

# Between politics and expertise: architectural agenda in the debate of Beijing urban development during the early communist era

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**ABSTRACT:** During the 1950s, Chinese architecture underwent a significant change. The newly-founded communist state employed a centralized system in both architectural practice and research. The connection between Chinese modern architecture, which was inspired by the Modernist approach in the West, and the architectural development in the West had been cut off. Most Chinese architectural professionals and scholars who were trained in North America and Europe continued to work for the new regime even though both professional and academic practices were reshaped and reoriented.

Architectural research and practice were challenged by not only the economic shortage of resources but also the newly instilled socialistic ideologies as well as their applications. When the new state pondered on the strategic plan of Beijing development, a large debate occurred between architectural scholars and professionals. One side led by Liang Sicheng and Chen Zhanxiang, both educated in the West suggested to preserve the old Beijing while building new urban centers west to the old urban core. On the other side led by the Soviet advisors and some West-trained Chinese architects and scholars advocated replacing the old Beijing with the new developments. Both groups presented their research analysis and conclusions, which focused on different aspects to define the value of a capital city. The three-year long debate was ended when the central government decided to support the latter opinion. This debate was considered not only an academic debate, but also an indicator of the beginning of political engagement and control in architectural scholarship and practice. From then on, the socialistic ideology and concepts gradually replaced the initial Western versions of architectural understanding and models.

This paper examines what the contextual changes for architectural practice and research was in a new regime with more socialistic influence. Rather than investigating the historical event of this debate, this study focuses on how architects and scholars from each side interacted with the governing party members and what the criterion were for the communist party to judge different viewpoints and opinions. This study will provide a case study to better understand the relationship between architectural scholarship and a particular political and social setting, and imply useful strategies for today's scholars and professionals.

Conference theme: Human context: social, cultural, and economic studies

Keywords: communism, party, state, architecture

## INTRODUCTION

Since the 1840s, generations of China's intelligentsia attempted to deal with the domestic chaos inherited from the fall of the Imperial Court and the challenges raised from the capitalist Western forces which, as Karl Marx predicted, served as "the unconscious tool of history" in breaking apart stagnant and tradition-bound society and in creating conditions for a social revolution in China. This attempt marked a significant stage in 1949 when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) controlled the entire mainland China and proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic. With a highly

disciplined and tightly knit organization of the Party cadres who had experienced more than two decades of armed struggles, a powerful central governance system was quickly built. This system combined material means such as technology, knowledge and learning with ideological sanctions in the Soviet totalitarian form, and therefore exercised broader and tighter control over Chinese society than any previous government in history. Under the communist rule in the early 1950s, all major sectors of Chinese population – workers, peasants, students, and professionals—were enrolled in a close-meshed system of mass organization (Harding, 1981.). As a result, all professions, including

architects and architectural scholars, were quickly and effectively integrated into the new organizational system.

The structural transformation of architectural profession started at the first year of the People's Republic. As early as 1953, state enterprises were the primary employer of all architects as well as architectural scholars. In September 1953, the Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Construction, Wan Li, announced that all private enterprises in the design and construction industries would henceforth be prohibited from practicing in any government-funded project (People's Daily, 1953.) Three years later, private practice of architecture was effectively and entirely terminated and independent professionals had disappeared as legitimate economic actors. In the meantime, the Party also successfully redefined the social and ideological structures of architectural scholarship by a series of political campaigns and resource reorganizations. Therefore, it is not meaningful to examine any aspect of China's contemporary architecture except in the context of the Communist Party's efforts to change it.

Like other professions, the formation of architects and architectural scholars in modern China was derived from the adoption of Western learning and technology after China was forced to open its door to the West in the late 1800s. It was not until the 1920s when the first group of Chinese architects began their practices. All of them were trained overseas, mostly in North America and Europe. Although they were in small numbers – for example, only 55 members registered in the Chinese Architects Association until 1933 (Zou, 2001), these architects brought back the tradition of Western liberalism and academic autonomy, by which they conceived of their practices and research as actions free and independent of political control. In addition, unlike their counterparts in literature and arts, Chinese architects and architectural scholars were politically inactive. In China, as in the West, most architects and scholars normally lived in large cities, like Beijing and Shanghai, and were content to confine themselves to their areas of expertise and their practice and research interests. Meisner (1999) indicated that this political indifference actually originated from the deep disappointment towards the corrupt Nationalist regime which the Communist state replaced. Knowing little about the Marxism and communist ideologies, it was hard for Chinese architects to enthusiastically accept a government which proclaimed socialism and communism to be its aims. However, the dissatisfaction of former regime made them hope the new rulers could control the political and economical chaos and restore the national independence and reputation.

On the other hand, the communists also viewed Chinese professional practitioners, including architects, in an ambiguous and suspicious way. Zhou Enlai, the Premier of the new government once publicly announced that most of China's professionals and scholars has some degrees of bourgeois idealism and individualism (People's Daily, 1956). When the communists came to power in 1949, they were facing a continuous dilemma: they needed the skills and

expertise of the professionals to rebuild and modernize the country while these professionals were not the most reliably loyal followers of the Party line (Teiwes, 1987). As a result, the Party took a contradictory policy toward the professionals: on one hand, the Party continuously indoctrinated the professionals with communist ideologies in a more comprehensive and intensive way; on the other hand, the Party had to stimulate the professionals to be more productive. Especially in these areas that the Party lacked of its own experts, like architecture, the new rulers had to rely upon these professionals left over from the old regime. Hence, seeing these professionals as "a hand-maiden to its own political goals" (Goldman, 1987), the Party needed to reform the thoughts of these professionals in order to gain their allegiance.

How were Chinese architects and architectural scholars inextricably embedded in an authoritarian ruling system and how was the Communist Party able to achieve the reform of these architects and scholars' political views through ideological re-education while encouraging them to contribute their skills and productivity to the country's modernization? This question is intriguing because by 1954 the Party did not employ drastic and large-scale political campaigns in architectural professional as what had been done in Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries. Rather, the Party mainly took a series of administrative approaches to gradually undermine the independent power base of professional practice and academic activities. Also, the group of architects and scholars started to form social stratum embedded in the communist ruling system. This led to a bifurcation of the professionals – some individuals still valued the autonomy of practice and research while another became a part of the Party's administrative apparatus. In fact, the Party took advantage of the struggle of these two groups and made effective progress to impose new rules and principles in architectural production and research.

This paper examines how the cooperation of China's architectural practice and research into bureaucratic alliances of the Communist Party ruling mechanism in the early 1950s. At the first part, this paper provides a theoretical framework of analyzing the institutional change of architectural practice and research and the new role of architectural scholarship in the new regime. Then, this paper discussed the interaction between the changing institution and the activities of architectural practice and research by focusing on the case of the strategic plan of Beijing development.

## 1. A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The examples in Nazi Germany, Soviet Union and other eastern European countries has indicated that controlling capacity of a political system depends on whether this system can develop a set of institutions to control both public and private lives of architectural professionals. When analyzing the behavior patterns of architectural practice and research activities, a theoretical framework is established: architectural practitioners can be considered the recipients of the

ideological, social and operational changes under the new regime. The ideological context focuses on the relationships of ideas, values, faith, and beliefs that individual architects and scholars accepted, supported or maintain the interaction with other ideas, values, and beliefs. The social context refers to various types of relationships that architects and architectural scholars constantly interacted in, including their relationships with the Party cadres, leaders, the relationships between individuals, and the relationships with other professionals and disciplines. The operational context focuses on the differentiation of positions, formulation of rules and procedures, and prescription of authority, by which architectural practitioners gained the materials and resources to exert their expertise and support their daily lives.

This paradigm indicates a hypothetical prototype to analyze patterns of architectural practice and research activities. A behavior could be predicted by these three forces of social, operational and ideological contexts. That is, how an architectural scholar's research activities depended upon his/her social relationships with the Party cadres and others who have strong influence on the research work, upon the availability of material resources to which he/she had accessed to support the research, and upon the degree to which he/she had either accepted or resisted the new communist ideologies. In addition, these three factors are also reciprocal. For example, the relationship between architects and the operational structure was heavily affected by how the individuals dealt with their own social relationship with others and whether they were expected to follow "appropriate" values and ideologies. Likewise, an architect's interpersonal relationship with significant others was partially dependent upon whether the significant other cooperated or competed in operational structure, and upon whether the significant other held the same or opposite values and beliefs. Hence, if the practitioner had a positive relationship with the significant others, and if the practitioner played an important role in the operation, he would easily accept the values and beliefs that he was expected to follow.

## **2. CHANGES IN THE EARLY 1950S**

What differentiated the Chinese Communist Party's practice of the early 1950s from those of previous regimes was the degree to which lucrative or powerful positions were monopolized by the state sector and the inability of the highly educated to exit voluntarily from state employment. Having established the People's Republic in October 1949, the Party began to launch a series of efforts to restore the nation's war-torn economy suffered from severe inflation and unemployment. The first duty for the new state was to control key sectors of economy, which were owned by Western capitalists, mainly British, American and French firms. Secondly, the new state had to restore normal economic order, which required the government to impose managerial and supervising rules and regulations to organize economic activities. Then, the

Party needed to instill its communist and socialist orders to guide economic growth. Hence, it was vital to reduce the conflicts between different economic sectors to a minimum and to establish an effective system to carry out the government's plans. As a result, nationalization of all private enterprises was not only important to build a socialist and communist order, but was inevitable in practice. The conduction of nationalization directly led to the changes in operational factors.

By 1950, most of foreign bourgeoisie were immediately confiscated or nationalized without any compensation. By 1952, most of the Western faculty and administrative staff had departed and all private control in higher education had been eliminated (Pepper, 1987). There were few foreign architectural firms in China during 1949. Most Western-based architects left China as early as 1937 when the Sino-Japan war started – some of them completely withdrew from the Asian market while some transferred their offices to Hong Kong or Singapore. Some major domestic firms which once thrived in China's design market had also moved their offices to Taiwan or Hong Kong right before the communists' arrival, including, Ji-Tai Associates, a major player in domestic market with more than 110 projects completed by 1949 (Yang, 2007).

The Nationalization of domestic architectural firms was actually initiated before the birth of the People's Republic in October 1949. The Communist authority founded the state-run Northern China Construction Company on August 10, 1949 as the first architecture and construction entity recognized by the new ruler (Zou, 2001). This company successfully recruited architects and engineers from all over China by offering better salaries and benefits. Zhuang Jun, who was a graduate from the University of Illinois and also founded the first domestic architectural firm in China, recalled that the communists cadres came to Shanghai and presented the job offer to invite him to work in the company in October 1949 – "they were asking me warmly and friendly to participate in a historical work of building the new capital for the people's government. They brought me a special offer of a provided residence with built-in bathrooms, which was luxurious during that period." (Fang, 2006). As a result, Zhuang closed his 25-years-old firm and joined this state company with his 50 subordinates and students. In October 1949, the Beijing Military Commission, which was the provisional governing entity of the city, planned to found state-run Yong Mao Construction Company with special emphasis on Beijing's architectural and construction market. Three major private enterprises were incorporated – Ji-Tai's Beijing Branch Office led by an elite architect, Yang Tingbao, a University of Pennsylvania alumnus, Long Hu Architects led by architect Zhu Zhaoxue, who was educated in France and Belgium, and Gu Chengpeng Architects from Shanghai (Zou, 2001). In December 1951, Chen Zhi, another University of Pennsylvania alumnus and one of the three principles of the Allied Architects, the largest domestic private architectural firm, received an

invitation from his former students in the Shanghai Municipal Government to join a proposed state-run Eastern China Design Company. Chen discussed this with two other principals and all agreed to terminate private practice within six months and to join in the new company. All three principals refused special stipends from the new company (Guo, 2005). By 1953, most middle-size and large-size architectural firms had been either merged or re-organized into city-or province-based design institutes ran by the state. Prominent members of architectural professionals were assigned leading positions in the new entities with considerable benefits and privileges.

The nationalization was also completed in higher education. Most of architectural faculty remained in their positions while all prominent members found extra appointments in the governmental administrative apparatus. Liu Dunzhen, department chair of architecture at the National Central University (the name changed into the Nanjing University after 1949) and famed by his study in traditional Chinese architecture, was appointed in Nanjing City Cultural Commission and Jiangsu Province Cultural Commission. Liang Sicheng, a prominent alumnus of University of Pennsylvania and also the department chair at the distinguished Tsing Hua University, became the deputy director of the Beijing Urban Planning Committee, which was in charge of all planning, design and construction of Beijing.

Nationalization of architectural practice and research had produced two immediate consequences. First, all architects and architectural scholars became the state's employees, which had completely changed their working nature. It meant that they did not have the freedom to choose their works and occupations any more. Before 1949, they were able to move between sectors- sometimes by choice, sometimes by necessity- and such occupational flexibility gave this stratum a critical degree of autonomy from the state. After 1949, legitimate professional activities were limited to the public sector. Not only were disaffected professionals and managers unable to retreat to private lives, but they were also not even permitted to resign from their jobs without securing approval from the very superiors from whom they wished to escape. In addition, being state employees, architects and scholars must conduct their works in a well-defined institutional framework and circulate their opinions only through authorized channels. As the Party paid the salaries and took the responsibility for the living and working conditions of architects and scholars, it gradually imposed an operational control before an ideological conformity could be achieved. Secondly, the nationalization generated two strata of architects and scholars – the establishment ones and these who preferred independence. Establishment architects could enjoy protections and privileges only through their cooperation with the powerful state. As a result, "By playing assigned roles as supporters of the establishment and the servants of the state, they gain patriotic self-esteem, outlets for their publications, power over their peers, and opportunities for scarce

commodities such as housing and travel abroad." (Israel, 1986). On the other hand, these who remained autonomy and independence would find it was extreme hard and dangerous to work in a way outside of the state's system and without bureaucratic alliances. It was obvious that during the early 1950s the Party considered transforming elite architects and prominent scholars into establishment ones the primary task to achieve the operational control.

The change of operational factors resulted in changes of social contexts. Before 1949, Chinese architects and architectural scholars usually established their socialization networks by their educational backgrounds – the schools that they attended, the teachers that they learned from, or the disciplines that they majored in. People tended to be closer to these who graduated from the same school or shared experiences of being one's students. The inner circle of personal relationships based upon educational background often determined architects' and scholars' career choices. For example, when Liang Sicheng founded architectural program at the Northeast University in 1928, he invited his classmates, Chen Zhi and Tong Jun from University of Pennsylvania to be faculty there. When the Northeast University was dismissed due to Japanese invasion in 1931, Chen Zhi, Tong Jun and Zhao Shen, all University of Pennsylvania alumni, founded Hua Gai Architects in Shanghai. These graduated from engineering programs while working as architects would feel difficult to enter the social circle of architects graduating from architectural programs. However, the nationalization changed the personal socialization circles. People from different educational backgrounds had to work together, which consequently resulted in conflicts among interpersonal relationships. For example, when serving for the Beijing Urban Planning Committee, Liang Sicheng, the deputy director, struggled with Hua Nanguai, the chief engineer of the committee, about whether architects or engineers should take the major roles in urban planning (Liang, 1986).

In addition, the Party's special emphasis on the stratum of elite and its effort to transform them into establishment ones caused the spectrum of political participation in terms of the interpersonal relationships with high-level Party cadres. The elite architects and scholars were normally assigned high-level positions in the new-established administrative apparatus and therefore they gained more direct access to interact with high-level Party cadres. Some elite members, like Liang Sicheng and Hua Nanguai, could not only have frequent chances to meet with senior Party cadres like the Mayor of Beijing or the Minister of Construction, but also had direct channel to communicate with the highest level Party leaders. In 1950s, Liang sometimes had written letters to the Premier Zhou Enlai when he found that he could not convince lower level cadres (Liang, 1986). The social status and personal connection played a determining role in architectural practice and scholarship. For expressing critical opinions in 1956, Liang Sicheng received drastic criticism while still remaining in his job. But Chen

Zhanxiang, a middle-level city design expert, was considered as a "rightist" and was sent to a labor camp at Beijing's countryside for re-education. The different treatment derived not only from the content of opinions and means of dissemination but also from the status of the two men.

For Chinese architects and architectural scholars, the transition to socialism meant less independence and freedom. The virtually objectives of the continuous changes in operational and social contexts were to subject Chinese architects and scholars to processes of thought reform and ideological re-molding. It was noted that unlike other political campaigns against "counterrevolutionaries" which were aimed to eliminate political dissent in general, the ideological campaigns focusing on Chinese professionals had specific goals of not destroying these social groups but rather establishing the political loyalty and preserving their expertise and talents to serve the new society. In 1951, the Party initiated the first political campaign towards all Chinese intellectuals to reorient them away from the Western theories and scholarships in which most of them had been trained and to transit towards Soviet theories and scholarships. The aim was to expunge Western liberal values and indoctrinate the intellectuals with Marxism-Leninism (Goldman, 1987). However, as this campaign targeted all Chinese intellectuals, these in literature, humanities and arts, who the Party was primarily concerned, were the most affected. This ideological campaign allowed Chinese professionals, scientists, and engineers more leeway as their works were more abstract and more theoretical and the Party lacked the knowledge and skills to understand. More importantly, these expertise and skills were crucial for the Party to restore and develop economy. Therefore, although Chinese architects and architectural scholars were inevitably affected by the Party's ideological control and thought reform, there was a relative relaxation in the ideological contexts during the early 1950s.

### **3. THE DEBATE OF BEIJING DEVELOPMENT PLAN IN THE EARLY 1950S**

After the Liberation Army took over Beijing in January 1949, the Communist Party leaders decided to choose Beijing as the capital city for the future People's Republic (Mao, 1991). In April 1949, when the provisional city government, Beijing Military Administration Committee convened two meetings to discuss Beijing's urban development for the new regime. All elite architects and architectural scholars who were in Beijing were called to participate in the meetings. Zhong Sen, a principal from a private firm -- Long Hu Architects, suggested setting up a governmental entity to act as the administrative role and make policies in Beijing's urban development. The Party accepted the suggestion and established the Beijing Urban Planning Committee on May 22, 1949. The provisional mayor, Ye Jianyin (who became one of the ten marshals in Communist China later), was the director and several elite architects and architectural

scholars, including Liang Sicheng, Hua Nanguai, Zhong Sen and Wang Mingzhi, were assigned as members of the committee (People's Daily, 1949). The reports about this establishment published by the Party's main mouthpiece, the People Daily, was titled as "the People's Government Invited Experts to Form the Urban Committee", which demonstrated a fact that the Party had to face -- although the Party possessed strong political powers armed by Marxism-Leninism, it still lacked sufficient capability and skills in some key areas, like city development. This caused the Party to primarily rely upon the Western trained professionals, one of the least politically reliable groups.

However, the first conflict occurred not between the Party cadres and the professionals, but rather, it was from the architectural scholars themselves. In June 1949, Hua Nanguai, the chief engineer of the committee, presented his proposal of Beijing development "the Outline of the 1<sup>st</sup> Session of New Urban Planning of Beijing". Hua proposed to rebuild the old city of Beijing by removing the city walls and preserving the most important traditional complexes, including the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven. Hua also considered developing modern traffic system the primary work. Liang Sicheng intensely opposed this proposal as he thought the city would be split by traffic systems. More importantly, Liang regarded both the old city and the city walls as the outstanding patterns of traditional Chinese architecture and it was vital to conserve all these structures as a living museum of architecture. In order to prove his opinion, in September 1949 Liang wrote a letter to Nie Yongzhen (who replaced Ye Jianyin in August 1949 and also became one of the ten marshals in Communist China later), the Mayor of Beijing, to stress that engineers were not capable of engaging in urban planning and the government should allow more architects to involve in Beijing's urban development:

"It is most important to understand the differences of capabilities and responsibilities among architects, engineers, and construction contractors. Most people do not know this...The knowledge of engineers is confined to construction structures and materials. On the other hand, in addition to understand building structures and materials, architects must take four to five years of rigorous studies to understand basic human needs. An architect's work is to achieve possible maximum in spatial beauty and uses based on the minimum of materials and land... I hope our new government to understand this difference between architects and engineers first." (Liang, 2001).

Liang also implied that the Party should employ people with sufficient architectural experience to become the Party cadres who would lead architectural practice and urban development (Liang, 2001). Being the academic pioneer of traditional Chinese architecture, Liang considered Beijing, which had served as the Capital City of China for over 850 years, the best-preserved imperial city in the world with a large intact palace complex, the Forbidden City, the most complete city

wall system, and a large number of traditional residential patterns of courtyard houses and Hutongs (Liang, 2001). Therefore, in February 1950, Liang and Chen Zhanxiang, a city planning expert trained from the University of Liverpool, presented a rough planning proposal and suggested building the new city center at the western suburban area in order to give rooms for new development while preserving the old city and patterns of traditional architecture. This proposal, called Liang-Chen proposal, pointed the main problems in the existing old city: 1) the high density of the old city (21,400 people per square kilometer) made no sufficient space for new central governmental offices and residence for their staffs, not ever mention land and space for future development; 2) having developed for over centuries, the old city of Beijing had already formed an intrinsic urban order with a definite south-north axis, the imperial palace at the center and all clear-oriented urban blocks; and 3) the existing city wall system was a major physical obstacle of further development for the old city (Liang, 2001). More importantly, Liang-Chen proposal studied the history of Beijing and demonstrated that the center of the capital city had changed various times in history according to new needs. Therefore, when a new regime was founded, it was possible to re-establish the city center in a different location. As what Liang described, the key of this proposal was “win-win” to “preserve the old city and to build a new and modern city.” (Liang, 2001). However, the Party was obviously not quite satisfied at this proposal. Liang and Chen had made more than 100 copies of this proposal and submitted to the Central Government, Beijing City Government, and the Beijing Branch of the Chinese Communist Party (Liang, 2001). There was no response at all. Two months later, Liang wrote a letter directly to the Premier Zhou Enlai to urge the decision-making. What Liang and Chen did know was that in the Party’s eyes, the urban development of Beijing was not purely architectural and urban, but a political issue. First, Liang-Chen proposal ignored the importance of Tiananmen Gatetower, where Chairman Mao proclaimed the founding of the People’s Republic and where the starting point towards the imperial palace – the Forbidden City. Building a new city center at the western suburban areas would definitely decrease the political meaning of Tiananmen. In addition, the south-north axis throughout the entire Beijing old city clustered the most sacred space – the center of political power -- in recent China’s history. Continuously using this axis in the new regime gave a psychological benefit to the new rulers and also sent a strong message to the Chinese people that the communist party had fully inherited the governing authority all over China. Chairman Mao once complained that “why those old emperors could live there while I could not?” Secondly, the Chinese Communist revolution of 1949 was not a “proletarian revolution” defined by Marxism as the Chinese proletariat was still in small number and remained politically dormant. In the Communists’ eyes, cities were viewed as bastions of conservatism, the strongholds of counter-revolutionary activities, the

centers of foreign imperialism, and the breeding grounds for social inequalities, ideological impurities and moral corruptions. The Party considered itself not only the occupier, but also liberators of the cities. In 1949, there was only 4% Beijing residents were workers, far behind the average level for other socialist capital cities (Dong, 2006). Therefore, to build a “People’s Beijing”, it was crucial to increase the number of workers in this socialist capital city. The old city of Beijing had few factories as well as few workers. If building a new city outside of the old one, the lack of proletariat power in the old city would remain and the Party would feel hard to establish an effective control without a solid proletarian foundation. A city without sufficient number of workers, who were defined by the Marxism and Leninism as the backbone of people, could not claim itself “a people’s city.” In 1953, Chairman Mao asked Liu Ren, the Second Secretary of the Beijing Branch of the Communist Party, “if we do not have enough workers in Beijing, shall we consider to move our capital to another place?” (The Beijing Branch of the Communist Party, 2000).

In the meantime, a group of Soviet advisors had arrived in Beijing and brought the experience of building socialist capital of Moscow. In December 1949, the Soviet advisors presented a report, “Suggestions on Improving Beijing’s Municipal Facilities”, to the Beijing City Government. This report clearly stressed that Tiananmen Gatetower be the spatial core of New Beijing and also suggested building the state’s new executive center along the Chang’an Street, the east-west oriented main street in front of the imperial Forbidden City, to form an east-west axis as a subordinate axis to the dominant south-north axis.

Based upon the Soviet report, some Chinese architects worked out a detailed design proposal. In April 1950, Zhu Zhaoxue and Zhao Dongri presented “the Opinions about the Capital Urban Development Plan”, in which Zhu and Zhao supported to reuse the old city for the new city center by conserving some key traditional buildings while demolishing large numbers of decayed buildings for the new development. Zhu and Zhao’s proposal highlighted the special meaning of Tiananmen Gatetower by continuing using it as the center of Beijing and suggested making good use of existing buildings for the new government. In addition, this proposal satisfied the economic needs – reusing the old city would be cost much lower than building a new city and maintaining an old one (Dong, 2006). More importantly, this proposal met the demands from both the Party leaders and the Soviet advisors. First, the headquarters of the Communist Party had stationed at the suburb Beijing. Reusing the old city would allow the Party leaders move into the old city of Beijing, offering them a more comfortable place than humble houses in the countryside. Secondly, most of the Party’s cadres were from poor peasants so that they usually were intermingled with strong feeling of suspicion toward cities. This became a notion deeply ingrained in these cadres’ mind when they perceived old buildings and traditional blocks, which were viewed as symbols of old society and old life styles and should

be removed in the new socialist capital. Zhu-Zhao's proposal fulfilled their desires by replacing the old city with new buildings and development. Thirdly, the Soviet advisors considered that building a new city outside of the old one violated socialist principles as it resulted in gradually abandonment of the old city as well as its inhabitants. A socialist state should place priority on promoting people's lives and fulfilling their needs. Finally, the proposal demonstrated that it was possible to redefine the meaning of Tiananmen Gate tower as well as the Tiananmen Square from a imperial center of backwardness into a symbol of the socialist consolidation.

In a debate, a Soviet advisor released that it was actually Chairman Mao who had already decided to live in the old city:

"We are informed by the Mayor, Comrade Peng Zhen, that he has discussed this issue with Chairman Mao. Mao told him that the major state apparatuses would be located within the old city while the secondary apparatuses could be located outside. We agree that it is a right decision, also the most economic solution." (Dong, 2006, p.8)

Although it was clear that the highest level authority had stated their attitude, the Party never announced publicly which proposal it chose. Also, there was no response to Liang-Chen Proposal. Behind the silence of the Party, the construction of building new governmental offices along the Chang'an Street had started, following the suggestions by the Soviet advisors and Zhu-Zhao proposal. During the entire debate, Liang and Chen actually underwent harsh criticism from their colleagues, most of which used political notions and terms. Some architects criticised Liang and Chen hold capitalist and exploiters' worldviews as their proposal did not aim to promote the life conditions of people living in the old city (Liang, 2001). Some questioned Liang and Chen's political attitudes as their proposal displayed strong affections towards the imperial honor of the past while disregarding the great revolutionary achievement of the present (Liang, 2001). More seriously, Liang and Chen were attacked to attempt to ignore the "importance of the Tiananmen as the political center and the symbol of the new regime's consolidation" (Wang, 2003).

However, the Party organ had not publicly criticised Liang and Chen, largely confining itself to reporting some opinions from both sides. The low key played by the Party demonstrated that the Party did not want to be blamed to make decisions mainly based upon political reasons. In order to restore the nation's industry and economy, the professionals' help and cooperation were vitally needed. Hence, in the early People's Republic era, the Party granted architects and scholars a degree of academic freedom in order to win their cooperation in economic development and to promote the Party's skills and expertise. But, it did not mean that the Party could tolerate any autonomy and independence in architectural practice and research. Once the Party had its establishment architects and its

own architects recruited from young students, the Party could rely less upon these non-loyal professionals and possessed more deliberate means to reform them. It was what happened in China's architecture after 1952.

## CONCLUSION

In the early Communist era, the working nature and conditions of China's architectural practice and research had been changed entirely. The communist party had gradually taken turns to change the operational, social and ideological contexts in which architects and architectural scholars fulfilled their expertise and skills. It was noted that the communist party took a step-by-step move to transform architectural professionals into establishment ones. The shortage of skills and expertise made the Party unable to assume a complete control of the profession in 1949. As a result, the Party first limited the Party's involvement in architecture while allowing other key aspects to be remained as before. First, in operational contexts, the nationalization made all architectural professionals the employees of the state. In addition, the nationalization had provided a system with less academic autonomy to force the architectural professionals to participate in this system for both practical and private lives. Hence, a professional could not withdraw to his/her studies or practices if he/she was not satisfied at the policies of the Party or the state. This system also defined the interpersonal relationships between professionals as well between them and other people. The elite and prominent architects and scholars were encouraged to be transformed into establishment ones. The Party also granted them more tolerance and more time for the transformation. The ideological campaigns would not be conducted until the Party achieved the strong control in both operational and social contexts. For these who had complied with this transformation, the Party would grant awards in terms of work position, income and other privileges. While those who resisted this transformation, they would undergo thought reforms conducted by not only the Party cadres, but also their colleagues who had completed this transformation.

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