

Whose Model is it Anyway: Bo Xilai, Xi Jinping and the Chongqing Model

Daniel Lanting

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Introduction

In early February 2012 news began to spread that Wang Lijun, Chongqing's police chief and Chongqing Party Secretary Bo Xilai trustee, had gone to the US Consulate in Chengdu to seek asylum. Over the next weeks a tale of corruption, murder, deceit and power abuse would unravel, shocking China and the rest of the world. These events also gave a glimpse into the secretive world of elite politics in China.

Chongqing had by this time already become a household name for many in China. Since 2007 Bo Xilai, one of the princelings and son of one of the 'eight immortals' Bo Yibo, had been Party Secretary. Bo began a large-scale publicity campaign about what would become known as the 'Chongqing model'. Some argued he did this to promote a new vision for China's future, which he was cultivating during his time as Party Secretary in Chongqing. Others believe Bo was openly campaigning for a spot on the Politburo Standing Committee and only using the publicity for that reason.

International newspapers and scholars began to pay attention after the Wang Lijun incident. Who was this strongman Party Secretary in Chongqing and what was happening there? Details began to come out about Bo Xilai's tough leadership style and his anti-corruption campaign. Focus soon also shifted to the other aspects of Bo Xilai's policies in Chongqing. The innovative economic strategy, the focus on equality, social housing and housing registration reform programs (*hukou*) also gained attention.

After Bo Xilai was removed from his position and accused of corruption and abuse of power, attention shifted to the world of elite politics in China. Bo Xilai, as a result of his princeling status and charisma, had been seen as one of the potential candidates for a position on the 2012 Politburo Standing Committee. He had grown very popular in Chongqing because people believed he was focusing on issues important to them. In fairness, Chongqing did indeed implement policies that sought to tackle growing inequality, criminality and corruption. It remains questionable however to what extent Bo Xilai would have sought or been able to translate this to the national level.

One of the reasons Chongqing became such a hot topic in China was the media war between Bo Xilai and Wang Yang, the Party Secretary in Guangdong province. Bo and Wang became entangled in a highly publicized debate about the role of the government in tackling inequality. For Bo the Chongqing model showed how the government could take an active role in addressing inequality. Wang on the other hand repeatedly stated the role of the government was to 'make the cake bigger', referring to economic prosperity. He believed that a focus on continued economic growth was the government's main concern, not how to divide the spoils of that growth equally. This confrontation launched a battle

between left leaning intellectuals, collectively known as the New Left, and more liberal intellectuals. The New Left latched onto the Chongqing model for its leftist tendencies, and focus on combatting inequality.

The Chongqing model became a different thing for varying people and groups. For the New Left it represented China's future, and the first serious experiment with more leftist policies. Mark Leonard described the rivalry between the Chongqing and Guangdong models as a battle for 'China 3.0' (Leonard 2012). For Bo Xilai it served his political ambitions and boosted his popularity among the public and increased attention from the media. Some critics disputed altogether the existence of the Chongqing model. This paper will show the Chongqing model can best be understood as a political project used by Bo Xilai in his quest for a seat on the Politburo Standing Committee.

Bo Xilai became very popular among Chongqing residents as a result of the policies of the Chongqing model. The land exchange market and building of social housing coupled with *hukou* reform offered an alternative to rural citizens who feared the consequences of losing their rural land. Bo's crackdown on organised crime and corrupt local officials also proved popular with citizens who felt disadvantaged by the ruling system. All of this altered Xi Jinping's vision on the importance of popularity in Chinese politics. By analyzing certain aspects of Xi Jinping's policies it is evident that he has also sought to increase his popularity among the Chinese population.

Another aspect that will be examined is how Xi Jinping has taken over various policies and strategies that were originally employed by Bo Xilai. One clear example is the anti-corruption campaign that Bo Xilai succumbed to. There are also other examples. For instance Xi has become increasingly focused on imbuing a nationalist spirit in the Chinese population. Furthermore, China's current economic strategy portrays similarities to those followed in Chongqing.

I will first address the history of policy experimentation in Chinese politics. Have similar models or experiments existed in the past and what can this tell us about the Chongqing model? Next the Chongqing model will be deconstructed. What policies made up the model? Which of these were examples of policy experimentation? What do the policies say about Bo Xilai? Third the economics of the Chongqing model will be explained. What is the relationship between the economic and social policies of the Chongqing model? Then there will be a comparison between the Chongqing and Guangdong models and a discussion about the need for differing policy approaches across China. Next there will be a section on Bo Xilai's use of the model for his personal ambition, the rise of celebrity politics in China and the role of the New Left in legitimizing the Chongqing model. Finally, Xi Jinping's copying of certain strategies will be examined.

Methodology

This research project is an attempt to situate the Chongqing model in Chinese politics. Various primary and secondary sources will be analyzed and used to paint a picture of the Chongqing model and its position within Chinese politics. How have the discourses about the Chongqing model influenced the understanding of it? How have some key actors spoken about the Chongqing model? These questions will be answered by placing this debate in the broader literature about governance in China.

Sources include articles by Chinese scholars and interviews with certain key actors in the Chongqing model. Furthermore, articles by other scholars focusing on Chongqing and Chinese politics will also be used. Another important source of information is the national and international media and how these have written about Bo Xilai and the Chongqing model. As will be argued in the main body of this paper, the Chongqing model can partially be seen as a discursive creation. It was, in part at least, created through the work of certain scholars and media appearances by Bo Xilai and others. Therefore scholarly sources and news articles from national and international media are essential to understand the discursive nature of the Chongqing model. These articles will also serve as the main source of information about the specifics of the policies that made up the Chongqing model. On the basis of this information arguments will be presented to show how the Chongqing model can best be understood, what the Chongqing model meant for Bo Xilai, and how Xi Jinping has emulated certain aspects of Bo Xilai's strategy.

Policy experimentation in Chinese politics

Chinese politics has a long history of policy experimentation. Since the early days of the CCP, during the Japanese occupation, local experiments were used to fine tune policies. This strategy was meant to find innovative solutions to social, economic and political problems. Before and during the Japanese occupation the communists in China were the ruling party in various small, mostly rural, townships. In the late 1920s Mao Zedong and Deng Zihui, another important early figure in the CCP, experimented with land reform (Heilmann 2008, p.4). This model of governance can be traced from the land reforms in the 1920s to current day China. It is the CCP's strategy to ensure the sustenance of the Party's rule under ever changing circumstances.

A country with a population the size of China's faces challenges that are of a much larger scale than most other countries. Add this to the incredible speed at which China has developed and it is obvious Chinese policy makers rely on policy flexibility to maintain development. This flexibility allows Chinese policy makers to react quickly to constantly altering situations. China's history of policy experimentation is important to the discussion about the Chongqing model. Some, mostly from the New Left, promoted this as a unique occurrence in Chinese politics. However, the long tradition of policy experimentation may show that what happened in Chongqing was just another attempt at finding innovative policy solutions to contemporary issues.

Heilmann argues China's "permanent revolution" (2011, p.7) style of governance allows it to generate "an array of creative – proactive as well as evasive – tactics for managing sudden change and uncertainty" (2011, p.7). China's large geographic size requires varying policy responses to ensure continual development. This was clear to the leaders of the CCP from an early stage. The initial experiments aimed at finding the best methods for land distribution and local governance. The party leadership at the time encouraged "party organs at each level to experiment with unconventional measures and to produce diverse models for emulation by other localities" (Heilmann 2008, p.5). In the 1940s policy experimentation was adopted as an official governance strategy of the CCP (Ibid, p.7).

Policy experimentation continued to be an essential strategy in Chinese governance. Deng Xiaoping would later use the phrase "crossing the river by groping the stones" (Heilmann 2008, p.12)¹. Experimentation would play an important role in the opening up period under Deng Xiaoping. In 1992 China's focus on using policy experimentation was included in the constitution of the

¹ Heilmann attributes the quote to Chen Yun rather than Deng Xiaoping, though it is commonly presented as a statement made by Deng.

CCP (Heilmann 2008, p. 26). Other scholars also examine the use of experimentation in China's policy process (Wang S. 2011; Hamrin 1984; Mulvad 2015; Huang P. 2011; Huang Y. 2013; Leonard 2012).

Wang Shaoguang, a Chinese scholar linked to the New Left movement, has written about policy experimentation in China's rural healthcare systems. His focus is on the rise and subsequent replacement of the cooperative medical stations (CMS). Wang Shaoguang sketches four distinct periods of China's rural healthcare system, the rise of CMS, the universalization of CMS, the decline of CMS, and the exploration for new CMS models (2011, p.104). Wang Shaoguang shows that early models of rural healthcare were initiated at grassroots level and then picked up by national party leaders. He then explains how villages were given the freedom within the CMS system to implement it differently according to the needs of the village. Wang Shaoguang's portrayal of policy experimentation in rural healthcare aptly portrays the long history of this strategy.

Other scholars have shown how this strategy was used for economic policies (Huang P, 2011; Mulvad 2015), a carbon trading scheme (Huang Y, 2013), social structures (Harmin 1984), and even foreign policy (Sohn 2011). As shown by these various scholars policy experimentation can be seen in most areas of policy making. It is not surprising therefore that discussions about the Chongqing model have also centered on policy experimentation. Some of the policies that made up the Chongqing model were clear attempts at using experimentation to find innovative policy solutions. What can the specifics of China's use of policy experimentation tell us about the Chongqing model?

Clearly, Chinese-style experimentation must not be mistaken as an attempt at "scientific", "evidence-based" policy selection. At every stage, from setting policy objectives to selecting model experiments and identifying generalizable policy options, "proceeding from point to surface" has always been an intensely politicized process driven by competing interests, ideological frictions, personal rivalries, tactical opportunism or ad hoc policy compromises.
(Heilmann 2008, p.28)

This explanation of how best to understand policy experimentation in Chinese politics offers several interesting concepts that relate to discussions about the Chongqing model. First of all policy experimentation is "an intensely politicized process" (Heilmann 2008, p.28). This suggests that although experimentation is desired not all officials can engage in it to the same extent. Bo Xilai and Wang Yang were both senior figures within the CCP. Bo is the son of one of the 'eight immortals', Bo Yibo. Wang Yang is a member of the so-called *tuanpai*, the party

officials who rose through the ranks of the CCP's youth league (Li 2008). Wang Yang also had strong ties to Hu Jintao (Li 2008). The powerful positions Wang Yang and Bo had within the Party's ranks likely played a roll in their freedom to engage in policy experimentation in Chongqing and Guangdong.

Secondly, Heilmann states policy experimentation can often be seen as a result of tactical opportunism. This suggests experimentation does not only stem from a drive for innovation and problem solving. Instead, party officials may engage in experimentation for personal reasons. In China's political system party officials rely on decisions from the top level to further their climb within the Party's ranks. Experimentation offers these officials a chance to show the higher officials they deserve to be promoted. For many it seemed likely Bo Xilai was using his time in Chongqing as a launching pad to get a senior position on the Politburo Standing Committee in 2012 (Cheng 2013; Fewsmith 2012). Following this line of argumentation it can be said that Bo Xilai used policy experimentation in Chongqing in his campaign for a position on the Standing Committee. The policies implemented in Chongqing can then be seen as a form of tactical opportunism, rather than an overall vision for China's future. This will be elaborated upon later.

Clearly policy experimentation occurs in many different styles in China. From healthcare to economic policies and from environmental policies to foreign policy, it's all there. There is also a long history stretching back to the very beginnings of the Communist Party in China. Furthermore, policy experimentation is used for different reasons. Originally it was used out of necessity (Heilmann 2008). Nowadays party officials sometimes engage in experimentation for reasons of political opportunism. All of this is important for discussions about the Chongqing model. The following chapter will examine what the Chongqing model was and relate parts of that back to this discussion of policy experimentation in Chinese politics.

The Chongqing Model

Before Bo Xilai's sentencing for corruption in 2013 there was a lot of attention for his work in Chongqing between 2007 and 2012. One question that needs to be answered is how the 'Chongqing model' can be defined? This requires an analysis of the specific policies that were implemented in Chongqing during the period of Bo Xilai's leadership. Was the Chongqing model simply an implementation of policies supported by the central party in the long tradition of policy experimentation? Or were these policies part of a bid for power by Bo Xilai? Furthermore what aspects of the Chongqing model can be found in Xi Jinping's China?

Scholars still disagree about whether it is possible to speak of a 'Chongqing model'. Some say that it does not represent a new system and thus cannot be thought of as a model (Chan 2011). Others, including many from the New Left, do write about it as a model, and believe it to be a distinct approach to politics and governance in China (Cui 2011, Wang, S. 2009). By exploring what happened in Chongqing under the rule of Bo Xilai and Huang Qifan an attempt will be made to address this debate.

There is a wide range of policies that made up the Chongqing model, stretching from public housing to anti-corruption campaigns. In 2008 Chongqing municipality announced the 'Five Chongqings' plan (五个重庆). This included policies aimed at housing, transport, safety, the environment and public health. Furthermore, the municipality experimented with reforms of the *hukou* and rural land rights systems. Some of these policies were experimental, but sanctioned by the central party leadership. Others were similar to what most local governments attempt to achieve for their citizens. Most leaders aim to improve transport, safety and public health. Chongqing was different in some respects because of the approach it took to address these issues. Below we will examine what policies were implemented as part of the Chongqing model. All of this will serve to examine to what extent the Chongqing model was a personal project of Bo Xilai or if this was truly a radical experiment in Chinese politics. It will also show what aspects Xi Jinping has copied.

Social Housing

Some of the issues the Chongqing model was attempting to address were and are still found throughout China. At the launch of the Chongqing model in 2007 China was struggling with housing. There was a lot of attention in China "about rising property prices and most young people [felt] that they [could] no longer afford to buy their own accommodation" (Cheng 2013, p. 415). Part of the Chongqing model was aimed at dealing with the issue of limited and expensive

housing. The plan set out to increase per capita accommodation space for urban residents to 30 million square meters in 2012 and 35 in 2017 (Cheng 2013, p. 416). The Chongqing municipal government would also spend billions on building social housing for the cities poorer citizens. This included housing for the large group of economic migrants living in Chongqing.

Social housing in China has gone through various changes since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.² Deng, Hoekstra and Elsinga split China's social housing policy in four different periods, from 1949-1977, 1978-1998, 1999-2011 and since 2011. The two important periods for our purposes are the 'market period' (1999-2011) and the 'comprehensive period' (after 2011) (Deng, Hoekstra and Elsinga 2015, p.2). In 1988 the central government decided to increase marketization of housing. The new aim of China's housing policy was to make housing "a commodity that should be provided and consumed in the open market based on market principles" (Deng, Hoekstra and Elsinga 2015, p.3). After this call for marketization, the Chinese housing market in 1999 entered a 'market dominant' period. Concretely this resulted in the percentage of commodity housing rising from "50% in the late 1990s to about 85% after 2005".

This rapid increase in the percentage of commodity housing coincided with the period of rapid economic development and urbanization in China. This rapid development was due in large part to the availability of migrant workers, China's so-called 'floating population'. The marketization focus of China's housing policy had a strong negative impact on the affordability of housing for Chinese citizens. After increasing criticism about this, in 2006, the central government launched a new phase in housing policy (Deng, Hoekstra and Elsinga 2015). This new phase was aimed at increasing the availability of subsidized housing for lower income families, for instance China's floating population. The central government set new quotas for land earmarked for social housing.

The period from 2006-2011, with its focus on the provision of social housing, is an indication of the general trend in China's housing policy. There are clear similarities to the social housing focus in the Chongqing model. However, the Chongqing model was more progressive than the central government's national policy. The housing policy pursued in Chongqing from 2007 onwards served as a pilot project for China's national housing policy.

The predominant form of social housing in China came in the form of Economic Comfortable Housing (ECH). Local governments could sell "specially allocated land (with no or a lower land lease fee) ... free of municipal tax and other administrative fees to government-contracted developers" (Deng, Hoekstra and Elsinga 2015, p. 14). As a result of the lower profitability of ECH land for local governments however, there was little promotion of this policy by

² For a complete overview of the social housing policies from 1949 to 2013 see Deng, Hoekstra and Elsinga 2015.

local governments. According to an article in the National Business Daily the ministry is considering ending the ECH program (Deng, Hoekstra and Elsinga 2015, p.14).

The Chongqing government, therefore, followed a different path to tackle the lack of social housing. The ECH policy was abolished and instead the Chongqing government focused on the Low-Rent Housing scheme (LRH) and Public Rental Housing scheme (PRH). The LRH program was aimed at low-income groups with a local urban *hukou*. The PRH program was also aimed at low-income groups, but did not require a local urban *hukou*. In 2013 the central government announced its plans to unify the LRH and PRH programs (Deng, Hoekstra and Elsinga 2015).

Social housing also featured in the national 12th Five Year Plan (2011-2015). A review of the 12th Five Year Plan shows that local governments racked up high levels of debt and a large real estate bubble was created (Mai 2015). This shows similarities to the focus on government spending that was characteristic of the Chongqing model. The Chongqing model's focus on government spending in the field of housing can be seen in the large public housing construction projects that took place between 2007 and 2012.

Nevertheless, targets for affordable housing set in the 12th Five Year Plan were not met. Doubts remain about the Chongqing model's ability to stimulate a culture change in Chinese politics. A clear focus of the Chongqing model was to 'share the cake more equally', which included more options for affordable housing.

What this discrepancy between the ideals of the Chongqing model and the realities of China's development between 2011 and 2015 in the field of housing may point to is the largely rhetorical role this focus played in Bo Xilai's vision for China. This would support the idea that for Bo the Chongqing model was merely a political project aimed at increasing his status within the party. This is backed up by the fact that by the end of 2012 the Chongqing government had only managed to fund the building of some 6.6 million square meters of housing, far short of the intended target of 30 million square meters (Shih 2013).

The focus of China's national housing policy did, however, end up following the strategy that was experimented with in Chongqing. While Bo Xilai may have used this policy as a rhetorical tool in his personal campaign, Chongqing did serve as a proving ground for a new national focus on the PRH program. As mentioned earlier, Party officials have used policy experimentation for tactical reasons before.

Land Exchange Market

The public housing campaign was coupled with two other policy reforms in Chongqing. The first was the creation of China's "first and only 'land exchange market' ... in December 2008" (Cui 2011, p.649). The second was the massive

extension of urban *hukou* in Chongqing. The combination of these two policies led to the increased need for affordable public housing. Between August 2010 and July 2011 some “two million rural migrant workers changed their household registration from rural residence to urban residence.” (Cui 2011, p.652)

The creation of a land exchange market in Chongqing was a clear sign of policy experimentation. This was an unprecedented project that sought to address two of China’s national policy goals: speeding up the synchronized development of urban and rural areas and maintaining “1.8 billion mu [1.2 trillion square meters] of cultivated land to ensure the country’s food supply” (Cui 2011, p.649). The land exchange model allows farmers to convert their land to make it available for cultivation and then sell the certificates for using the land to developers. These developers are then allowed, “to purchase land-use rights in urban areas and develop that land.” (Cui 2011, p.650)

Chongqing’s Mayor Huang Qifan, who together with Bo Xilai was responsible for the implementation of the Chongqing model, stated the unused rural land issue was a problem for the whole of China (Huajie 2015). The massive number of migrant workers in China who moved from rural areas to urban areas for temporary work left behind large areas of unused rural land. Before the implementation of the land exchange market the only way to make use of this land was if local governments expropriated land after approval from the Ministry of Land and Resources. This appropriation of land by the government is of course deeply unpopular among the rural population. The land exchange market offered farmers the opportunity to sell their land rights to developers, creating a market for unused rural land.

The inspiration for the land exchange market is likely to have come from a document released by Ministry of Land and Resources in 2005 titled ‘*An opinion on regulating the experiment of linking up increased land use for urban development with decreased non-agricultural land use in rural areas*’. According to the Ministry of Land and Resources local governments’ quotas for urban development could be expanded if farmers or rural industries had converted non-used rural land for cultivation. Although Cui Zhiyuan labeled the Chongqing land exchange market as “China’s first and only”, this is not entirely accurate (Cui 2011, p.649). A similar project was launched around the same time in Chengdu, a prefecture-level city and the capital of Sichuan province. The Chongqing and Chengdu land markets though similar in what they tried to achieve, contain some significant differences. Before explaining these differences it is important to understand the background of China’s land use policy.

There is an official policy from the central government governing land use for all provinces, municipalities and cities. The policy tries to balance the needs for more urban development and preservation of agricultural land. More weight

is given to agricultural preservation than urbanization.³ This has created a ‘one-size fits all’ system of land use regulation for all Chinese cities. The National Land-use Master Plan Outline, the official government policy governing land use, sets hard quotas for preservation of agricultural land and construction land. The quotas are set annually at the central government level and then passed down to the provincial, municipal and city level.

China’s uneven development and the geological differences between provinces add extra pressure to this ‘one-size fits all’ system of land quotas. Some provinces and cities are experiencing rapid economic growth and urbanization and some areas of China are less suitable for agricultural production. As a result many Chinese cities are struggling with limited quotas for urban development. There was a need for new policies that could provide solutions to the dual problem of limited quotas for urban development and the preservation of agricultural land. The land exchange markets created in Chongqing and Chengdu deal with both of these problems, offering a sustainable solution to urbanization.

In 2007 Chongqing and Chengdu were named Pilot Areas for the Comprehensive Reform for Balanced Urban-Rural Development (Li, p. 50). The central government hoped the tried and tested strategy of policy experimentation could lead to innovative policies for land use. Chongqing and Chengdu were given the freedom to stray from the central government’s regulations on land use.

Both the Chongqing and Chengdu land exchange markets are based on the trading of ‘quota rights’. Converting rural land back to agricultural land after farmers have resettled in urban areas is how quotas are made. The creation of the land exchange markets led to the creation of “a new profession of ‘quota developers’” (Xiao 2015, p. 9). Quota developers are responsible for “the process of demolition, resettlement and reclamation” of rural land (Xiao 2015, p.9). This is where the Chongqing and Chengdu land exchange markets differ. Whereas in Chengdu there is a focus on private quota developers, in Chongqing the local government exclusively fulfills this role.

The differences in approach can be explained by the focus on the role of the state in the Chongqing model. A recurring theme in the various policies that formed the Chongqing model is the strong role of the state in leading society and development. It is not surprising therefore that in the land exchange market the local government would take such an important role upon itself. The focus on the role of the state in combatting inequality in Chongqing can be explained by Bo Xilai’s belief that this would be well received by the masses. Bo believed

³ Yuan Xiao explains this in a 2015 paper: “In the planning process, the country sets up a target for the size of arable land to be preserved. The projection of the size of new urban land development is based more on the target of arable land protection than on a projection of economic and population growth.” (p. 7)

implementing popular policies raised his political profile and increased his chances of promotion to the Standing Committee.

There is another significant difference between the two land exchange markets. “In Chengdu all real estate developers are required to buy quota, and in that case, quotas work more like a tax or a fee rather than representing any property right.” (Xiao 2015, p.10) In Chongqing the quotas more truly represent property rights as the developers are given “special privileges such as picking their own land parcels” (Xiao 2015, p.10).

Chongqing’s land exchange market has generated some 30 billion yuan, “of which 6 billion yuan was paid to migrant workers who moved into cities” (Huajie 2015). According to Huang Qifan, “over the past few years, Chongqing has not seen a decline in its amount of farmland” (Huajie 2015). This suggests that the land exchange market was successful in tackling the dual problem of urbanization and available agricultural land. The success of the land exchange market in China, and its continued existence make this a policy that could translate to the national level. The land exchange market will not be applicable to all cities in China, but the wish of the central government to spur development in Western regions means there are plenty of urban areas where similar schemes might be implemented.

The Chengdu and Chongqing land exchange markets were only made possible by the decision of the Ministry of land and Resources to name these two areas as ‘experimental zones’, allowing them to implement innovative policies (Xiao 2015, p.14). This points to a more top-down nature of policy experimentation in China. However, the land exchange experiment was an attempt by local governments to change regulations set by the central government, while being authorized by the central government. The lack of applicability to other regions in China again points to the idea that much of the Chongqing model was aimed at raising Bo Xilai’s political profile.

Hukou reform

To go along with Chongqing’s reforms of social housing and rural land use policies the local government was also allowed to experiment with *hukou* reform. All three of these issues are closely connected and form the greatest challenges to narrowing the urban-rural gap in China. China’s development since the opening up period under Deng Xiaoping has mostly been spurred by economic growth in large urban areas in China’s Eastern coastal provinces. As mentioned earlier, China’s large floating population of migrant workers greatly contributed to this development. However, the urban population mostly benefitted from the resulting growth in income. As a result, the central government has for many years stated a wish to address this urban-rural gap. Since 2002 this has been a policy focus of the central government (Zhong 2011, p. 353).

Experimenting with *hukou* reform was also part of Chongqing and Chengdu being named Pilot Areas for the Comprehensive Reform for Balanced Urban-Rural Development. Experimenting with *hukou* reform in a city the size of Chengdu, which has some 14 million inhabitants, was a large step. Granting the same power to Chongqing, with its 30 million citizens, was an even bolder step in China's aim to reform the *hukou* policy. *Hukou* reform had been on the central government's agenda since 2002 and restrictions on the issuing of urban *hukous* had been lifted for small cities and relaxed for medium sized cities. However, the experimental status of Chongqing and Chengdu allowed the local governments to go further in an attempt to find solutions to the *hukou* problem.

In 2010 the Chongqing government set a target to issue 3 and 10 million urban *hukous* to rural citizens by 2012 and 2020 respectively (Zhong 2011, p.358). In a 2015 interview Huang Qifan stated, "over the past few years, a total of 4 million rural workers and their families have received urban *hukou* in Chongqing" (Huajie 2015). Considering the stated goal of 3 million new urban residents by 2012, it is fair to say that Chongqing is behind on schedule, but not by much. The *hukou* reform in Chongqing seems, therefore, to have been partially successful. Therefore it is possible similar strategies will be translated to the national level at some point in the near future.

The *hukou* reform in Chongqing was different from that in other areas because it did not require rural migrants to give up their land rights. As explained above, rural migrants could choose to return their land to agricultural status and sell it on the land exchange market. They were also permitted to retain their land and the rights that come with it. Across China there was opposition to the *hukou* reform from rural migrants who lacked long term security in urban areas. Fearing that they might lose their jobs in the cities, retaining their rural land gave them a fall back option should things go south. The unique approach implemented in Chongqing, therefore, attempted to make transferring from a rural to urban *hukou* more appealing to rural migrants. The *hukou* reform in Chongqing had a single requirement: that migrant workers have worked in the city for more than five years. In this way the local government attempted to ease the financial burden *hukou* reform would place on social services.

The *hukou* reform policies implemented in Chongqing were, partly at least, mirrored in the national plans for *hukou* reform that were announced by President Xi Jinping in February 2015 (Tiezzi 2015). The central government announced its goal of achieving a 60 percent urbanization rate by 2020. *Hukou* reform is an essential aspect of achieving this target. The national *hukou* reform announced by Xi Jinping was aimed at "'suitable people' ... who are both 'capable of maintaining jobs and comfortable in cities'" (Tiezzi 2015). The *hukou* reform had several criteria "including employment, housing and length of stay" (Tiezzie 2015). In *hukou* reform we find another policy area that Xi Jinping also acted on after the experiments in Chongqing. *Hukou* reform has long been a controversial

topic in China, and it is likely this would have been addressed regardless of the events in Chongqing. Nonetheless, Xi Jinping's personal involvement in announcing changes to this policy show the importance he believes this has in China.

Although Chongqing's *hukou* reform policy was translated to the national level, albeit on a smaller scale, the land exchange market has so far not received the same treatment. In Chongqing these two policies formed two sides of the same coin. The local government knew that solving the twin problems of urbanization and agricultural land protection was only possible if both were tackled in conjunction. So far this dual approach is missing at the national policy level.

Some have also questioned in how far this was truly a real reform of the *hukou* system. All the regulations were still in place, it had just become easier for citizens to apply for an urban *hukou*. The policy experimented with in Chongqing is thus a superficial fix to a much deeper structural problem. It is unclear whether Bo Xilai could have gone further with these reforms, but the fact remains. To the outside world and many citizens this seemed as a huge step and contributed to Bo Xilai and the Chongqing models' popularity.

Healthcare reforms

Healthcare was another aspect of the Chongqing model. The objectives set out in the *Jiangkang Chongqing* approach were: "(1) the quality of health of the people in Chongqing should exceed the national level; (2) the level of health insurance enjoyed by the people in Chongqing should be in the front rank of western China; and (3) the cultivation of healthy behavior patterns on the part of people in Chongqing should be basically completed." (Cheng, p.420-421) Concretely this meant an increase in life expectancy to 77 years by 2012 and that by 2020 all citizens should have access to basic medical insurance, medical and health services, and safe food and drinking water (Cheng, p.421).

Similarly to other areas of policy making after the economic reform period of Deng Xiaoping, the health care system that had been centrally organized was pushed towards marketization. As with most societal issues in China tensions between the promoters of the market approach and those of the governmental approach continued (read liberals and leftists). Recently the central government has announced its intention to find a middle way between these two systems (Ho 2011, p.1). The central party announced its health care reforms "will adopt a 'people-first' approach, based on an understanding of health care as a basic public good provided to the entire population for its common welfare" (Ho 2011, p.2).

Besides the mention of health care as one of the areas of focus for Chongqing in the 'Five Chongqings' plan, there is little evidence showing Chongqing experimented with significantly different health care policies than the

rest of China. Despite this, there is evidence showing some aspects of Chongqing's health care approach outperformed the national targets. This took place before Bo Xilai was named Party Secretary of Chongqing and the launch of the Chongqing model. After implementing a new form of health care insurance for urban and rural residents in 2003, coverage had reached 100 percent by 2007. This was three years ahead of the national plan (Xu, Ailong & Jun 2013). As this took place before the Chongqing model was launched under Bo Xilai the results cannot be counted towards a support of the Chongqing model.

Nevertheless, Chongqing under Bo Xilai's leadership continued to show strong results in health care insurance reform. Various programs aimed at increasing health care insurance coverage showed strong improvements.

In 2011, the number of participants in the urban employees basic medical insurance scheme reached 4.58 million, an increase of 12.9% over the previous year; the number of participants in the industrial injuries insurance scheme rose to 3.32 million, an increase of 24.8% over the previous year; and the number of participants in the pregnancy insurance scheme amounted to 2.15 million, an increase of 23.3%. Migrant workers taking part in the major illness medical insurance scheme numbered 0.33 million, showing an increase of 43.8%; and migrant workers taking part in the industrial injuries insurance scheme reached 1.24 million, an increase of 18.5% (Chongqing Municipal Statistics Bureau & Chongqing Investigation Principal Team, National Bureau of Statistics, 2012).⁴

These figures show significant improvement in health care insurance coverage in Chongqing. As an aspect of the Chongqing model it can be argued this shows health care was an important issue for the local government. This supports the ideological aspect of the Chongqing model, strong government involvement in improving the lives of ordinary citizens.

This is backed up by a recent controversy in Chongqing regarding health care reforms. Protests erupted in Chongqing on March 29th 2016 after the local government announced reforms that would result in higher prices for dialysis treatment (Lu 2015). The immediate action of the government was to clamp down on the protests and forbid media coverage, but photos and stories of the

⁴ Quoted in Cheng, J.Y.S. 2013, The "Chongqing Model" What It Means to China Today, *Journal of Comparative Asian Development*, 12:3, 411-442

protests ended up on Weibo regardless. After criticism erupted on Weibo the local government backtracked and announced it would suspend the reforms.

The noteworthy aspect of the fallout over the health care reforms was that various Weibo users used this controversy as a way to reminisce the days when Bo Xilai was still in power. One user wrote, “he [Bo Xilai] was actually concerned with the people’s welfare” (Lu 2015). The public support for Bo Xilai suggests health care policies during his leadership were considered more in line with the public’s wishes. This also points to a departure from the stated goals of the Chongqing model since Bo’s removal from power. It must be mentioned, however, that the proposed reforms would have lowered prices on other treatments and tests. The public outrage, therefore, can also be considered to be somewhat misplaced. The nostalgia for Bo Xilai three years after his imprisonment does show how popular he was and still is in Chongqing. This shows how Bo used the Chongqing model to raise his profile.

Dahei

Two of the most talked about and controversial aspects of the Chongqing model were the *changhong* and *dahei* campaigns. These two campaigns had a symbiotic relationship serving to address one of the most pressing concerns of the Chinese population, corruption, and simultaneously improve trust in the government and stimulate a feeling of unity.

Corruption is an often-found problem in states with a one party system. In China this is no different. The Chinese population regularly has to deal with corrupt officials throughout all levels of government. The CCP has increasingly become aware of the threat this poses to the long-term stability of the regime. Large-scale social unrest must be avoided at all costs and the actions of the CCP are geared towards preventing this. Corruption has become more apparent with the increasing prosperity in China. The richer and more powerful members of society are believed to be enriching themselves at the expense of the lower classes and this is becoming clearer as China’s economy grows (Bell 2015). There is also still a strong presence of gangs and mafia in China.

The *dahei*, or ‘strike black’ anti-crime campaign aimed to crackdown on organized crime in the Chongqing municipality. Many believed organized crime and corruption had been “left to flourish” (Cabestan, p.8) under Bo Xilai’s predecessor, Wang Yang. The strike black campaign “targeted ‘red-black collusions’ (between officials and gangs that monopolized markets through violence” (Broadhurst & Wang 2013). One reason the *dahei* campaign has become so controversial was because it played hard and fast with judicial impartiality and due process. As part of the *dahei* campaign Bo “ordered the arrests of an estimated 5,000 people for illegal prostitution, operating gambling dens, weapons possession and other crimes.” (Wagner 2011).

After being appointed party secretary in Chongqing Bo Xilai chose Wang Lijun to serve as the head of public security in the city. Bo knew Wang from his time in Liaoning province, where he had been at the head of various anticorruption police actions. After his transfer to Chongqing, Wang Lijun became responsible for the implementation of the *dahei* campaign. This campaign was effective in fighting corruption, but was often criticized for its “disregard for legal procedures and confessions extracted through torture” (Anderlini 2012). That Bo Xilai was able to take Wang Lijun with him to Chongqing was a remarkable feat. In China high officials are appointed by the party structures, and handpicking officials is rare.

Chongqing’s anticorruption campaign caught national and international media attention in 2009 when high level bosses of Chongqing’s gangs and various high level current and former public officials were put on trial. Also on trial was Wen Qiang, the head of Chongqing’s justice bureau (Economist 2009). Anticorruption campaigns were not unheard of in China before the strike black campaign in Chongqing. The amount of high level targets, however, did make this effort stand out.

The trials not only sought to break up various organized crime gangs, but also what is referred to in China as the ‘red-black’ connections. These are connections between organized crime and corrupt officials who offer political protection. This strong emphasis on the corrupt network of gangs, businessmen and public officials drew national and international media attention. Much of the media attention credited Bo Xilai for the success of the *dahei* campaign.

Chongqing’s anticorruption drive also received criticism. Many legal scholars fear that the *dahei* campaign will have lasting effects on China’s legal system. Another concern was the brutality employed during the crackdown on corruption and organized crime. Stories surfaced about the use of torture to solicit confessions (Cabestan 2011). One of the most written about aspects of the *dahei* campaign was the Li Zhuang case. Li Zhuang was a prominent defense lawyer for one of the mafia bosses convicted as a result of the anti crime campaign.

Li Zhuang was arrested for allegedly falsifying evidence during the trial after his client stated Li Zhuang had told him to say the police had tortured him. After serving his sentence Li Zhuang was charged on a separate matter of giving false evidence in another case. Many saw this as an attack on Li Zhuang and the legal profession in China (Cabestan 2011).

Far from being a positive development, this shows the dangerous turn the Chongqing model could also take. What various New Left scholars have described as an ambitious model for the future of China, threatened the practice of the legal profession. Other lawyers who represented Li Zhuang in his defense to the allegations of using false evidence stated they were concerned about the lack of fairness shown by the court in Chongqing (Cabestan 2011). Si Weijiang stated “looking for exculpatory evidence is a big risk for a lawyer: you could

easily find yourself accused of inducement to give false evidence, and so become a defendant yourself” (Cabestan 2011, p.9).

Furthermore, there has been criticism that Bo Xilai protected a senior mafia member from being prosecuted (Garnaut 2011). This raises questions about how serious the *dahei* campaign truly was. Weng Zhejie, a prominent businessman and member of Chongqing’s People’s Congress has been described as “the real godfather of the Chongqing mafia” (Garnaut 2011). The anti-corruption campaign clearly did lead to arrests and lowering criminality. However, if a senior member of the Chongqing mafia was purposefully protected, it is possible that Bo was less serious about fighting corruption than the publicity suggested. This supports the theory that for Bo the Chongqing model was primarily a personal project. Steering clear of such a senior member while still being seen as being tough on corruption and criminality was likely a safer strategy for Bo in the long run.

The *dahei* campaign in Chongqing was exceptional in its focus on high level targets in organized crime and the public bureaucracy and in its brutality. The political control over courts and the pressure to push through convictions were also part of this. Some of these aspects can be found back in Xi Jinping’s high profile anticorruption campaign, of which ironically Bo Xilai was possibly the most high profile victim. More attention will be given to the comparisons between Xi and Bo’s anticorruption campaigns in the following chapters.

Under Xi Jinping the Party seems to have reaffirmed its control over the legal system. The arrests of several bookshop owners and publishers from Hong Kong and their forced confessions on state television have a strong scent of Party involvement. These arrests seem to serve no other purpose than to warn any would-be critics of the Party and its leaders. What the arrests show though is that the legal system in China is still meant to serve the Party’s interests. This is comparable to how the legal system in Chongqing worked under Bo Xilai. It was responsible for carrying out the wishes of the Party leadership in Chongqing.

Besides attempting to strengthen his position within the Party and the Party’s rule over China, Xi’s anti-corruption campaign is also meant to increase his and the Party’s popularity among the Chinese population. The *dahei* campaign was popular in Chongqing and added to Bo’s popularity because it addressed a long lasting problem. Xi’s anti-corruption campaign is attempting to do the same but then at the national level. Xi hopes the general population will view him as a leader who has their best interests at heart.

Changhong

One of the most ideological aspects of the Chongqing model was the *changhong*, or ‘sing red’ campaign. This campaign reintroduced various revolutionary songs from China’s past. Many of these songs had links to Mao and

the founding of the People's Republic. Bo Xilai stated the revival of the red songs was meant to inject traditional CCP cultural values and traditions into modern society (Cheng, p.424).

The red culture movement in Chongqing was a broad program that included various activities. The public broadcaster in Chongqing was forced to alter its programming to show classic dramas and red song shows. Local radio and newspapers were also conscripted to spread red songs that would form part of a singing competition. Furthermore, a mass texting service was launched that would send messages containing Mao Zedong thought to Chongqing residents. All of these activities formed part of the massive campaign to infuse communist ideology into modern Chinese society.

Xi Jinping has also focused heavily on promoting nationalism in the Chinese population since becoming president. Xi's efforts in this can be viewed as an emulation of Bo Xilai's efforts at achieving this through the *changhong* campaign. One example of how Xi is promoting nationalism is through his foreign policy. The conflicts in the East and South China Seas with Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam and others has led to rising nationalist fervor in China. Just as in Chongqing, Xi Jinping hopes that nationalism will instill a sense of unity in the Chinese population. This unity should ensure the continued rule of the CCP despite slowing economic growth.

Although not part of the *changhong* campaign, in 2010 the local government announced a community service plan. As part of the plan urban born students will be sent to work in the countryside for a period of up to a month. This echoes a similar program, albeit on a much smaller scale, during the Cultural Revolution when students, including Bo Xilai, Xi Jinping and others were sent to the countryside to gain a better understanding of Chinese society. The local government stated the plan would help overcome the increasing gap between urban and rural citizens and students would learn practical skills (Branigan 2010). All of this forms part of Bo Xilai's wish to position himself and the Chongqing model as the populist alternative for China's future development.

The economics of the Chongqing Model

The Chongqing model also contained a strong economic focus that has been widely written about. Various scholars focus on Chongqing's promotion of what has among others been called 'socialism 3.0' and 'the third way' (Huang 2011, Wang S. 2012). This economic approach attempted to combine aspects of market capitalism and socialism in a different way than the national norm. The focus is on using strong government involvement in the economy to drive 'equitable development' (Huang 2011, p. 571). The Chongqing government focused on using the profitability of state owned enterprises (SOE) for the benefit of social equality.

The local government, under mayor Huang Qifan's guidance, started an aggressive campaign to increase foreign direct investment (FDI) in Chongqing. Using this strategy Chongqing became the new production center for Hewlett-Packard (HP), Foxconn, BASF and Chang'an Automobile Company.⁵ With the help of government incentives these companies spanning the high tech, chemical and automobile industries all opened large production facilities in Chongqing. Attracting FDI for production facilities has been a trusted development strategy in China since the opening up period under Deng Xiaoping.

The Chongqing government created a new 'IT park' and 'chemical industry park' where the respective companies could locate their new facilities. The IT park now houses not only HP, but also major tech companies Acer and Asus. Currently one in three of the world's laptops are manufactured in Chongqing (Wong 2016). The local government also struck a deal with Chang'an over a massive automobile production facility for far below the market price. All of this was part of the strategy of "attracting manufacturing companies in the lower end of value chains, using both the availability of cheap labor and the pro-activity of the state in improving infrastructure as key selling points" (Mulvad 2015, p.208). Attracting large manufacturing companies created new employment opportunities, which would help with Chongqing's urbanization plans.

The second aspect of Chongqing's 'third way' development started before the appointment of Bo Xilai. In the 1990s China underwent a massive privatization campaign. Many SOEs under the control of provincial and municipal governments were privatized. However, the local government in Chongqing followed an alternative path. Rather than privatizing the companies, the Chongqing government believed it could keep control over them but still

⁵ Chang'an Automobile Company is a Chinese company and therefore doesn't count as FDI. Ensuring the company created a new production center in Chongqing followed a similar strategy as with the foreign firms. For this reason it is included in the list above.

instill the desired market pressures to ensure efficiency and productivity. It managed to do this through an “appreciation of the leasing price of publicly held lands to fund their market restructuring” (Mulvad 2015, p.212).

This was partially achieved by the creation of a government-owned assets management company that took over from the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) “no good assets” (Huang P. 2011, p. 579), or in other words underperforming state-owned firms. Simultaneously the municipal government created eight government-owned investment firms for infrastructural development and public utilities. The government-owned assets management company could then use its assets as security for loans to provide funding for investing in public projects through the various government-owned investment firms.

In this way the local government was able to turn these SOEs into sources of significant income. As these companies competed under market conditions and began positing profits, the local government could directly benefit from this. In deciding how the local government should spend this money the ideological aspect of the Chongqing model came into play. Profits were used to “lower taxation of companies and individuals”, invest in public infrastructure projects and the various social welfare reforms discussed earlier (Mulvad 2015, p.212).

The economic strategy in Chongqing showed positive results. Between 2002 and 2011 the public ownership of assets grew by a factor of eight, “from 170 billion yuan in 2002 to 1,386 billion at the end of June 2011” (Cui 2011, p. 654). Simultaneously the private sector also grew, from 38.8 percent of Chongqing’s GDP in 2001 to 61.2 percent in 2010 (Cui 2011, p. 654). These figures show that the local government was able to successfully use its control over SOEs to grow the local economy while not crowding out the private sector. This is supported by the fact that the tax on enterprises in Chongqing during this period was lower than the national rate, 15 percent compared to 33 percent respectively.

The ‘third hand’ is thus the use of government intervention in the market in order to drive investment in social equality. The economic aspect of the Chongqing model offers an interesting viewpoint from which to analyze the existence of the model itself. The various social policies listed earlier offer innovative solutions to national problems, but by themselves do not constitute a truly different vision for China’s future. The economic theory underlying these policies might offer exactly this.

As policy experimentation has been an element of Chinese politics since the early days of the CCP, this alone cannot make a political model. Had the Chongqing model only consisted of the various social welfare policies written about above there would be too little evidence to support calling it a model for Chinese society. The Chongqing model did offer a more clear focus on ‘dividing the cake more equally’, but this is not enough.

Coupling the focus on social equality with and economic theory that offers new solutions to achieving this offers a more compelling argument for the status of a political model. The 'third hand' approach underpinned all of the policy innovation and created a framework that allowed for an increased focus on social equality. Similarly, however, if this policy focus had not existed the economic strategy would not be as significant. The combination of the two is what made the developments in Chongqing during this period so remarkable.

The Chongqing model's focus on the role of the state can be seen back in China's economic policy under Xi Jinping. Admittedly Xi Jinping has changed the focus somewhat. For Xi a strong role for the state was not so much aimed at ensuring better division of wealth among the population as ensuring long-term stability of the Party. Xi Jinping has employed similar strategies at the national level as were implemented in Chongqing under Bo Xilai and Huang Qifan's guidance. An example of this is the consolidation of SOEs.

During the time of the Chongqing model the municipality consistently outperformed the national growth averages. In 2009 Chongqing's GDP grew by 14.9 percent while China's national GDP grew by 9.2 percent (Larson 2010).⁶ Over the full five years Bo Xilai was party secretary Chongqing averaged a GDP growth rate of 15.8 percent, compared to 10.5% for China nationally (Orlik 2012). With impressive growth figures like these it is understandable that Chongqing garnered so much national and international attention.

In the most recent figures for 2015 Chongqing reported the highest GDP growth of any province or municipality in China. Chongqing's GDP grew by 11 percent, an impressive feat when compared to the national GDP growth of 6.9 percent. This continued growth in Chongqing is likely the result of allowing the economic approach underlying the Chongqing model to continue. After Bo Xilai was sentenced in 2012, Huang Qifan was allowed to continue in his post as mayor. Huang is widely believed to have been at the basis of the economic aspect of the Chongqing model (Wong 2016).

That Huang Qifan was the main driver behind the economic theory of the Chongqing model is supported by the fact this approach was already in use before Bo Xilai was appointed party secretary in 2007. The influence of Huang Qifan on this is important because of the discussion about whether the Chongqing model was a project Bo Xilai was using to raise his status within the party. As mentioned above the Chongqing model can only truly said to be a model when it is seen as a whole, a combination of the economic and social policies. That the economic strategy employed by Chongqing predates Bo Xilai's term as party secretary and even many of the social policies that became the

⁶ National GDP growth figure from IMF WEO data, available at: http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2016/01/weodata/weorept.aspx?pr.x=68&pr.y=13&sy=2007&ey=2015&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=924&s=NGDP_RPCH&grp=0&a=

public face of the Chongqing model suggests it should be seen as a separate entity. This supports the idea that the Chongqing model was largely a discursive creation promoted separately and for different reasons by Bo Xilai and the New Left.

After the global financial crisis, growth in most developed economies slowed substantially. China's economy however, posted record growth figures during a period in which the global economy was in a serious recession. Considering the reliance on exporting this was somewhat surprising. In order to compensate for the fall in global demand the central government launched a massive economic stimulus program. The Chinese government would inject some 4 trillion yuan into the economy in an attempt to prop up growth. This stimulus package was aimed at investments in infrastructure projects and housing developments. Local governments were encouraged to lend money to SOEs to invest in these projects.

The stimulus package was successful in maintaining GDP growth in the Chinese economy. Recently however, the limits of this strategy have become apparent. China's economic growth is slowing; it has fallen below the double-digit rates of the post 2008 period. The Party leadership is keen to label this the 'new normal' (Peston 2015). Double-digit growth rates were never likely to be sustainable for a long period. So the slowing in growth to the 'new normal' is not altogether surprising. However, there are serious structural problems in the Chinese economy that have become apparent over the past years.

The huge stimulus package has taken its toll on the Chinese economy. There is massive overcapacity in various industrial sectors. China's steel industry, for instance, produces about half of the world's steel (Jongerius 2016). This was less of a problem during the period of China's massive stimulus program, but now that the Chinese economy is slowing domestic demand for steel is dropping too. Many of the large steel producing companies in China are SOEs. Similar problems are visible in other SOE predominant industries in China.

There are also serious problems in China's housing market that stem from the massive injection of money after the 2008 global financial crisis. A large portion of this stimulus package was used to invest in building housing across China. There is now a dual problem in the Chinese housing market. In large prosperous cities like Shanghai, Beijing and Shenzhen housing prices are shooting up and making it difficult for the working class to live affordably. Simultaneously, smaller cities are experiencing overcapacity in the housing market (Economist 2016). The housing construction boom that took place as a result of the stimulus package paid little attention to actual demand.

What can the current problems in China's economy tell us about the Chongqing model? For some it seems as if the time of large-scale government involvement in the economy has reached its end in China. Similarly to the approach in Chongqing, the national government sought to boost the Chinese economy through SOEs. While this worked in the short term to maintain GDP

growth, the limits of this approach have now become clear. Nevertheless Xi Jinping's current economic strategy seems, to a certain extent, to copy that of Chongqing. While massive layoffs have been announced for certain SOEs, the general trend is a consolidation of SOEs into massive state-owned conglomerates. In this way the central leadership hopes to increase its control over the economy while hoping for more streamlined SOEs. Nonetheless, there are specific aspects of the Chongqing model's economic strategy that cannot be translated to the national level or implemented in other provinces.

As Mulvad has shown and the problems in China's housing market further support, there are serious disparities between different Chinese provinces and cities. This complicates any discussion of economic models for China. Although Chongqing is still showing good results from its economic policies, there is little to suggest this would be applicable in other areas of China. This contradicts the idea that the Chongqing model, or the Guangdong model for that matter, should be seen as visions for China's future.

Chongqing vs Guangdong

There is another argument that supports this line of thought. Mulvad, in his analysis of the Chongqing and Guangdong models suggests the two were not competing visions for China's future but responses to historical development paths (Mulvad 2015). Mulvad's argument centers on the differences in development between Chongqing and Guangdong. Guangdong as a coastal province was part of China's early development during the opening up period under Deng Xiaoping. Along with other coastal regions such as Shanghai and Beijing, Guangdong had by the late 2000s already reached a much higher level of development than inland regions. Deng Xiaoping's approach was to drive development in the coastal regions so that this could later be shared with inland regions.

From this perspective Chongqing's economic success can partially be explained by its lagged development in the opening up period. Mulvad uses the term 'variegated capitalism' to explain why Chongqing and Guangdong may have been focusing on such different policy packages. In his view the differing economic realities of Chongqing and Guangdong can offer at least a partial explanation for the focus on social welfare programs and enhancing the role of civil society respectively. Economic realities thus may have shaped the foundation of the Chongqing model more than Bo Xilai. This, of course, did not prevent Bo Xilai from latching onto the popularity of the policies and using this to his own political advantage.

In order to fully understand this line of argument and to contrast the Chongqing and Guangdong models it is important to understand what the Guangdong model was. As mentioned, by 2007 Guangdong was already one of the most highly developed provinces in China. Having benefited strongly from its coastal location and with powerhouse cities like Shenzhen and Guangzhou, Guangdong became an industrial and export hub. As the local economy grew and incomes grew with it, foreign companies began looking at inland Chinese cities because of their relative costs. Guangdong as a result began to focus on climbing in the global value chain. Thus Guangdong invested in "... [research and development], design, marketing, and sales at the commencement and logistics at the culmination" (Kuhn 2009, quoted in Mulvad 2015, p. 208).

In order to reach this goal the Guangdong local government offered tax incentives, better protection of intellectual property and grants to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (Mulvad 2015). As Guangdong's economy began focusing more on innovation it benefited from Chongqing and other inland cities that were attracting foreign investment in large production facilities. Guangdong had fulfilled a similar role vis-à-vis Hong Kong for decades. In this way Chongqing and Guangdong formed a symbiotic relationship within the Chinese

and global economy. Chongqing would have had more difficulty attracting foreign investment to make its economic model work if Guangdong and other coastal provinces had not been going through their own economic developments. This further weakens the case for Chongqing's economic strategy being a model for all of China. It was and is successful in Chongqing because of the specific conditions there, but it is not readily translatable to the national level.

Guangdong became heavily involved in debates about the Chongqing model because it also experimented with a package of social policies rather than just altering its economic strategy. Whereas the economic policies could be seen to form a symbiotic relationship, the social policies showed a clear ideological divide between the two. Guangdong, in contrast to Chongqing, sought to reduce the role of the state. Instead the market and 'civil society' were given more freedom to make up for the retreating state involvement. This took concrete shape in allowing citizens to make suggestions and criticize public policy decisions through the local government's website. Furthermore, restrictions on the registration of NGOs were eased. Another example is the local government's reaction to a workers strike in 2010. Rather than send in police to quell the riots, "Wang Yang ... encouraged the state-controlled unions '... to engage in collective bargaining with the employers despite the misgivings among local officials who feared worker activism and upward wage pressures'" (Mulvad 2015, p.210).

Another oft-mentioned example of Guangdong's more liberal approach was the reaction to protests in the village of Wukan. In December 2011 protests erupted in Wukan that drove the local leaders out of the village. The protests centered on the local government's unauthorized sale of land. Rather than send in the security forces Wang Yang again decided to take a measured approach and promised the residents new elections for town officials. The protests, however, should not be viewed as a statement against the CCP or its rule of China, but rather as a revolt against corruption (Tiezzi 2014). Seen in this light, however, the developments in Wukan do not signify a 'liberal turn' in Guangdong.

Much emphasis was put on the easing of restrictions for NGOs during Wang Yang's term as party secretary in Guangdong. This was an example of a liberal turn in Chinese politics. Recent developments in China show increasing pressure on the NGO community there. New legislation passed in April 2016 places NGOs under police supervision (Chin 2016). This will require any foreign-based NGOs to find a local partner and register with the police, giving the government further control over which organizations are allowed to operate in China. The reversal of attitudes towards NGOs shows that while party secretaries may have room for experimenting with new policies, the central party leadership retains total control to change course. This suggests that neither the Guangdong nor Chongqing models were anything more than local experiments.

The tightening of government control over society has become increasingly apparent in Xi Jinping's China. Examples of this are the crackdown on NGOs, the arrests of critical bookshop owners from Hong Kong and the anti-

corruption campaign. All of these policies show a trend of increasing state power in China. This is another way in which Xi Jinping has taken a leaf out of Bo Xilai's book. Xi also believes the state should play a strong role in governing society, similar to the role of the state in Bo Xilai's Chongqing.

Bo Xilai's public campaign, the New Left and celebrity politics

The legitimacy of the word model has been questioned in discussions about the Chongqing model. Some scholars contend that what happened under Bo Xilai's leadership did not constitute a model. Instead they speak of an "experiment or trial" (Chan 2011, p.3). The legitimacy of the Chongqing model as a model can also be questioned because of Bo Xilai's use of it as a campaign tool for his own personal benefit. Perhaps even more than the individual policies pursued during his time as Party Secretary in Chongqing, Bo Xilai's media campaign was most radical change in Chinese politics. Of course, after his downfall it became clear that this was unlikely to be the most lasting change.

Bo Xilai's public campaign for the Chongqing model was remarkable in two ways. First, it "challenged the rules of elite politics in a significant way" (Fewsmith 2012, p.2). Second, Bo Xilai managed to "develop a significant populist base" (Fewsmith 2012, p.2). The use of the Chongqing model to further his political ambitions is also what raises most questions about the Chongqing model as a political model. As explained earlier the use of policy experimentation in China has also occurred for political opportunism, and in the case of Chongqing it seems as if Bo Xilai was using this strategy to improve his chances for a top seat on the Politburo Standing Committee.

Promotion to the Standing Committee has always relied on backroom political decisions. Top party members decide which officials to grant a position based on their political connections, loyalty to the party and performances in previous positions. Another consideration is the need to maintain balance between different factions within the Party. Officials hoping to make their way onto the Standing Committee never overtly campaign for a position. Yet publicity was an important aspect of the Chongqing model. Visits of the Politburo Standing Committee members were reported in detail, international guests were invited to tour Chongqing and famous artists have been invited to perform (Liu 2011). Bo also spoke about the goals of the Chongqing model openly in the media and contrasted them with Wang Yang's strategy in Guangdong.

The Chongqing and Guangdong model discussion has also been referred to as the great 'cake debate' (Cartier & Tomba 2012). In 2011 Bo Xilai and Wang Yang would engage in a public debate in the media about what was more important for China. Bo argued the government's focus should be on 'dividing the cake more equally'. Wang, on the other hand, believed it was the government's main task to 'make a bigger cake'. This was the first time Party officials had taken to the media to promote differing views on China's future (Cartier & Tomba 2012, p.46). Bo fostered an image of himself as a champion of the common folk. His stated belief in the importance of egalitarianism certainly made him and the Chongqing model very popular. This is confirmed by the

nostalgic tweets about Bo Xilai that popped up recently during protests about health care reform (Lu 2015). That Bo Xilai is remembered in such a way even after having been imprisoned for more than three years attests to the success of his publicity campaign.

One reason this debate became so popular in China was because public intellectuals and scholars eagerly jumped in to support either Bo Xilai or Wang Yang. The liberal leaning intellectuals and scholars defended Wang Yang for trying to improve rule of law and include the middle class in the political process (Lim 2011). The Chongqing model became the flagship for the New Left. Nothing made this clearer than the involvement of Tsinghua University professor Cui Zhiyuan. As a prominent scholar espousing many of the ideas that the Chongqing model was based on, Cui Zhiyuan was approached to serve as Deputy Director of Chongqing's State-Owned Assets Management and Supervision Commission for a year. During the period it was Cui Zhiyuan's job to "publish articles about Chongqing's experience' and to 'communicate both internally to government officials, and to the general press'" (Callahan 2013, p.85).

Cui Zhiyuan was not the only New Left scholar to throw his weight behind the Chongqing model. Wang Shaoguang (2012) has also published on the Chongqing model, as have Su Wei, Yang Fan and Liu Shiwen.⁷ That the Chongqing model became such a hot topic is in large part thanks to the work of these scholars. Without academic attention it is unlikely the Chongqing model would have received the same amount of international attention. Nor, it is possible, would what happened in Chongqing between 2007-2012 be thought of as a political model. The intellectual weight put behind the Chongqing model helped to legitimize it as more than just a combination of various social and economic policies. Instead an ideological aspect was added that transformed this into something more. Therefore it is possible to say the Chongqing model was in part discursively created through the efforts of the New Left.

Of course, for the New Left the Chongqing model also presented an opportunity. Similar to how Bo Xilai used the Chongqing model to further his political ambitions, the New Left used Chongqing as their flagship. Chongqing espoused the ideas many in the New Left were advocating: a turn away from neoliberalism, a return to strong state involvement and the use of the 'third hand'. For the New Left the events in Chongqing and the public attention for what was happening there presented an opportunity to disseminate their vision for China's future.

⁷ Su Wei, Yang Fan and Liu Shiwen published a book titled *The Chongqing Model* (重庆模式).

Celebrity Politics

Over the past few years celebrity politics has become an increasingly popular research topic for academics. This field looks at how “marketing communication strategies” are used to design and brand “political personas, leadership style and policies” (Jeffreys 2016, p.58). Jeffreys uses the term ‘politician celebrity’ to describe Bo Xilai. Politician celebrities are “established politicians whose public behavior, private life, or association with celebrities alters their own public persona beyond the traditional political sphere into the celebrity sphere, either by intent or through accident/scandal” (Jeffreys 2016, p.60).

As mentioned above Bo Xilai actively stimulated his public persona. It can almost be called a personality cult. His frequent media appearances and public confrontation with Wang Yang showed he did not shy away from the spotlight. Bo Xilai believed that through becoming a ‘politician celebrity’ he could possibly build up enough support to guarantee a spot on the next Politburo Standing Committee. This was likely the reason for equality to be the cornerstone of the Chongqing model. This popular concept caught on among the public and increased Bo Xilai’s celebrity politician status. This was another way in which Bo Xilai challenged the status quo of elite politics in China. Rather than settling for the normal status as a top official but nothing more, Bo Xilai actively sought to be a leader ‘for the people’. Since his downfall, it has of course become clear that publicly campaigning for a position on the Standing Committee and raising his popularity was not a successful strategy. However, it is possible that had he faced someone other than Xi Jinping he would not have fallen to the same fate.

Xi Jinping himself in recent times has taken over certain aspects of Bo Xilai’s celebrity politics strategy. Xi’s celebrity status in China is embellished by the presence of his wife Peng Liyuan, a famous Chinese folk song singer. The couple is very popular among the Chinese population (Fan, Zhang & Zhu 2016). This relationship’s public appearance has been carefully nurtured during his Presidency (Fan, Zhang & Zhu 2016). Xi has also reaffirmed state control over the media, ensuring it serves the party’s, and by extension his, purposes. According to a study by the University of Hong Kong Xi’s name has appeared more often in state media more than any other leader since Mao Zedong (Hall 2016). Both of these facts points to Xi’s belief in the importance of popularity among the general public, something Bo Xilai brought back to Chinese politics.

Bo vs Xi anti-corruption campaign

Since Xi Jinping took over as President of PRC he is often said to have amassed the most power of any leader since Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. Much of the focus has gone out to his anti-corruption campaign, of which Bo Xilai was possibly the most prominent victim. This anti-corruption drive shows quite

a few similarities to the *dahei* campaign that took place in Chongqing under Bo Xilai. Corruption has increasingly become an issue for Chinese citizens. As a result fighting corruption has risen on the agenda of the Party leadership. Distrust in the Party and China's political system threatens the stability of the Party's rule. This has always been the top priority for the Party.

Bo Xilai's anticorruption campaign in Chongqing was an important part of his rising popularity among the public. Bo understood the frustration among the public at the collusion between government officials, businessmen and criminals. Furthermore, rather than trying to limit publicity so as not to endanger the Party's reputation, Bo actively sought media attention for his anti-corruption drive. This was mostly because of his wish to use his popularity in Chongqing in his campaign for a top position in the Standing Committee. However, exposing the flaws of the Party and its involvement in corruption and criminality in such a public way was remarkable.

It seems as if Xi Jinping hopes he can generate a similar reaction. Xi's anti-corruption campaign has taken *dahei* to the national level. Besides the many 'flies', lower level officials, which have been investigated and charged there are also a few 'tigers', higher level officials. Zhou Yongkang, a former Politburo Standing Committee member and Secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission was another high profile target. In this way it seems as if Xi Jinping is using the anti-corruption campaign for at least two reasons. The first is to shore up his power and take out political rivals. Secondly, Xi as Bo before him seems to be using the anti-corruption drive as a way to increase his own popularity and restore faith in the Party.

One difference between Xi's anti-corruption campaign and Bo's *dahei* campaign is the reliance on internal Party disciplinary measures. Most of the cases involving party officials have been dealt with internally. Some high profile cases, for instance Bo's, have been referred to the courts (Yuen 2014, p.45). This is different from Chongqing where the majority of cases were handled through the courts. The amount of control the Party had over the process might not be very different though. In Chongqing Bo put heavy pressure on the police and judiciary system, assuring the outcomes that he wanted. That Xi Jinping has taken a leaf out of Bo Xilai's book further supports the idea that for Bo this was all part of a personal political campaign.

Conclusion

How can we best place the Chongqing model in Chinese politics? Was what happened in Chongqing between 2007 and 2012 truly a unique vision of China's future? After dissecting the Chongqing model and the debates surrounding it, the Chongqing model seems primarily a political project that was meant to propel Bo Xilai into the upper echelons of the Chinese political system. While there were examples of policy experimentation in Chongqing the legitimacy of calling it a political model is questionable. The economic approach underlying the model was already in place long before Bo Xilai took office and introduced a focus on equality. The combination of the economic and social policies does offer a coherent plan for Chongqing. However, as shown above there are reasons to believe the same approach would not be successful in other places in China. Furthermore, there are other examples of Chinese provinces, cities and municipalities that aimed to achieve similar things as Chongqing did through social housing, *hukou* reform and the land exchange market. Experiments with innovative policy ideas have long been present in Chinese politics, and Chongqing due to its size and location was an obvious choice for experimentation.

The media attention that surrounded Chongqing can primarily be attributed to Bo Xilai's charismatic style and his ambition to secure a position on the Politburo Standing Committee. The standard operating procedure for top officials seeking promotion to the Standing Committee is to function well while not attracting unnecessary attention. This shows loyalty to the Party over one's own ambition. Bo Xilai chose the opposite path, hoping that his popularity among the public would ensure his promotion. He happily used the media to increase attention for Chongqing and the Chongqing model, relying on the assumption that the left leaning policies would be popular among ordinary citizens. For a long time this seemed to work. But after the defection of his police chief, the allegations of murder and corruption and his removal and sentencing it became clear Bo may have flown too close to the sun.

Dissecting the debate surrounding the Chongqing model offers new avenues for further research. What is the role of factionalism in the Party and what part did this play in Bo Xilai's downfall? How do officials use policy experimentation for their own political purposes? What role do scholars play in determining the future of Chinese politics? All of these questions are options for future research that can offer a better understanding of governance in China. It will be interesting to see if any other officials dare to follow Bo Xilai's lead and aim for more publicity. Although with the way things are looking under Xi Jinping this seems outright risky.

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