teaching Party history. On the centenary of the Party’s founding, we collect and organize representative documents and

objects to exhibit the historical scenes and developmental achievements of the textile town to celebrate the centenary of the Communist Party of China.

The photos had been enlarged and printed on a long photo board linked up and placed around the exhibition hall to create a vast and long roll of film. These photos were arranged in chronological order and divided into four periods: Beginnings, Development, Heydays, and Transformation. When visitors walked around the hall, they learned about the textile town's historical development in different periods from 1953 until the present day. Several showcases were placed beneath the photo board. In the center of the exhibition, there were several other rows of showcases that displayed various documents including old original photos, photos examining each factory's design, photos of the opening ceremony, of the inspection by leaders from the political center and foreign dignitaries in different periods, of work scenes in each workshop, of the work groups' excitement over product awards, over work and study, over the kindergartens, over primary and secondary schools in the factory community, and group photos, for instance, of workers on the same shop floor or team.

Figure 7.1: The view of the exhibition. Photo taken by Chi Cheng.

The exhibition highlighted the honor and reputation that the textile town obtained. Several awards, medals, and prizes were exhibited in the showcases, which included medals from the national and ministerial levels to provincial and factory levels. The prizes were more varied and included a practical file package, an enamel basin and porcelain cup printed with the name of the factory, and a notebook

printed with the word "award" in red. In addition, on the wall at the end of the hall several boards displayed certificates detailing the merits that the model workers as individuals and the textile factory as a unit had obtained. The model workers were the brightest shining stars in the textile town, and some of them appeared in the video interviews by the entrance.

In addition, various cards and tickets also attracted visitors' attention. There were work cards, bathing cards, swimming cards, voter cards, reading cards, movie tickets, food stamps, oil stamps, cloth stamps, deposit books, various scripts and sticky notes, etc. Many of the original official documents were very precious, such as documents with the square red seal of the Northwest Textile Administration of the Central People's Government (a central administration established in 1954), and other provincial and municipal documents, as well as factory, team, and Party documents.

Several original newspapers were on display. They presented the achievements and developments that were reported in a timely manner to the public to inspire the textile workers to work harder. These newspapers included the *People's Daily*, *Wen Wei Po*, *Liberation Daily*, *Yangtze River Daily*, *Workers' Daily*, *Shaanxi Daily*, and so on. Some reports were also on display, including planning reports, work arrangement reports, production task completion reports, and quality reports. Visitors also saw the wage-setting reports of the textile workers, which covered employees ranging from the factory manager and shop floor director to each type of worker. There were also other official documents, including

Figure 7.2: Visitors looking at the "red boat" that was built out of shuttles previously used for weaving. Photo taken by Chi Cheng.

provincial and municipal documents, factory documents, team documents and Party documents.

Furthermore, some works of literature related to textile workers were also exhibited in the hall. For example, a comic strip named "Honglan and Qinglan," was published by the Chang'an People's Publishing House in 1958. This was a story about two sisters who became textile workers and strived for advancement and learned from each other. *The Looms are Singing* was a fiction written by a worker and writer named Yang Dafa from the No.4 Factory, who brought visitors to the past era. The newspapers published by each factory were important food for thought for the workers in those days. One visitor said she still remembered how happy she was when her mother finished work for the day and brought her latest factory newspaper home.

In addition, some material objects attracted visitors' interest. For example, several visitors stood around a "red boat" that was built out of shuttles previously used for weaving. Several visitors borrowed the white hat and apron from the guides who dressed up as a former textile worker. These visitors would then hold a weaving shuttle while others took photos of them.

On the first day of the exhibition, the textile town's subdistrict office awarded "Fifty Years of Glory in the Party" medals to sixteen representatives of old Party members. In a small hall next to the exhibition, the old textile workers sat on chairs, and the local officials awarded the medals to them. In the ceremony speech, an official stated that the purpose of giving these awards was to convey the care and concern of the Party organization for the workers and to enhance the sense of honor, belonging, and mission attached to being Party members. After the ceremony, a journalist interviewed the subdistrict party committee's secretary, and he said, "This is a vivid Party history education class. In looking back at the history, we can derive strength and pay tribute to our predecessors. We can learn the history of the Party, give thanks to the Party, and follow the Party. We have to continue to carry out concrete practical activities and do practical things for the public."

Interaction Between Individual Memory and Collective Memory

The interaction between individuals' perspectives and the official intentions in the exhibition is an effective way of observing the relations between individual memory and collective memory. Did the working-class residents experience the same feelings that the exhibition described and sought to convey?

At the exhibition, several young tour guides from the local government dressed as female workers and explained the stories behind the images, documents, and objects to the visitors. Many visitors were extremely well-acquainted with the photos and the objects because they had many similar materials in their homes. Thus, when the young guide told the story of the picture, some visitors were keen to correct her or add some details. When this happened, the young guide listened to the visitors and gave an embarrassed smile. But after talking with more visitors several times, the guide became used to this and was willing to hear different versions. The young guide's job training involved remembering the texts for each exhibit in advance, and then reciting them to the public. For the visitors, however, these were not other people's stories; they were their own stories. They were able to reinterpret their

past from their individual memories and to build on working-class history, express their sense of community, share their personal experience, and even educate the next generations. For example, two female visitors pointed at one photo together and told others about its background. This photo showed two young female workers cooperating in front of a machine. In the photo, a worker with her back to the camera spoke to another worker facing the camera, and they smiled while they both looked at a spool in one worker's hand. It was a typical work scene in which the textile workers learned how to remove the spool and rewind the remaining yarn to reduce waste. The most interesting thing was that those two visitors were the very same figures who featured in the photo. When they saw this photo taken forty years ago, they expressed their feelings by saying, "We believe the exhibition is a great way to remember the past. We can use these old objects to teach the younger generation how the older generation struggled under the circumstances to attain the good life we have today."

Few visitors were alone; most had someone accompanying them. Some older workers visited the exhibition with their children or grandchildren. These older workers were very excited to tell the next generations about the background to the exhibits. A female visitor in her eighties talked with her daughter about one figure in a photo. Both mother and daughter were textile workers and had lived in the factory community all their life. It was exciting for them to find people they knew who featured in the photos. When they saw photos of the model workers, they discussed how important these model workers were:

> In the past, the labor role models were based on real model workers, frontline workers, seriously. We would be very proud if our factory had a model worker at the provincial level. Nowadays, we don't trust the model workers, because the people who receive the model worker accolade are assessed by people who were either rich or powerful.

Every visitor who was once a worker was able to find personal connections to this exhibition. In that moment, they were not so much visitors but rather hosts who were familiar with every object and who even told other guests the background stories. Their narratives about the past were not like the information introduced by the guides sent by the local government. Even though these guides had been trained professionally, they could never become the same people as those who had experienced the industrial past directly, people who experienced all the changes and all the vivid and real interactions with other workers.

On the conclusion board, a long paragraph attracted attention:

> The 1500 square meter exhibition hall is limited to exhibiting more documents and objects, but the historical contents and connotations of the times are indeed rich and profound. Maybe you are an old resident in the textile town. Does this moment take you back to the rumble of machines? Maybe you are a new resident of the textile town. Do you understand the hardships and happiness of the predecessors right now? Maybe you are a guest here. Can you feel the passion of textile workers in the previous era right now?

This text was the first paragraph that summarized the exhibition while emphasizing the visitors' emotions and their connection with the past. The narrative aimed to awaken a nostalgic attachment to the textile town. In terms of working-class residents, this exhibition could awaken their individual memory of the past and bring them back to the shop floor full of the "rumble of machines." In terms of new residents, despite not working as textile workers in the factory, the exhibition enhanced their understanding of the history and people of the textile town because the place where they were now living was a place where the older generations had worked hard. Visitors from outside the area could also learn about the contribution that the textile workers and the factories in the textile town had made, and they could be inspired by the textile workers' spirit.

Emotional Complexity: The Combination of Pride and Loss

The local government intended to put on a positive, educational, and hopeful exhibition that created an atmosphere full of nostalgic connections with the past. Their purpose was to offer working-class residents a sense of belonging and a sense of pride. When the workers saw these pictures, their reminiscences brought them back to the shop floor where their most important friendship was established, to the communal apartment where everyone shared food and knew each other very well, to the secure sense of being a textile worker in a socialist country, and to a society in which workers could earn respect and, more importantly, dignity.

Beside the corner of the exhibition hall, a place named "Post-viewing Message," had been set up. Here, visitors were asked to respond with their feelings about the exhibition. It used voice input in a novel way to record visitors' messages. A staff member helped visitors to leave their messages on the machine. An older, retired worker left an excited message:

> This exhibition is excellent! When I see all the photos and objects in this hall, I feel like I am still a young man full of energy, and I feel like I have come back to the regular production workshop.

This reflected local people's nostalgia, which built an emotional bridge that connected the present with the past. Compared to the positive sense of nostalgia shown in the official narratives, however, many working-class visitors were deeply emotional, and mixed a sense of pride with a sense of loss. What emotional complexity underpins how they understood the meanings of nostalgia? They emphasized that they did not experience a simple nostalgia; instead, they carried on describing the past they remembered:

> This does not mean that I want to go back to the glorious days, the heydays. Yes, I agree that I feel proud of the glorious past. Everyone would envy you in the 1980s heydays when you said you came from the textile town. You may know that our town was once called "little Shanghai," and then "little Hong Kong." We earned more than others, and we wore more beautiful clothes than others. People admired us, the textile factory workers.

I heard many stories that painted a picture of these heydays. When they mentioned the details of their experience, I could sense how proud they were. Did the pride come from the economic conditions, as they said, given their position producing family-owned products in a period of material shortages? In fact, in the 1970s and 1980s, periods marked by a planned economy, most urban residents worked in state-owned factories. Living standards did not vary much. Even though the textile factory's output rate was better than that of other factories, and the workers in the textile town earned larger average salaries than workers at other factories, the products they could buy were limited. Thus, the truth is that the sense of pride is not based on economic priority but is instead rooted in a sense of security and self-esteem or dignity, which they described in more detail when they saw pictures showing schools and clinics in the factory community:

> We did not worry about sickness or children's education. The factory provided us with real social welfare. If I was sick, I just went to the factory clinic, I didn't even pay. Our factory just deducted a little from my salary. And more importantly, we did not worry about the children's education. Our factory provides education from kindergarten to high school, and you just need to register when the kids reach the appropriate age. We felt relaxed about those things because the factory helped us to take care of them. What I needed to do was just focus on my work.

While many workers recalled their past experiences and proud emotions, certain other workers, however, sighed and shook their heads. One worker described his sense of loss:

> (Sigh.) Don't believe how glorious the past was. The work on the shop floor was tough. Especially the night shift, so tiring. We devoted our whole life to the factory, but what did we get? Nothing, except for an unhealthy body.

Their sense of loss became written into their bodies. Mauss (1979) used the term "technique of the body" to illustrate how people in different societies carry out automatic bodily actions. Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1977) also discusses how the habitus acquires specific attributes within the human body and subsequently influences it through other institutions such as education and employment. Moreover, Brownell's ethnography of Chinese athletes (1995) analyzed how the concept of "body culture" was applied to sports in Chinese society. She argued that Chinese athletes' bodies are not their own; instead, the body is permeable and highly malleable, and it could be bent to the demands of the family or state. To some extent, the actions of frontline workers when operating machines resembled the repetitive and practical actions typical of Chinese athletes' practices. Their everyday routines on the shop floors were not only a job; rather, these workers bore a heavy responsibility for building socialism. Thus, the "body culture" applied to the shop floor formed a kind of connection that linked up everyday practices with the working class's sense of honor and mission. Even though each worker's body suffered during the labor process, they had to tolerate these personal challenges. But after many years, their physical condition suffered, and as they aged, their bodies experienced chronic, incurable pain and became unhealthy. For example, nearly every worker I talked with mentioned that speaking

loudly was a specific characteristic of workers in the textile factory, even when they were away from the shop floor and in a relatively quiet atmosphere. One former worker pointed at a photo depicting workers on the weaving shop floor, and he said:

> The noise of machines, especially the intensity of the din on this weaving shop floor, was unbearable. Your voice can't be heard if you do not speak loudly. Every day when we left the factory, our ears were still ringing.

Another worker mentioned that they inhaled cotton-batting easily; it floated in the air and caused lung diseases. Also, workers stood for more than eight hours per day and had to bend over frequently when operating the machine, which put them at risk of discomfort and possible injury as they aged.

Feelings of loss always tended to focus on the decline of the textile industry and the workers' precarious situation. As a female worker from the No.4 Factory said,

> You can now see how backward the textile town is compared with other areas in Xi'an. Our factory closed down in 2008, and thousands of textile workers were laid off. Several years before the bankruptcy, our salaries were very low, and they did not rise after the year 2000. We could afford the crazy rising prices. And our social status became very low — people from other districts looked down upon us, the people from the textile town.

Some visitors constantly asked why their lives had changed so much. A piece of pink silk with many different signatures was placed in the showcase, and it came from the opening ceremony for building the No.5 Factory in 1955. When the man looked at this piece of silk, he whispered those signatures one by one, and finally sighed helplessly, said, "You see, this is a town built from the First Five-year Plan period, how come it is like this?"

The most common visitor request was that they hoped this exhibition was a permanent exhibition. As one visitor said, the local government should build a special industrial museum to exhibit photos and more material objects like textile machines in the exhibition permanently. Or, as another visitor put it, they could "use more attractive media, such as voices, light, and videos, to create a more vivid space and build a permanent textile museum." In reality, however, the exhibition was only lengthened from two weeks to one month.

Different Senses of Nostalgia Between Generations and Between Workers

An old photographer named Quan Shizhong, who once worked as a staff member in the No.5 Textile Factory's propaganda department, came to the exhibition. Uncle Quan pointed at the photos one by one and told other visitors that he had taken almost one-third of the photos in the exhibition. He had come to the textile town from another city, Chongqing, when he was sixteen as part of the call to support Northwest China. And now he was eighty-nine. He looked spry, carried a camera, and was excited to tell others about the background to these pictures. He pointed at a black-and-white aerial photo of the whole textile town and said he was the only man from the textile town who joined the

team of provincial photographers to take this picture. He went up in the helicopter five times in the 1980s and eventually took this photo. Then he pointed to another group photo, looked at the figures in it, and said sadly, “Many people have died, only I am left here.”

Uncle Quan is one of the thousands of textile workers who devoted their lives to the factory. When these workers saw such photos and objects, they became emotional and felt nostalgia because many things that had truly existed in their everyday lives and represented their actual past experience were now being displayed in the elegant and well-arranged exhibition hall.

Many things had vanished, especially some of the already-demolished buildings in the photos. A female visitor pointed to a building and said, “The office block in the No.6 Factory was the only original factory office block in the textile town.”

Another man standing next to her added more details, “But those windows had changed, and the building was sold to the China Railway Group. The building becomes history now.” Another woman standing behind her echoed, “True, like our factory (the No.4 Factory), all were demolished, and only the big pine tree on the side of the road was left.”

These older workers had a deep attachment to the factory as many of them had constructed the factory buildings. A male textile worker who was at least seventy years old explained his attachment to the factory and those buildings:

> We have deep feelings about our factory because we built many building ourselves. We moved the bricks and built it up bit by bit. It was not like nowadays, when the state grants building permits. We worked very hard, not only on the shop floor, but we built our schools, the middle school, and the elementary school for the No.4 factory, we built it ourselves.

He continued to complain about the sense of being abandoned by the state and discontented with the reform policies:

> We provided the country with much profit, never a loss. Our factory paid off the entire loan in the first two years, and over all the remaining decades we have been giving the country money. In the end, why is the result like this? Maybe because of the policy, but not just because of the policy: someone wants to turn this state-owned asset into a private asset ... The officials’ descendants have good lives; our workers’ children were always poor although we worked too hard, too hard ... The apartment I live in now is still in a Soviet-style building distributed by the factory. There is no toilet inside; the toilet is for public use. You can’t imagine what we have suffered.

During the conversation, he shook his hand several times and said, “It’s not good to talk about it; it’s meaningless to talk about it. That’s how society is.” Or he said, “I don’t want to say it, I don’t want to say it, no meaning. Just look at these photos, memories, just nostalgia, that’s enough.” This emotional complexity is a sentiment that can’t be put into words. This is not a simple nostalgia that desires a return to a collectivist past, but a reflective, helpless nostalgia that is not willing to compromise.

Not all the visitors were pessimistic. A middle-aged woman shared her experience and claimed that leaving the textile factory was not bad for her. She was a textile worker in the No.4 Factory, and she worked there for more than twenty years. When the factory was bankrupt, she decided to leave the factory and then worked for a real estate company. Compared with when she worked in the factory beforehand, she felt more satisfied with her current situation, as she earned more than she had in the factory. Although she was dissatisfied with the factory, she was proud of being a textile worker from the No.4 Factory:

> In the past, the textile people were dedicated. The labor discipline was stricter than in other neighboring factories. Thus, when the workers from our factory worked elsewhere, they had an outstanding reputation. You see, like us who are now going out to society (for work), they all like to use workers from the No.4 Factory. Our responsibility, labor discipline, and reputation are excellent. So many talented workers were buried in the No.4 Factory. For example, I was just a general worker in the factory, but many workers including me now get promoted to the management level when we work outside.

She accompanied her eighty-year-old mother, a member of the older generation in the textile town. She still believed the textile town was the best place in which to stay:

> Today is my second day coming here. Yesterday I came here alone, and today I asked my daughter to accompany me. When I was twenty years old, I came here. And now I am nearly eighty years old. I graduated from a professional textile school and worked all the time until I retired. Wherever I go, I feel our textile town is the best. But when I see these pictures, it's so sad, nothing is left.

The nostalgia they presented was not the same. The mother felt grief because the factory's tangible objects were gone. When she saw these exhibited photos, she, like other older retired textile workers, remembered the vivid past through the place, people, and other objects in the photos. The daughter, however, conveyed a positive nostalgia in which she focused on the current benefits and the future hopes, which were affected by the past.

This moment shows how differently nostalgia is experienced. Individual nostalgia differs because nostalgia is a reconstruction of the past that incorporates affective memory. This memory is selective, and the affect drawn upon is complex and diverse. The complexity of emotions stems from the complexity of individual experience and identification with the collective unit. For each generation of textile workers, the difference in their sense of collective identity leads to a different kind of nostalgic tendency. The first generation of workers believed they were the most qualified to speak about the history of the textile town, as their collective identity formed due to their contributions to the country. Their nostalgia echoes the purpose of the official nostalgia, wherein the glorious industrial past should be remembered. As the "lost generation," the second generation has experienced social suffering throughout their life courses. They enjoyed a unique and privileged status offered by the state, which provided them with a sense of pride as workers in their youth. Nevertheless, after being laid off

and finding employment elsewhere, this collective identity became disintegrated and fragmented. When the work unit no longer existed, there was a break in the transmission of working-class culture and tradition. Although they were nostalgic for a time when the factories ran well, they felt more pessimistic about what they had experienced after everything had changed. This affection was based on a contrast between the present and the past, which reinforced a comparison between their pride in the past and their loss in the present.

Individuals' sense of nostalgia varied in line with their different encounters. Some workers obtained a better job, and then their sense of nostalgia viewed the past positively because what they learned from their past continues in the new position, especially when they benefit from their previous experience. But for those who suffered precarity after leaving the factory, nostalgia seemed to function as a security blanket that allowed them to return to a secure past when they still had dignity, and when working-class people were "masters" of the country.

Memory, Nostalgia, and Industrial Heritage

Now I will delve into the relationship between memory, nostalgia, and heritage by analyzing the relationship between people and place in the past and present. Let me return to the three questions I posed at the beginning of this chapter.

First, I asked, "What do people remember and how do they represent their lived experience when they recall the past that happened in the place?" To answer this question, memory studies help us understand the process of remembering and forgetting, with a focus on how a memory is formed and sustained in a social context. Different layers of memory, as discussed in memory studies, overlap and interact with each other in a complex dialogue. When we ask what people remember, we should first pay attention to individuals' narratives about the past in order to learn more about their own experiences and knowledge. Internal variations also exist in the past that individuals describe. Then we can compare these various narratives about the past and find the differences and figure out what reasons cause such variety. The analysis of memories of everyday life in the past is an effective way of understanding how an individual's memory works, and it shows what they remember and forget. This helps us grasp what parts of their lives are important, and why they remember or forget.

At the same time, we also need to concentrate on collective memory. Collective memory does not entail the aggregation of all individuals' memories. Some individuals may share collective values and a sense of belonging within a group, but other individuals may even be opposed to collective narratives about the past. Thus, we need to recognize how the particularities of individual memory operate within or struggle with collective memory. Critics have asserted that collective memory is limited, and it cannot explain how memory is sustained and continually transmitted to the next generations. Connerton's (1989) concept of "social memory," however, could provide an effective way of understanding how memory can be reorganized, decontextualized, and suppressed to give historical events new meanings. Social memory is a dynamic process of struggle or negotiation during a social transformation. Connerton discussed commemorative ceremony and bodily practice as two ways of

sustaining social memory. Commemoration shows how social memory represents a dominant shaping of memory in which shared values are constructed. Then, the tension and contradiction between social memory and individual memory help us understand social conflict and potential structural violence. Bodily memory forms a habitual memory through habits and practices, which can help us to avoid the bias that texts cause. Therefore, when we analyze how memory connects the past and present, we need to focus on the different layers of memory to investigate how they interact with each other.

As a kind of sentimental longing associated with remembering and forgetting the past, nostalgia recalls some parts of a memory and interacts with that memory. Like memory, nostalgia is affected by social transformation. The exhibition in the textile town gives an example of how people relate to nostalgia during a period of social and cultural transformation. Nostalgia is not always present but is evoked by certain scenes. Spatial arrangements can enhance nostalgic sentiment. Industrial museums, for example, establish a connection that helps former workers recall their working experience on a shop floor, and these museums offer an effective way of making nostalgia come alive, in a productive and emotional way. When visiting, workers are not just visitors; instead, they become masters and storytellers of working-class history, and they even build their own history from the memorialization. This is a productive way of paying attention to how people and their communities use nostalgia to evoke hopes of social equality, self-esteem with dignity, and class solidarity in the future.

Nevertheless, nostalgia can be used as a tool by a bureaucracy to distort and tamper with social and collective memory. In the official narratives recalling the past, nostalgia was presented as an innocent and romantic emotion in order to ask people to forget the painful past. Rosaldo (1989) argues that when we are mourning the passing of traditional society, we should realize how complicit we are with imperialism. He proposed the term "imperialist nostalgia" to explain such a sentimental discourse. In his words, "the anthropological trope and the colonial official's curious longing for what he or she has destroyed" (1989: 120). Herzfeld (2021) put forward a concept of "bureaucratic nostalgia." He criticized those in power for pretending to regret the destruction of older socio-cultural formations — actions they had willingly carried out. These officials want to destroy all traces of traditional lifestyles, replacing them with a sanitized version that the affected communities can no longer recognize as their own. The textile town exhibition demonstrated how bureaucratic nostalgia was presented by selecting materials to display and by writing glorious illustrative notes. Nostalgia often relates to something really painful for people, but what the official state narrative does is generally to conceal the painful side, only showing the beautiful surface and evoking a nostalgic imagination. The purpose of this narrative is to ask people to forget the pain in order to build a positive image. This attracts people involved in their romantic nostalgia and avoids people's resentment toward them. Thus, forgetting becomes a frequent occurrence during urbanization, and it then distorted memories.

Nostalgia is also a personal experience, but it is affected by collective memory and social memory. Nostalgia often evinces a sentimental yearning for a lost past related to a place, a period, or a situation. Although people experience a similar past in a collective, nostalgia nonetheless varies within a group. Some people may yearn for a period or place that has changed. Others, however, may think that the past is the past, and the present is better than the past. But sometimes, when people face external forces

or threats, the nostalgia they exhibit may become rather consistent as a form of resistance. Thus, it is important to analyze what causes such internal variation, and to embrace consistent nostalgia when people confront an external force. Nostalgia can reveal cultural intimacy (Herzfeld 2016a), namely, something that seems to be a source of external embarrassment, but that for insiders forms part of their common sociality.

Heritage, as a platform on which memory is performed, easily reflects and evokes nostalgia. Nostalgia is not visible all the time but rather needs to be activated in certain moments. When people enter a heritage site or when they look at certain objects from the past, this may enhance their memory and nostalgia for the past. Thus, stimulating people's senses in this space addresses my third question: how do people understand the past through heritage as a form of cultural memory that represents and reconstructs the past within a larger society? Memory, nostalgia, and heritage interact with each other in a space. Memory helps us understand how social and individual lives have changed, and such changes bring up nostalgia, which demonstrates how a memory reflects an intimacy with a place. Heritage can be viewed as a platform linking memory and nostalgia, and it evokes local people's attachment to the past and to a place. Besides object that embody heritage, other forms of heritage — like rituals, music, and dance — are more likely to represent memory, like commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices. And the reason is that some forms of heritage can be inherited and pass from generation to generation. This is also how social memory can be sustained. When we deal with heritage issues, we first need to ask whose heritage, which is similar to the question of whose nostalgia. We then need to ask what heritage brings to the local community, and this can help us reflect on the conflict between the local community and the authorized heritage discourse (AHD).

Concepts of heritage and heritage practice may vary from generation to generation. We can observe the break created by the official government approach to heritage and a break in the memory chain linking one generation to the next. A break in affective relations also means a break in the transmission of knowledge. Can nostalgia be inherited? An answer to this question would requires us to investigate the differences and similarities of nostalgia over the generations and the various ways of evoking the past. Heritage affords a space in which our memory and nostalgia can interact. Historical buildings, monuments, objects, performances, rituals, songs, skills, and many other elements remind us of who we are and how we identify ourselves.

Conclusion

As soon as people arrived at this exhibition, they entered a nostalgic field. The officials and the public shared nostalgia here. The officials used historical photos and objects to evoke memories of the socialist past, and the individuals also remembered and yearned for the past when they saw such objects. The exhibition's purpose and the objects chosen to go on display highlighted the glorious history of socialism and the spirit of collectivism. This also invoked individuals' nostalgia for a past with the essentials of security, solidarity, and dignity provided. Individual and collective memories infused together in this moment. Nevertheless, a sense of pride is only one affect present in nostalgia.

Pride also evokes a sense of loss, which emerged here from personal encounters because of the social changes; nevertheless, this aspect of the past, which the officials pass over, is the source of people's complex sense of nostalgia.

Through a detailed description of the exhibition, I have shown here how heritage practice offers a space in which textile workers can recall and reflect on the past, associating it with their resilience in the present. I have unpacked working-class people's self-expression and their complex nostalgic emotions linked to the past. This can make working-class memory come alive and continue. Although working-class people are not familiar with official narratives on "industrial heritage," they can tell their own stories about the past and understand the connection between the past and the present in their own way. These are effective ways for working-class people to express their class history and values as embodied in the process of social change.

The collective memory and emotions can be reproduced through various forms of representing the past, including events, people, or places considered worth remembering. In the case of the exhibition, the local government emphasized the historical value of the textile town by using concepts such as achievement, honor, and reputation. The local government made links to other glorious moments by using words such as "endeavor," "dedicate," and "strive" to connect the individual and collective levels. This aimed to foster a sense of pride and reproduce a sense of belonging even though the collective no longer existed. The links the local government made echoed individuals' memories of their previous experiences working and living in the factory community because it helped them to recall the past and feel nostalgia toward the security and dignity of being working-class people. There was significant consistency in the official narratives and individual expressions of the past as people reproduced collective class memory and heritage together.

Although individual memory overlapped with official narratives about the past, working-class people's emotions and nostalgia are more complex than the official narrative's uses of the past. What working-class people seek is not a sense of belonging as featured in the official narratives; instead, they wanted to remember what they had gained from the past and what parts of the past were essential to them. The people, place, and community that constitute working-class heritage are always neglected and excluded in official narratives (Smith, Shackel, and Campbell 2011: 2). Even though the official narratives applaud certain individuals' meritorious deeds, they also emphasized the symbolic meaning of collective achievements rather than ordinary working-class people's work and life. In particular, the laid-off workers' precarious situation and suffering was excluded as a topic because the officials were reluctant to confront it. This reflects how the government builds a monument for celebrating or remembering an event, people, or other unique things. The logic here is that the official government wants to fix time in order to make a singular history, which Herzfeld referred to as "monumental time" in his ethnography of a Cretan town (Herzfeld 1991).

Working-class people and the official government shared a sense of nostalgia here. Even though they presented a similar way of remembering the past and wanted to go back to the glorious heydays, the meaning of this nostalgia was not the same. Did the official government realize that what the people were longing for was exactly what the government had destroyed earlier? The authorities have more

power to use the past, define history, and control the direction of public opinion. Are working-class people aware of this? Some are immersed in their recollections of the past, but others are conscious of it from how the nostalgia intertwined with the reality they are now experiencing.

Chapter 8

Another Kind of Restitution: Back to the Working Class

In the context of industrial heritage, the evident absence of the working class emerges as a recurring phenomenon, casting a shadow over the official historical narrative. This raises a thought-provoking question: how can industrial heritage conservation — ironically, rather than paradoxically — lead to the marginalization of the very people it supposedly to celebrate? The stories that happened in the textile town offer a critical view of the disjuncture between official models of "progress" and the lived experience of dislocation. The individuals in the textile town seem to be excluded from the social history narratives we commonly encounter. They do not fit the conventional profile of migrant workers contributing to urban development, nor do they resemble the emerging middle class enjoying relatively stable social status. Why has their experience been overlooked or neglected?

In recent years, the last group of SOE workers in the textile town, including those who were laid off and reemployed, has reached retirement age. They appear to have been overlooked by the urban development and are gradually fading from the stage of history. Nevertheless, with the growing recognition of industrial heritage and the state's strong advocacy for its protection and reuse, urban renewal has initiated the reproduction of the industrial remains. Despite this resurgence, the former SOE workers remain the forgotten component of industrial heritage. The stories happened in the textile town challenge the conventional narrative, emphasizing the importance of concentrating on working-class people and their cultural traditions within the discourse of industrial heritage. In this conclusion, I aim to reveal why we need to concentrate on working class people and their cultural traditions when it comes to industrial heritage.

Class Still Matters

Just as my fieldwork came to an end, the Chinese government introduced top-down policy guidance and implementation measures for the protection of industrial heritage. In November 2019, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a speech during his visit to Binjiang, Yangpu district in Shanghai,

proposing an urban development goal: transforming "industrial rust belts (gongye xiu dai)" into "livable beauty belts (shenghuo xiu dai)." It is worth noting that both terms contain the word "xiu." Although they share the same pronunciation, their meanings differ. The first "xiu" means "rust," and refers to the oxide of metal surfaces, implying rustiness. The second "xiu" has two meanings: one denotes beauty and elegance, while the other is an internet buzzword derived from the English word "show," meaning to show off or perform. By comparison, "industrial rust belts" symbolize outdated, underdeveloped industrial areas, whereas "livable beauty belts" represent urban spaces in transition, beautified through improvements in living standards and the environment. Shortly thereafter, in early 2020, the National Development and Reform Commission, together with four other national departments, jointly issued the "Implementation Plan for Promoting the Protection and Utilization of Industrial Heritage in Old Industrial Cities."[1] This national-level regulation aims to implement industrial heritage protection and utilization through a top-down approach.

Subsequently, according to the national policy guidance, many local authorities formulated their local work plans. Almost every document title used the term "livable beauty belts." For example, in the city where the textile town is located, the Xi'an municipal government issued a work plan to promote the protection and utilization of industrial heritage.[2] This document outlines an implementation plan for creating a heritage list, conducting heritage identification, and strengthening the protection and utilization of industrial heritage. In the section on protection and utilization, the document specifically mentions the preservation of industrial heritage in the textile town:

> ... the concentrated area of industrial heritage in the textile town centers on the state-led relocation and transformation of old industrial zones. This initiative aims to deeply explore the cultural significance of the textile industry, accelerate the revitalization of old streets, factory areas, and buildings, and promote the development of cultural and creative industries. Additionally, it seeks to enhance homestay experiences, sightseeing tourism, and leisure and wellness industries, ultimately creating a textile industrial cultural and creative commerce hub alongside a livable production area.

At the same time, the textile town is also an example of a key project implementation. The document states: "Relying on the Xi'an textile old industrial base railway dedicated line, Xibei Yiyin, and the No.3 factory areas, etc., a series of scientific, demonstrative, and stimulating industrial heritage protection projects will be implemented." The goal is to "promote the integration of industrial heritage protection with the enhancement of Xi'an's urban image, creating a model area for industrial heritage and a tourist destination." An attachment to the work plan clearly outlines the division of responsibilities among the involved departments. The plan includes a total of 22 tasks, each assigned a leading department along with several cooperating units.

[1] Details of the implementation plan can be found at https://www.ndrc.gov.cn/xxgk/zcfb/tz/202006/P020200609555028859020.pdf. Available access on 26th March 2023.

[2] Details of the work plan can be found at https://files.parkworld.net/files/8d9921eff0380eb/download. Available access on 26th March 2023.

In addition to reviewing policy documents from Xi'an, I also examined documents from various other municipal governments. I found that their main contents are largely similar, all centering on the formulation of local policies based on national guidelines. As a country with a long industrial history, China has many cities with old industrial bases and districts, and the industrial heritage listed in local documents often reflects distinct regional characteristics. Nevertheless, what I would like to emphasize here is how little attention is paid to working-class people. They are either excluded from the policy-making process or have only limited participation in preservation efforts. The top-down policy shows how to build "livable beauty belts," but livable for whom? Whose needs and interests are being prioritized in the name of development process? The policy masks the deeper social implications of the tension between neoliberal process and the displacement of working-class communities. Herzfeld (2017) argued that the concept of "beautification" as a form of urban development is a product of global modernity, which imposes a middle-class aesthetic in the crypto-colonial dynamics in Thailand. This approach poses a threat to existing ways of life and often ignores the social needs of poorer residents. Similarly, Ghertner (2015) explored how a particular world-class aesthetic emerged in Delhi. He illustrated how urban governance, shaped by aesthetic norms, led to the marginalization and displacement of communities. Similarly, in China, the policy of reusing and rebuilding industrial space reveals neoliberal economic demands that prioritize class-based urban purity over the needs of local communities, perpetuating the same process of beautification.

Although policymakers present the transformation of the old industrial districts from a "rust belt" of the past to modern "livable beauty belts" as significant urban planning, it is crucial to recognize that this characterization — framing the transformation as a simplistic dichotomy between past and present, backwardness and advancement — oversimplifies the complex and multifaceted processes that have unfolded in these areas. This narrative highlights the disjuncture between social time and monumental time, revealing the state's aspiration to create something of historical permanence. By focusing on monumental time, however, the everyday experiences of ordinary people seem to vanish.

Contrary to the state's portrayal of nostalgia as a picturesque and delightful reminiscence, it is, in reality, a poignant and complex experience for local residents. The state's attempt to diminish the pain and present a selective, beautiful narrative is a form of bureaucratic nostalgia — an effort to manipulate perceptions. This operates by acknowledging the existence of a community that once thrived, now gone, while overlooking the enduring presence and effort of those who continue to inhabit and shape the community. Despite the imposition of monument time and bureaucratic nostalgia, people are pushing back. They resist through their memories and ongoing experiences, challenging the narrative dictated by monumental time. Therefore, my research aims to spotlight stories of those excluded by monumental time and bureaucratic nostalgia, providing an alternative perspective to social memory and nostalgia based on their lived experiences.

In fact, both heritage policy and its implementation emphasize the reproduction of physical space, often preserving the structure of factory buildings while changing their functions to create new attractions that can better meet economic demands. Therefore, we need to understand whose symbolic attributions are being placed on industrial heritage and how heritage policies are enacted through the

repurposing of industrial heritage sites to generate cultural and economic value. Specifically, industrial heritage policy focuses on protection measures that leverage old industrial districts to develop the tourism industry, establish innovative cultural hubs, and facilitate the establishment of various cultural industries within the framework of industrial heritage. Ultimately, this approach reproduces cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) by emphasizing the economic value of industrial heritage as a tourist attraction and match for middle-class aesthetic. Indeed, industrial heritage has symbolic significance because it represents the collective and social memory of an industrial past and its transformation over time. But the heritage politics use such "collective memory" and romantic nostalgia to legitimize the neoliberal process of urban beautification. This shift prioritizes the aesthetic and commercial value of heritage over its social and historical significance, ultimately leading to the commodification and gentrification of industrial neighborhoods.

Therefore, the symbolic significance of industrial heritage should be understood in a critical and nuanced way, taking into account its complex dynamics and the potential social problems it may generate. We should not only focus on how old industrial communities are transformed into heritage spaces, but more importantly, we must understand why heritage politics often fail to prioritize the participation and empowerment of local communities, especially working-class people who have lived in these communities for several generations. We should also consider the need to protect not just physical spaces, but the ways of life and the knowledge embedded in working-class traditions. Class still matters. We need to analyze why and how working-class communities and their way of living have been excluded. When introducing the concept of class into the discussion of industrial heritage and other social topics, we can expand our horizon to reflect the significant role that class plays in shaping historical industrial traditions, labor dynamics and cultural practices.

The concept of heritage is not limited to physical objects or locations but encompasses a dynamic cultural process that involves the expression and interpretation of cultural values, stories, memories, and significance (Smith 2006). In my research, I delve into the complexities of working-class heritage, examining how working-class communities negotiate and perform their cultural identity in the present, as well as how they remember and forget their past. I aim to provide a new perspective on critical heritage studies (Harrison 2012) by exploring the nostalgia of working-class communities and their contradictions with the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) (Smith 2006). When using AHD, we need to identify the source of authority. In other words, who is making the decisions? This helps us better understand the dynamics of heritage politics and the power imbalances between local people and authorities. This exploration intends to bring attention to the cultural heritage of working-class communities, which is often neglected or marginalized by dominant heritage politics. The goal is to demonstrate that working-class communities have their own voices, but they lack platforms to express them, often being overlooked in official historical narratives and urban development processes.

Secondly, the importance of class remains relevant, as it offers deeper insight into the relationship between individuals and place. Topophilia, as described by Tuan Yi-Fu, is the affective bond between people and their place or setting (1974: 4). He also stresses the crucial role of experience in shaping this bond, and further elaborates on how our perspective of experience can affect our relationship with

a place (Tuan 1977). It is true that, by incorporating the concepts of experience and affective into the concept of class, we can better understand the specific locations where individuals are placed and the relationships between them. As Perry (1996) highlighted, labor politics in China is largely shaped by the politics of place. I have also shown how the establishment of factories and workshop culture provided workers from various regions with a sense of place, fostering meaningful relationships during the labor process. These relationships created a community of shared rights and responsibilities that persisted through new forms of guanxi and reciprocity, even as the community began to disintegrate due to factory closures, layoffs, and reemployment. This connection between people and place is a deep attachment, as seen in the enduring bond between generations of the textile workers and the textile town.

Furthermore, class still matters, which allows us to gain a better understanding of the political logic behind various neoliberal policies. In China's neoliberal process, for example, the classification of class has been weakened, and individuals have been simply grouped together as an "imagined community." This approach aims to minimize class conflicts by prioritizing social stability and projecting a harmonious social atmosphere, aligning with the official assertion that China remains a socialist state. Nevertheless, this approach may lead to the disregard of the needs of the poor, potentially aggravating social issues. The emphasis on "beautification" in urban development projects can conceal underlying social contradictions and the persistent existence of structural violence. In this context, the working class is situated in a controversial situation, influenced by neoliberalism and gradually losing its agency. Nevertheless, self-representation by the working class can play a crucial role in rebuilding a class identity with significant social meaning. Their past experiences can become a powerful force in the fight against social inequality, enabling them to reclaim control over historical narratives and heritage discourse.

My research on working-class individuals has revealed how their class consciousness has evolved over time and how they utilize their class traditions and history to negotiate with the past and employ strategies in the present. The concept of "class" is not static; it undergoes dynamic changes within the global labor market. As Massey (1995) argues, the influence of global economic forces on local labor markets has led to the emergence of new spatial divisions of labor characterized by disparities and uneven development. By examining the process of changing class identity and memory through class self-representation, we can gain insight into the power dynamics that underlie the disregard of "class."

The Future of Nostalgia

I have chosen to draw inspiration from Svetlana Boym's (2001) insightful book, "The Future of Nostalgia," as the title for this session. Boym discussed the diverse manifestations of nostalgia, revealing how they intricately intersect with a wide range of ideologies, cultural traditions, and the intricate dynamics between society and individuals. She introduces the idea of two distinct types of nostalgia: restorative nostalgia and reflective nostalgia. The former aims to rebuild and romanticize a vanished past, driven by a longing to revisit a bygone era or construct an idyllic version of history,

while the latter entails a more thoughtful and introspective approach to the past, recognizing its intricacies and paradoxes. In an argument somewhat similar to Boym's, Smith and Campbell's (2017) thoughtfully distinguish between "reactionary nostalgia" and "progressive nostalgia," and emphasized that using the past can shape sentiments and foster emotional dedication to the social justice causes that the Left greatly desires. These researchers offer a comprehensive understanding of the origins of nostalgia and its potential future trajectory within the context of a rapid transforming society. In my research, I also delve into the profound complexity inherent in nostalgia. Here, I would like to reflect critically upon some fundamental inquiries.

The first question is whether nostalgia is primarily a psychological or a social phenomenon. As an anthropologist, I treat nostalgia as a social construct rather than merely an individual psychological phenomenon. Nostalgia emerges from individual experiences, but also affected by collective and social memories. By studying nostalgia, I strive to comprehend its significance within social and cultural contexts, and its influence on memory and social practices. The second question involves exploring the social aspects of nostalgia, particularly by considering the models of nostalgia that are invoked. A convergence of models from different sources has here allowed us go further details on the process of nostalgia and its influence on social phenomenon. What models of nostalgia we are invoking also connect to the larger question of how to deal with sentiment and emotion in research that is primarily social. While addressing this question, it is valuable to engage with works on the anthropology of emotion, as it provides insights into different approaches and frameworks. But it is crucial to distinguish between the mere expression of emotion and the emotion itself. The affect theory offers us a perspective to understand how everyday life is embodied within complex political, economic, and cultural transformations, particularly since the emergence of the "affective turn" (Clough and Halley 2008) in the 1990s. As anthropologists, our focus lies more on the representations of emotions rather than the emotions themselves. As Navaro-Yashin posed the question, "What resonates as affect in the different geographies that we study as anthropologists?" (2017: 210), we are prompted to explore diverse forms of representations, such as attachments, intimacy, empathy, hospitality, reciprocity, and more. It is important to recognize that these forms often overlap and contribute to the complexity of the phenomenon. Hence, we must approach the forms of affect as social phenomena, allowing us to delve into the intricacies of affection and emotions.

The study of nostalgia could potentially expand affect studies. Nostalgia could be seen as a form of affect, which is also the representation of a social phenomenon. The complexity of nostalgia is further reflected in the different traditions and modernization processes of various countries. Simple models of nostalgia cannot fully encompass the working-class nostalgia towards their industrial past. Just as in the field, I constantly feel that the expressions of nostalgia among the workers are a contradictory sentiment: they are both nostalgic and aware that it is not worth nostalgia; they both yearn for home and fear returning home.

Nostalgia could provide us a possibility to seek out the commonalities in the representations of shared emotions. Nostalgia, a sentiment experienced not only by individuals but also by states and the broader public, does not always conform to a simplistic dichotomy of positive or negative.

Instead, it possesses the potential for convergence, offering a platform for shared experiences and a sense of collective identity. I refer to this phenomenon as social nostalgia, encompassing the collective yearning for moments, places, and experiences that evoke a sentimental longing within us. Underneath the surface of shared nostalgia, it is important to recognize the inherent contradiction between bureaucratic nostalgia and the individual's intricate longing for the past. This yearning for bygone times is intertwined with the fundamental values of dignity, empathy, respect, pride, and security, representing the essence of cultural preservation when confronted with an industrial past. Additionally, industrial nostalgia possesses the potential to serve as a social force, empowering workers to shape narratives and even assert their legitimacy. By tracing back to the origins of nostalgia, both individuals and authorities have the opportunity to deepen connections and foster a collective sense of belonging. It is essential to ensure that all these possibilities are rooted in the respect for workers' rights to express their experiences and the way of life in the industrial past and present.

Socialist nostalgia in China offers a fresh lens through which to examine the complexities of modernity and the neoliberal way of life. Given China's rapid economic and cultural transformations, the nostalgia for its socialist past has become increasingly intertwined with people's everyday experiences. In her insightful book on China's modernity, Rofel delves into the narratives of women workers who recount the "bitterness" of their socialist working past (1999: 137–148). Rofel highlights how these older female workers challenge the prevailing narrative of the past by reclaiming their identities as socialist heroes through the practice of "speaking bitterness" (1999: 129). My own conversations with textile workers also proved this phenomenon that they often emphasized the hardships they endured during their working years and the immense bitterness they "ate." But what I find particularly captivating is the nuanced divergence that exists within the community and across generations when it comes to nostalgia. Specifically, among the first-generation members in the textile town, there is a resonance with Rofel's depiction, as they perceive themselves to hold a special social status as the pioneers of the factories. Despite the hardships endured in the 1950s and the challenging material conditions, they maintain a deep sense of pride and optimism from that period. Their nostalgia serves not only as a way to retrace the factory's history but also as a means of reaffirming their identity, as they believe they are the most qualified to speak about the textile town's past.

The second generation, often referred to as the "lost generation," experiences a more complex range of emotions when looking back at the past. But individuals' lived experiences should not be reduced to a stereotype like "lost." They still have a deep attachment to the textile town and feel nostalgic for a time when the factories were more efficient and had better benefits. Despite this, having sacrificed a significant portion of their lives to the factories, they often ridiculed themselves for their low status as working-class individuals and strongly opposed their children following the same path as workers. With the dissolution of the work unit (danwei), there was a break in the transmission of working-class culture and tradition, further intensifying the divergence in how nostalgia is expressed. Some workers who secured better jobs after being laid off view their past factory experience as valuable training that helped them adapt to new workplaces. Conversely, those who faced ongoing precarious employment after the layoffs often lament their unfortunate fate, feeling abandoned by the state.

Therefore, in addition to the current literature's focus on nostalgia, my findings suggest that nostalgia cannot be oversimplified as a mere longing for a simpler or better past expressed through emotions or consumer behaviors. Instead, nostalgia emerges from the intricate dynamics of workers' changing identities, profoundly influenced by the shifting landscape of generations' experiences — from socialist workers to precarious workers. Within this context, the cultural, social, and emotional dimensions of nostalgia intertwine, shaping their perceptions and memories.

Let us revisit the title, "The future of nostalgia." The future is shaped by time, space, and the elements inherited from the past and present. The case of the textile town offers a perspective that nostalgia is complex and constantly changing, influenced by individuals' past and current experiences, as well as by generational differences. The future of nostalgia lies in how knowledge, tradition, and heritage are transmitted from one generation to the next. This transmission can be disrupted, severing the chain of memories that connects one generation to another. Such disruptions in affective relationships also hinder the continuity of knowledge and tradition, influencing how nostalgia will be experienced and expressed in the future.

Industrial Heritage or Working-Class Heritage?

In this research, I mainly focus on two aspects of the textile town: the textile workers who have experienced three generations of living and working in the textile town, and the projects and exhibitions related to the textile town's industrial heritage. My original intention was to combine the description of workers' cultural history and tradition with the recent urban renewal centered on industrial heritage, to show the contradictions, conflicts, and possibilities for integration between the working class and industrial heritage. In terms of integration in practice, for example, Keşküla's (2013) ethnography on coal mining heritage provides a possibility, that is, all the staff members working at the mine museum are connected to the former mine, especially the guides who used to work in the mine. Indeed, I have visited some industrial heritage museums in the UK, Europe and Australia, including train, ship, and airplane museums. Retired or former workers often take on roles as guides or staff members work in various industrial museums. An illustrative instance is the Workshops Rail Museum in Queensland, where some retired employees share vibrant stories with visitors, drawing upon their experiences as a railway driver or bus driver. Similar phenomenon I described in chapter seven, is that when former textile workers visited the photography exhibition launched by the local government, they have more vivid stories that happened at shop floors to share rather than just listening to the guides' superficial explanation. After all, the workers believe that as witnesses to the real history, they are better equipped to share their first-hand experiences, as opposed to relying solely on younger guides who have been trained by the local government. Because, as the previous chapters have shown, the labor process and shop floor traditions, as well as their daily life and interaction with family and friends in the workers' community, demonstrate that the former workers have the capacity to act as the main force in the transmission of knowledge related to class heritage and to exert their subjective initiative.

My research delves into the lived experiences of workers spanning three generations within a

textile town in China, focusing on their complex attachment to the factory community. I place their stories within the framework of critical heritage studies, and the findings show that industrial heritage and working-class heritage should not be separated. For example, when we visit a place that was once a factory, we are not only attracted to the structures of the building, which may evoke a sense of the industrial past. What we are more interested in is what happened in this place. When we narrow down the question, we focus on what happened to the workers who worked and lived in this factory community. The industrial past is workers' past, and industrial heritage is deeply intertwined with workers' tradition and heritage. Similarly, when we talk about working-class heritage, we may encounter songs, articles, poems, pictures, and other documents. If we are fortunate, we can sit with former workers and listen to their stories about the past. Regardless of the forms of heritage, we all feel the connection and attachment between the workers and the factory. For example, the workers have complex emotions with machines, as they always express that they were "bound with machines." If an industrial museum only exhibits machines without discussing the relationships with workers, the industrial heritage loses its essential roots. Therefore, I argue that the term "industrial heritage" essentially includes the inequality of power relations, which exclude the life trajectories of the working class. It solely focuses on using selected elements of the industrial past to construct an imagined heritage in order to add value for economic and political purposes.

Even though industrial heritage includes working-class heritage, the working-class stories presented when we visit industrial heritage museums are those chosen as heritage. My findings reveal the contradictions and irony that former workers encounter when reflecting on their past at the factory community or during industrial historical exhibition. The authorities perceive heritage as a static or simplistic concept, viewing workers as an objective group. The lived experiences of workers, however, provide an alternative vision of the industrial past. Being lifelong witness, they are able to express reflective emotions that reveal the meaning of the past. Therefore, in order to understand industrial heritage, we need to examine the dynamic process of interaction between the working class and the industrial space they worked and lived, considering the social and cultural transformation that took place.

What I contribute to critical heritage studies is a different perspective on industrial heritage. Rather than viewing it solely as the collections of industrial artifacts from the past, I emphasize that industrial heritage can be inherited and embodied by workers in their everyday lives. I demonstrate two forms of heritage that former workers inherit from their previous labor process on the shop floors and living communities, which are then carried forward and verified in their new workplace. First, I use Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" (1984) to categorize workers' experiences based on the heritage they inherit from their former working experience. I introduce the notion that punctuality, being hardworking and responsibility are three aspects of habitus that cultivate from the socialist factory. I argue that habitus is not a fixed entity and can change over time, offering a valuable perspective on how individuals can cultivate adaptive and flexible capacities. Second, I explore the concept of guanxi, a specifically Chinese term, as a unique form of industrial heritage that workers inherit from the past. I illustrate how the strategic use of guanxi serves as the way to maintain working class heritage and

traditions. In this context, guanxi can be regarded not only as a social strategy but also as a form of heritage itself. It holds significance in both preserving industrial traditions and fostering enduring social connections within the working class. By highlighting the ways in which workers inherit and carry forward aspects of their industrial experiences, I provide a nuanced understanding of industrial heritage as a living and adaptable way of life for working-class individuals. When we realize that industrial heritage can be inherited and embodied by workers in their everyday experience, we then can understand their deepest connection with the socialist collective and the way of reaching back into the past.

Although they have encountered the changes in generations, family, and friends, the identity of the working class is essential to the shift, as it structures people's memories of the past and therefore structures attitudes to the changes taking place in the present. The strategies of adjustment they adopted reflect the textile workers' capacity not only to adapt to these changes but also to establish equilibrium in their relationships among generations, couples, former colleagues, and friends. What working-class people see is not only the past; they see the changes spanning from the past to the present. Industrial heritage should reflect the experience that those working-class people have. This should include not only the past of working and living in the industrial community, but also what they have inherited from the industrial past. Their experiences of everyday life and of the present-day period of deindustrialization are an important part of this.

Future Prospects

At the end, I would like to reflect on my connection to the textile town after the fieldwork. Despite the physical distance imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, my bond with the textile town remains unbroken. While I have been in contact with my interlocutors online, another avenue through which I keep a close eye on the textile town is the online platform called "I Love the Textile Town." "I Love the Textile Town" is a WeChat public account, also referred to as an "official account." WeChat, known as "weixin" in Chinese, is the most popular online social network in China, enabling users to exchange messages, images, audio and videos with others. Within the WeChat platform, both individuals and organizations can create public accounts to share news, articles, videos and other information with subscribers.

In 2013, Xing, the third-generation resident of the textile town, established this public account. Since 2015, the account has featured more original articles and photos, written by Xing and other authors who contribute their own works. The majority of these articles revolve around commemorating the past, including stories about places, people, and objects. Additionally, followers can access helpful information such as restaurant and shop recommendations, occasional advertisements, and updates on textile town-related matters like housing prices, recent construction projects, and local government announcements. During the pandemic, for instance, the account regularly shared updates on vaccine availability, Covid-19 testing locations, and the number of infected individuals. As of February 20, 2022, the account had published 772 original articles. When I inquired about the number of subscribers

at the beginning of 2022, Xing informed me that there were approximately 27 000 followers.

As a member of the third generation living in the textile town, Xing utilizes his technological skills to facilitate the collective community in preserving their shared memories of the past and exchanging present-day information. When asked about his motivation for creating this online platform, he provided the following reasons:

> Growing up in the textile town has instilled a genuine love for this place within me. I want to share the positive aspects of the textile town with everyone. Through my efforts, I aim to bring about even the slightest change in the Textile Town. Perhaps what you need is precisely what the rest of us in the Textile Town can offer and provide. That alone is enough!

This online platform offers an interactive space for authors and followers to engage with each other. When an article posted, comments quickly follow below. Some individuals express their resonance with the past, while others make comparisons between the past and the present. For instance, when reading posts related to the past, second-generation members recall their repetitive shift work and the close friendship forged on the shop floors, while the third generation is captivated by their carefree childhood memories. In contrast, when reading posts about policies or ongoing projects, many residents leave dissatisfied comments, expressing their complaints about "face projects" that the government conduct. These residents do not trust the local government because of a history of disappointment. Although leaving comments may not have a significant impact on maintaining residents' rights, some individuals still express their emotions, even though officials often disregard their voices. The complex emotions expressed online shed light on the central tension explored in my dissertation: the conflict between a sense of pride in the socialist experiment and a lingering resentment over feeling abandoned by the state.

The reason I describe this online platform is to provide a window through which we can observe the current situation in an old industrial district and its residents, as well as rethink future prospects. Although my main focus is on the second generation and their lived experience in the factory community, I also discuss the third generation, many members of which left the textile town after they went for work, but eventually returned as third-generation residents. This highlights a potential way of inheriting industrial heritage between generations. Unlike the second generation who inherited their habitus from their past experiences in the factory community, the third generation seems to inherit a more symbolic representation of the industrial history. The memories of their upbringing in the factory community evoke a profound sense of familiarity and emotional connections with the community. This connection was absent when they lived and worked outside of the community. As a result, their return to the community feels like a journey back to the past, even though the community no longer resembles the one etched in their childhood memories.

The members of the third generation are the key generation responsible for shaping the future of the community. Although they do not inherit the skills and knowledge of the preceding generations regarding the labor process in factories, which could disrupt the chain of memories and traditions

connecting one generation to another, they have developed innovative ways to connect with the past. For instance, online platforms have become a stage for preserving collective memory and voicing the current situation. Nevertheless, the challenge remains in transmitting industrial heritage from one generation to the next during times of social transformation. The state's overarching narrative recalls the industrial successes of socialist experiments but often overlooks the lived experiences of ordinary individuals. When the state's historical narrative neglects the everyday lives of people, forgetting occurs at a rapid pace. Therefore, it becomes crucial to preserve records and amplify the perspectives of these individuals to resist this process of forgetting. This responsibility lies in fostering a more cohesive and inclusive future for old industrial communities, ensuring their voices and histories are not lost.

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Appendix A

Chinese Characters

Ba Qiao	灞桥
Bahe	灞河
Bailu Plain	白鹿原
Banpo	半坡
Baqiao dianchang	灞桥电厂
beiqu	北区
bingcu chejian	并粗车间
bingtui	病退
changzhang fuzezhi	厂长负责制
Chanhe	浐河
dagong	打工
daguofan	大锅饭
dahua shachang	大华纱厂
dangwu gongzuo	党务工作
danwei	单位
dao xibu qu	到西部去
dazibao	大字报
diqi	底气
diuren	丢人
Dong Sanhuan	东三环
Fangsan lu	纺三路
fangsha chejian	纺纱车间
Fangxi jie	纺西街
Fangzhi Cheng	纺织城
Fangzhi Gongyuan	纺织公园
fengqi	风气
fuli cun	福利村
fuli fang	福利房
ganba	干爸
ganma	干妈
ganqing	感情
gongye xiu dai	工业锈带

guanxi	关系
Henan	河南
hexie shehui	和谐社会
hexin shehuizhuyi jiazhiguan	核心社会主义价值观
hua er bu shi	华而不实
Huacheng	华诚
huahua shijie	花花世界
hukou	户口
jiangfa fenming	奖罚分明
jiedao banshichu	街道办事处
jing wei chuan suo, huo hong nian dai	经纬穿梭，火红年代
ju wei hui	居委会
kunnan shiqi	困难时期
Li Shan	骊山
Longhai xian	陇海线
maiduan	买断
mianzi	面子
na shi fang zhi cheng	那时纺织城
nanqu	南区
neitui	内退
po	坡
pochan bu po shengchanli	破产不破生产力
Qingdao	青岛
Qingling	秦岭
qingshu chejian	清梳车间
ren ren dou shi yi shu jia	人人都是艺术家
renming	任命
renqing wei	人情味
renqing	人情
san jia ma che	三驾马车
Shaanxi	陕西
Shandong	山东
shang shan xia xiang	上山下乡
Shanghai	上海
she xiaojia wei dajia	舍小家为大家
shehui shang	社会上
shenghuo xiu dai	生活秀带
shiluo de yidai	失落的一代
Sichuan	四川
sushi	素质
Tanghua	唐华
tie fan wan	铁饭碗
tongbingnian chejian	筒并捻车间
weixin	微信
wenming cun	文明村
wo men gong ren you li liang	我们工人有力量

Wuhan	武汉
Xi’an	西安
xiagang zhigong	下岗职工
xiagang	下岗
xiahai	下海
xiao shehui	小社会
xiaoqu	小区
xiaoxin	孝心
Xibei Yiyin	西北一印（西北第一印染厂）
Xifang jituan	西纺集团
xingfu cun	幸福村
Xinhua shudian	新华书店
xiuyang	修养
ya ding	压锭
Yangtze	扬子江
yi jia zhi zhu	一家之主
za ding	砸锭
zhengli chejian	整理车间
zhibu chejian	织布车间
zhishi qingnian (zhiqing)	知识青年（知青）
zhiyuan daxibei	支援大西北
zhunbei chejian	准备车间

Appendix B

Summary

This dissertation examines the relationship between industrial heritage and the working class in Fangzhi Cheng, a textile town located in the eastern suburbs of Xi'an, China. Drawing on thirteen months of ethnographic fieldwork, it traces the lives of three generations of textile workers who built, labored in, and ultimately endured the closure of six state-owned textile factories during China's socialist and post-socialist transformations. Through the lens of nostalgia, this study develops a more precise and critical understanding of the relationship between class and heritage, asking whether and how industrial heritage can genuinely speak to the working-class people it claims to represent.

The textile town was constructed during China's First Five-Year Plan (1953–1957) as part of a broader national project of socialist industrialization. The factories were organized around the danwei — the work unit system — which provided workers not only with employment but with housing, medical care, education, and a dense social world. Workers from across China settled in the textile town, forging a community defined by shared labor, collective identity, and a strong sense of dignity as socialist workers. This dissertation traces that history from its constructive origins through the economic reforms of the 1990s, which brought mass layoffs, factory bankruptcies, and the dismantling of the danwei system. By the late 2000s, all five major factories in the textile town had closed, leaving behind a community of former workers who continued to reside in the same residential area, separated from their former workplaces by what this study describes as an invisible but deeply felt boundary.

The central theoretical contribution of this dissertation lies in its use of nostalgia as an analytical framework for understanding the relationship between class identity and heritage politics. Nostalgia, understood here not as a sentimental longing for a better past, but as a complex and contradictory social force, reveals the tensions between official heritage narratives and the lived experiences of working-class people. This study distinguishes between "bureaucratic nostalgia" — the state's selective and sanitized presentation of the industrial past — and "social nostalgia," which encompasses the collective and multilayered yearnings of workers across generations. While the state deploys nostalgia to attract middle-class consumption and tourism through heritage projects such as art districts and Soviet-style streets, former workers experience nostalgia as something altogether more painful, contradictory, and generative. They are simultaneously proud of their socialist past and resentful of their abandonment by

the state; they long for a home that has been transformed beyond recognition, yet continue to inhabit and shape it.

This dissertation argues that industrial heritage and working-class heritage cannot and should not be separated. It addresses a fundamental question raised in the field: "How can it be called industrial heritage if there is no working class here?" It aims to understand how workers navigate the profound ruptures between their past industrial lives and their current engagement with heritage, examining whether the concept remains useful for exploring class identities in a nominally socialist state. Official heritage policy in China prioritizes the aesthetic and economic value of industrial spaces while systematically excluding the voices, memories, and needs of the working-class communities who created them. Heritage politics, in this context, functions as a form of neoliberal urban governance that reproduces class-based inequality under the guise of cultural preservation. The former textile workers of Fangzhi Cheng are not passive victims of this process, however. They resist through memory, through the everyday transmission of working-class habitus, and through the persistent maintenance of guanxi as a living and embodied form of industrial heritage.

A major contribution of this study is its expansion of the definition of industrial heritage beyond physical artifacts and machinery. This dissertation argues that heritage is embodied and inherited by workers in their everyday lives through traits cultivated during the socialist era. This is manifested through habitus — the persistence of specific characteristics such as punctuality, a strong work ethic, and a sense of responsibility, which workers carry into their new, often precarious, workplaces. Additionally, the strategic use of guanxi — social networks and reciprocity formed within the factory community — is presented as a unique form of intimate, affective heritage. Together, habitus and guanxi reveal that industrial heritage is not confined to factory buildings and machines; it is embodied, practiced, and transmitted through the daily lives of working-class people across generations.

This dissertation ultimately argues that class still matters. As China's rapid urbanization and economic transformation continue to reshape old industrial communities, the experiences of former socialist workers risk being absorbed into a heritage discourse that celebrates the industrial past while erasing the people who lived it. By centering the voices, memories, and strategies of three generations of textile workers in Fangzhi Cheng, this study calls for a more inclusive and critical approach to industrial heritage — one that recognizes working-class communities not as objects of heritage conservation, but as their most essential and living carriers.

Appendix C

Samenvatting (Summary in Dutch)

Dit proefschrift onderzoekt de relatie tussen industrieel erfgoed en de arbeidersklasse in Fangzhi Cheng, een textielstad in de oostelijke buitenwijken van Xi'an, China. Op basis van dertien maanden etnografisch veldwerk worden de levens van drie generaties textielarbeiders gevolgd — mensen die de staatstextielsfabrieken hebben gebouwd, er hebben gewerkt en uiteindelijk de sluiting ervan hebben meegemaakt tijdens China's socialistische en postsocialistische transformaties. Via de lens van nostalgie ontwikkelt deze studie een nauwkeuriger en kritischer begrip van de relatie tussen klasse en erfgoed, en stelt de vraag of en hoe industrieel erfgoed werkelijk kan spreken namens de arbeidersklasse die het beweert te vertegenwoordigen.

De textielstad werd gebouwd tijdens China's eerste vijfjarenplan (1953–1957) als onderdeel van een breder nationaal project van socialistische industrialisatie. De fabrieken waren georganiseerd rondom de danwei — het werkplaatssysteem — dat arbeiders niet alleen werk verschafte, maar ook huisvesting, medische zorg, onderwijs en een rijk sociaal leven. Arbeiders uit heel China vestigden zich in de textielstad en vormden een gemeenschap die werd gekenmerkt door gedeelde arbeid, collectieve identiteit en een sterk gevoel van waardigheid als socialistische arbeiders. Dit proefschrift traceert die geschiedenis van de opbouwjaren via de economische hervormingen van de jaren negentig — die massaontslagen, faillissementen van fabrieken en de ontmanteling van het danwei-systeem met zich meebrachten — tot de late jaren 2000, toen alle vijf grote fabrieken in de textielstad gesloten waren. Wat resteerde was een gemeenschap van voormalige arbeiders die in hetzelfde woongebied bleven wonen, gescheiden van hun vroegere werkplek door wat deze studie omschrijft als een onzichtbare maar diepgevoelde grens.

De centrale theoretische bijdrage van dit proefschrift ligt in het gebruik van nostalgie als analytisch kader voor het begrijpen van de relatie tussen klasse-identiteit en erfgoedpolitiek. Nostalgie wordt hier niet opgevat als een sentimenteel verlangen naar een beter verleden, maar als een complexe en contradictoire sociale kracht die de spanningen blootlegt tussen officiële erfgoednaratieven en de geleefde ervaringen van arbeiders. Deze studie maakt onderscheid tussen "bureaucratische nostalgie" — de selectieve en gesaniteerde presentatie van het industriële verleden door de staat — en "sociale nostalgie," die de collectieve en meervoudige verlangens van arbeiders over generaties heen omvat.

Terwijl de staat nostalgie inzet om middenklasseconsumptie en toerisme aan te trekken via erfgoedprojecten zoals kunstdistricten en straten in Sovjetstijl, ervaren voormalige arbeiders nostalgie als iets veel pijnlijkers, tegenstrijdigers en productiefs. Ze zijn tegelijkertijd trots op hun socialistische verleden en verbitterd over hun verlating door de staat; ze verlangen naar een thuis dat onherkenbaar is veranderd, maar blijven er wonen en vorm aan geven.

Dit proefschrift betoogt dat industrieel erfgoed en erfgoed van de arbeidersklasse niet van elkaar gescheiden kunnen en mogen worden. Het stelt een fundamentele vraag die in het veld werd opgeworpen: "Hoe kan het industrieel erfgoed heten als er geen arbeidersklasse meer is?" Het beoogt te begrijpen hoe arbeiders omgaan met de diepe breuken tussen hun vroegere industriële leven en hun huidige betrokkenheid bij erfgoed, en onderzoekt of het concept nog steeds bruikbaar is voor het verkennen van klasse-identiteiten in een nominaal socialistische staat. Het officiële erfgoedbeleid in China geeft prioriteit aan de esthetische en economische waarde van industriële ruimten, terwijl het stelselmatig de stemmen, herinneringen en behoeften uitsluit van de arbeidersklassegemeenschappen die deze ruimten hebben gecreëerd. Erfgoedpolitiek functioneert in deze context als een vorm van neoliberaal stedelijk bestuur dat op ongelijkheid gebaseerde klassenverhoudingen reproduceert onder het mom van cultureel behoud. De voormalige textielarbeiders van Fangzhi Cheng zijn echter geen passieve slachtoffers van dit proces. Ze verzetten zich via herinneringen, via de dagelijkse overdracht van de habitus van de arbeidersklasse, en via het in stand houden van guanxi als een levende en belichaamde vorm van industrieel erfgoed.

Een belangrijke bijdrage van deze studie is de uitbreiding van de definitie van industrieel erfgoed voorbij fysieke artefacten en machines. Dit proefschrift betoogt dat erfgoed wordt belichaamd en geërfd door arbeiders in hun dagelijks leven, via eigenschappen die tijdens het socialistische tijdperk zijn gecultiveerd. Dit komt tot uitdrukking in habitus — de voortdurende aanwezigheid van eigenschappen zoals stiptheid, een sterke arbeidsethos en verantwoordelijkheidsgevoel, die arbeiders meenemen naar hun nieuwe, vaak precaire werkplekken. Daarnaast wordt het strategisch gebruik van guanxi — sociale netwerken en wederkerigheid die binnen de fabrieksgemeenschap zijn gevormd — gepresenteerd als een unieke vorm van intiem, affectief erfgoed. Samen tonen habitus en guanxi aan dat industrieel erfgoed niet beperkt is tot fabrieksgebouwen en machines; het wordt belichaamd, beoefend en overgedragen in het dagelijks leven van mensen uit de arbeidersklasse over generaties heen.

Dit proefschrift betoogt ten slotte dat klasse er nog steeds toe doet. Nu China's snelle verstedelijking en economische transformatie oude industriële gemeenschappen blijven hervormen, dreigen de ervaringen van voormalige socialistische arbeiders te worden opgeslokt door een erfgoeddiscours dat het industriële verleden viert terwijl het de mensen die het hebben geleefd uitwist. Door de stemmen, herinneringen en strategieën van drie generaties textielarbeiders in Fangzhi Cheng centraal te stellen, pleit dit proefschrift voor een meer inclusieve en kritische benadering van industrieel erfgoed — een benadering die arbeidersklassegemeenschappen niet beschouwt als objecten van erfgoedbehoud, maar als de meest essentiële en levende dragers ervan.

Appendix D

Curriculum Vitae

Xiao Luo was born in Xi'an, China, on 6 October 1986. She received a Bachelor's degree in 2008 and a Master's degree in 2011, both in Law from Xi'an Jiaotong University, China, and later obtained a second Master's degree in Chinese Studies from the University of Nottingham, UK. During her PhD, she also completed a Graduate Certificate in Data Analytics at QUT, Australia. Before coming to Leiden, she worked as a Student Advisor and taught for three years as a Lecturer at a university in China.

Xiao's research focuses on industrial heritage, nostalgia, and the working class, exploring their intersections with neoliberalism, labor, urbanization, and socialism, both within China and in comparative international contexts. She employs ethnographic approaches to investigate social and cultural transformation and lived experience in post-socialist and industrial settings worldwide.