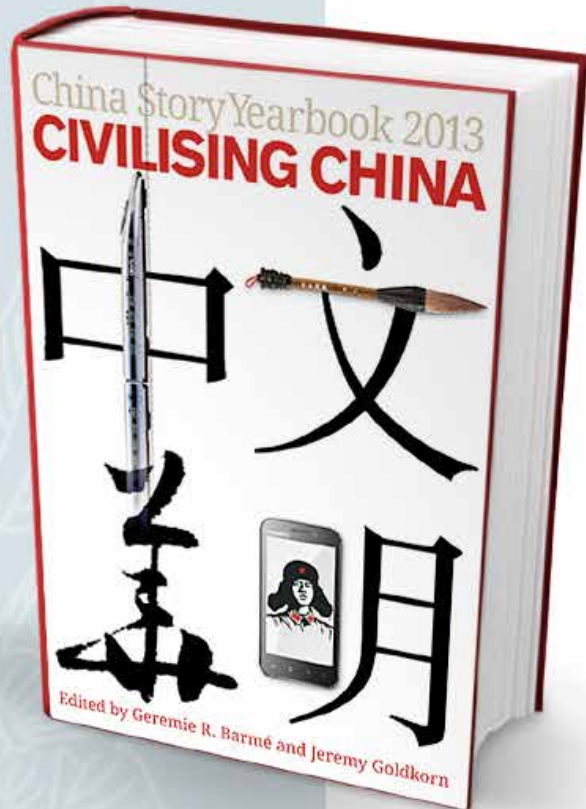


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CHAPTER 5

BUILDING CIVILISED CITIES

Carolyn Cartier

Excerpt from

CHINA STORY YEARBOOK 2013

CIVILISING CHINA

文明中华

EDITED BY

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CHINA IN THE WORLD



ANU College of Asia & the Pacific
Canberra, Australia

The China Story
中国的故事

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As China becomes wealthier and more confident on the global stage, it also expects to be respected and accommodated as a major global force — and as a formidable civilisation. Through a survey and analysis of China's regional posture, urban change, social activism and law, mores, the Internet, history and thought — in which the concept of 'civilising' plays a prominent role — *China Story Yearbook 2013* offers insights into the country today and its dreams for the future.



Chinese football fans, Guiyang, June 2011.
Source: ImagineChina

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MARCH 2013

BUILDING CIVILISED CITIES

Carolyn Cartier



深圳市

SHENZHEN

The first city to implement a 'civility law' also requires an 'ecologically sustainable environment'. This includes the management of air quality based on national standards. This didn't prevent portable oxygen concentrators from becoming a popular item among urban dwellers.

THIS CHAPTER introduces the urban issue of the year — the air quality problem in China's cities — in relation to the 'Civilised City' system. The system combines Maoist-style campaigns with ideals of urban modernisation, bestowing the honour of the title 'Civilised City' on chosen places of reform. A hybrid form of social control and urban governance, the National Civilised City program sets out goals that encompass government accountability, air quality monitoring and improved public infrastructure including cultural facilities, in addition to programs promoting volunteerism and 'healthy' ideals for urban youth. It is a broad-based approach for all cities that recalibrates the party-state's political and social agendas in relation to standard urban development benchmarks.

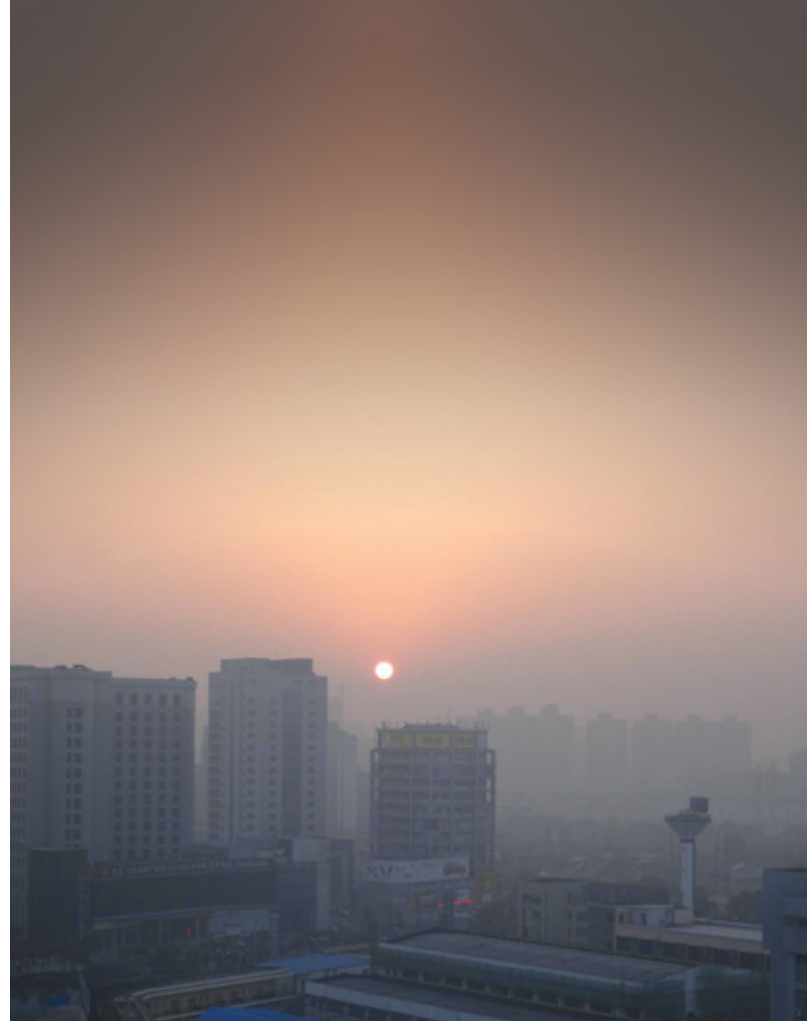
An Uncivilised Air



Oxygen infusion in Shanghai, 16 June 2013.
Photo: Madhu Babu Pandi

In 2012–2013, many cities in the People’s Republic of China started regularly reporting air quality data for PM2.5 — the measurement for micro-particulate airborne pollutants that are implicated in a range of serious health threats. PM2.5 in the air sometimes appears like a ground fog or mist, and photographs of urban streets thick with smog in China often look like fog-bound river valleys or coasts. Rather than being identified by weather forecasters as unsightly and threatening ‘air pollution’ (*kongqi wuran* 空气污染), in recent years the authorities have encouraged the use of the more poetic expression ‘dun mists’ (*yinmai* 阴霾). California tule fog — the winter fog of the San Joaquin Valley — can look worse than average Beijing smog.

In January 2013, the reading for PM2.5 in Beijing air reached its highest recorded levels since the US Embassy there began independently tracking pollution levels in 2008. Readings were over 750 on the 1–500 scale of the US Environmental Protection Agency air quality index, and up to 900 at some stations. When the reading first breached 500, the US Embassy twitter feed indicated ‘crazy bad’, a non-official description that was not originally meant for public dissemination because no-one imagined that the level of PM2.5 would ever exceed 500. Nevertheless, the phrase went viral.



Good morning, Shanghai: image taken at Tianlin Road, 26 January 2013.
Photo: Phreddie

The relation between the appearance of the air and health-threatening levels of PM2.5 lies in the numbers. As we noted in *Yearbook 2012*, the US Embassy’s webpage and twitter feed ‘BeijingAir’ introduced the concept of PM2.5 to Chinese citizens in 2009. The authorities protested against this statistical incursion into local air sovereignty. In a tone of high dudgeon, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs urged that ‘air quality data should not follow a “market-based” approach’. It was concerned because PM2.5 information released by the embassy had ‘resulted in the Chinese public now questioning “unnecessarily” the validity of Beijing EPB’s [Environmental Protection Bureau’s] data.’ The ministry declared that the ‘Beijing

EPB should be the sole authoritative voice for making pronouncements on Beijing's air quality'. By this logic, the ministry was unwilling to support a market in objective data.

The hazardous air led people to coin the expression 'airpocalypse' (*kongqi mori* 空气末日) that captured the public sense of panic. People blogged about 'refusing to be human vacuum cleaners' (*jujue zuo renrou xichenqi* 拒绝做人肉吸尘器) and recorded their experiences: 'I'm standing in front of Tiananmen but can't see [the huge portrait on Tiananmen Gate of] Chairman Mao' (*zhan zai Tiananmen qian, que kanbujian Mao zhuxi* 站在天安门前, 却看不见毛主席). Reports that the smog was also registering indoors, inside public buildings, were alarming and sometimes appeared in contradictory terms that defied reality: 'The interior of the gleaming Terminal 3 of the Beijing Capital International Airport was filled with a thick haze on Thursday'. In another account, anxious hotel guests ran for a fire alarm after encountering smoke in the hallway, only to learn that it was osmotic smog. The security authorities, having painstakingly installed unprecedented numbers of surveillance cameras in public spaces such as Wangfujing Mall and Tiananmen Square, as well as around party-state government compounds in recent years, were also worried to find themselves blinded by the persistent thick haze.

Once the authorities started reporting PM2.5 levels, local governments expanded their air quality monitoring capacity. In January 2013, for example, Shanghai introduced a user-friendly air quality index in the form of an anime-style face whose six different expressions correspond to air quality levels. More importantly, the Shanghai Environmental Protection Bureau now provides real-time air quality data for a range of air quality indicators: PM2.5, O₃, CO, PM10, SO₂ and NO₂, based on an aggregate of information from ten measuring stations.

China's Environmental Protection Bureau has historically preferred reporting on the larger particulate measurement of PM10, which is equal to ten microns, or ten millionths of a metre. PM2.5 is only 2.5 microns. (For the non-metric world, PM2.5 comes down to 1/10,000 of an inch.) To gain



Real-time Air Quality Reporting System in Shanghai, 26 September 2013.
Source: Shanghai Environmental Monitoring Center

some idea of the size of such particles, we would note that the dot above the letter 'i' in a typical newspaper measures about 400 microns. Micro-particles collect in vital organs and can also enter the body through the surface of the skin. Since the nineteenth century, people in industrialised cities have suffered unknowingly from some amount of exposure to micro-pollutants. Scientific knowledge of the health consequences of PM2.5 has circulated only since the early 2000s. The fact that China is industrialising at a time when pollution is a global concern means that its citizens and foreign residents, as well as the media and potential visitors, expect that the authorities will strive to meet international standards. In response to the news about poor air quality, foreign tourist arrivals decreased markedly in 2013.

In 2012, the central Ministry of Environmental Protection outlined new requirements for cities to monitor and report on ambient air quality standards. This policy is now being introduced incrementally in the leading cities of major industrial regions such as Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai and Guangzhou, as well as in provincial capitals. The authorities further stipulated that, in 2013, all of what are called 'Key Environmental Protection Cities' and 'National Environmental Protection Model Cities' had to monitor air quality. This will be followed in 2015 by the same requirements for all prefecture-level cities (most large cities except Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin and Chongqing are prefecture-level) and other cities nationwide by 2016.

Modelling the National City

Because rapid industrialisation and rapid urbanisation have proceeded hand in hand, China takes a multi-faceted approach to questions related to modernisation and development. Still, many forms of urban policy are neither readily visible to observers nor directly comparable to the kind of approaches taken in other countries. For example, in China today there are different types of what are called ‘model cities’ (*mofan chengshi* 模范城市). The political history of the ‘model’ (*mofan* 模范 or *dianxing* 典型) in China derives from the Maoist-era use of model production workers, model streets and model places, which the propaganda apparatus held up for emulation. The most famous model places in the Maoist heyday were the oilfields of Daqing (*Daqing youtian* 大庆油田) and Dazhai People’s Commune (*Dazhai renmin gongshe* 大寨人民公社). The media repetitively idealised their trumped-up successes in collective production and support for the party-state: as sites for political pilgrimage they were outstanding symbols of Potemkin-village propaganda. They were also geographical contexts for the Stakhanovite labour mobilisation model, introduced to China from the Soviet Union in the 1940s. Alexey Stakhanov was the mythologised model worker who symbolised a zealous socialist work ethic and ‘socialist competition’. Villages, factories or industrial towns thus competed to increase their production through collective effort. If they reported that they had

exceeded their quotas, they could accrue rewards; they commonly masked their failures and faked their successes through inflated statistics. This had disastrous implications for overall economic management.

The model city programs in China today have their historical and aesthetic roots in such Maoist-era models and the political campaigns used to promote them. For example, big red banners with political statements and exhortations still herald ‘model’ activities. Yet now, instead of basing a model on a particular place, such as was the case when the whole nation was exhorted to ‘In Industry Learn from Daqing’ (*gongye xue Daqing* 工业学大庆), the contemporary approach combines measures for social control with regulations for urban governance. What has not changed is that today’s model city guidelines provide idealised visions of development, officially approved standards for urban modernisation. An early contemporary example of such a campaign was the National Environmental Protection Model Cities program launched in 1997. Others include the National Ecological Garden City, National Hygienic City, National Model City for Science and Technology, National Excellent City for Comprehensive Management of Public Security and National Entrepreneurial City. But unlike schemes targeting one particular goal, the National Civilised City model involves a set of goals, criteria and indices of measurement designed to regularise urban governance and promote its standards nationwide.

‘Better City Better Life’ signifies Shanghai’s status as a major economic and cultural centre.
Photo: Wolfgang Staudt



Slogans and Quality

The National Civilised City (*Quanguo wenming chengshi* 全国文明城市) campaign is a top-down, commercialised form of post-socialist mobilisation or agitprop. It features, among other things, propaganda slogans in large colourful Chinese characters printed on all kinds of conspicuous billboards and other kinds of signs. This kind of Mao-era ‘red’ practice might seem out of step with the contemporary urban environment, but it is a central, and highly visible, feature of party-led socialist modernisation. The language used in these slogans harks back to the Spiritual Civilisation campaigns of the 1980s mentioned earlier in this volume. Today, following the prompts of the new leadership of Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang, ‘The China Dream’ prominently features in many of these urban slogans; under the previous decade-long rule of Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao, the key phrase was to create a ‘Harmonious Society’ (*hexie shehui* 和谐社会).

At the core of all of these exhortations is the tireless injunction to ‘construct a civilised society, build a civilised city’. The language often includes paired characters or phrases relating the actions of the individual to the quality of the society or collective. Many of the slogans repeat the term ‘civilised’ (*wenming* 文明) the key expression of this *Yearbook* — several times over with different yet related meanings. Other slogans draw explicit connections between the behaviour of the individual and urban development. Numerous variations exist, tailored to particular cities. All of the

Slogans for Civilised Cities

争做文明人,共创文明城
Collectively strive to be civilised, together build a civilised city.

手牵手共建和谐城,心连心同做文明人
Together build a harmonious city, heart to heart, unite to become civilised people.

树文明新风,做文明市民,创文明城市
Establish civilised new ways of doing things, be civilised citizens and create a civilised city.

市民素质高一分,城市形象美十分
Each small improvement in the character of its citizens results in a great improvement in the image of their city.

说文明话,办文明事,做文明人,创文明城
Speak in a civilised manner, do things in a civilised fashion, be a civilised person and build a civilised city.

创建文明城市,优化城市环境,促进经济发展
Create a civilised city, optimise the urban environment and promote economic development.

建设生态文明城市
Construct an ecologically civilised city.



‘Be Civil’. Street musician in front of a poster in Shanghai.
Photo: Flickr/badbrother

keywords used in the slogans invoke ideas about the role of the individual in striving to build modern cities. Together they convey the notion that the future of China lies in the city as a paragon of national modernisation and development.

For these reasons, talk of *wenming* in China invariably invokes another idea, that of *suzhi*. As we noted in the introduction to this *Yearbook*, it is a term that can roughly be translated as the ‘quality’, demeanour or overall value of a person or people.

At the start of the Reform era in 1979 and the launching of policies leading to radical modernisation, China’s leaders expressed concern about the quality of its population (*renkou suzhi* 人口素质), fearing that low levels of education, widespread lawless behaviour, and people’s lack of ability to cope with rapid change would limit China’s potential to catch up with other countries. The concern with *suzhi*, which dates back to the early twentieth century, is integral to the party-state’s efforts to create the kind of civilised society it envisages for China and to achieve the goals of Socialist Spiritual Civilisation. For the authorities, this is the human development side of economic growth in national modernisation. The building of civilised cities today is the latest in a series of political campaigns to improve the *suzhi* of the country’s citizens as a whole.

How to be a Civilised City

'National Civilised City' is an honorary title granted by the Central Steering Commission for Building Spiritual Civilisation. The commission awards the title to urban governments in recognition of attainment of party-designated standards in several categories including education of party officials, promotion of the rule of law, public security, development of the consumer environment, provision of new cultural facilities, volunteer social services organisation and environmental quality. As the highest state honour for Chinese cities, the title of Civilised City is much sought after by urban officials.

To be awarded the title, a city must apply for evaluation and demonstrate 'clean' government. Subsequent to preliminary assessment, cities are subject to local site inspection including interviews with local citizens. Each of the eleven categories of standards is subject to multiple criteria of evaluation and assessment. The following is a selection from the Civilised City Evaluation Work Manual, which contains over one hundred separate items of evaluation of the goals specified in the National Civilised City Assessment System. Each criterion involves various standards of qualitative or quantitative assessment:

- Study and promulgation of party theory and policy (*lilun xuexi yu xuanchuan* 理论学习与宣传)
- Education of party cadres (*ganbu xuexi jiaoyu* 干部学习教育)
- Scientific and democratic system for decision-making (*jianli kexue minzhu juece zhidu* 建立科学民主决策制度)
- Government transparency (*zhengwu gongkai* 政务公开)
- Observance of government regulations by officials (*yifa xingzheng* 依法行政)
- Legal propaganda and education (*fazhi xuanchuan jiaoyu* 法制宣传教育)
- Legal aid and services (*falu yuanzhu yu fuwu* 法律援助与服务)
- Protection of labour rights (*weihu laodongzhe hefa quanyi* 维护劳动者合法权益)
- Protection of gender equality (*weihu nannüpingdeng* 维护男女平等)
- Protection of the rights of minors and senior citizens (*weichengnianren, laonianren quanyi baohu* 未成年人, 老年人权益保护)
- Protection of migrant workers' rights (*jincheng wugong renyuan quanyi baozhang* 进城务工人员权益保障)
- Complaints of violation of rights of disabled people, per ten thousand households (*qinfan canjiren hefa quanyi shijian tousulü - qi/wanhu* 侵犯残疾人合法权益事件投诉率 - 起/万户)
- Strengthening grassroots-level Party and Youth League organisation (*jiceng dang, tuan zu-zhi jianshe* 基层党, 团组织建设)
- Democratic establishment and administration of community residential committees (*shequ juweihuide minzhu jianshe yu guanli* 社区居委会的民主建设与管理)
- Public safety and security (*gonggong anquan baozhang* 公共安全保障)
- Emergency response systems (*tufa gonggong shijian yingji chuli* 突发公共事件应急处理)
- Maintenance of social stability (*weihu shehui wending* 维护社会稳定)
- Promotion of retail shops without counterfeit products (*kaizhan 'baicheng wandian wu jia-huo' huodong* 开展'百城万店无假货'活动)
- Anti-smuggling and 'anti-fake' campaigns (*daji zousi fansi, jiamao weilie chan shangpin* 打击走私贩私, 假冒伪劣产商品)
- Protection of the legal rights and interests of businesses (*weihu qiye hefa quanyi* 维护企业合法权益)
- Civic education (*shimin jiaoyu* 市民教育)
- Moral and ideological education of minors (*weichengnianren sixiang daode jiaoyu* 未成年人思想道德教育)

- Education expenditure per capita (*renjun jiaoyu jingfei zhichu* 人均教育经费支出)
- Frequency of large-scale cultural events held in public squares (*daxing guangchang wenhua huodong cishu* 大型广场文化活动次数)
- Public libraries (*gonggong tushuguan* 公共图书馆)
- Art museums, cultural centres and places for community cultural activities (*yiguan, wenhua guan, shequ wenhua huodong changsuo* 艺馆, 文化馆, 社区文化活动场所)
- Sports facilities per capita measured in square metres (*renjun tiyu changdi mianji* 人均体育场地面积)
- Regulation of publications (*chubanshu guanli* 出版物管理)
- Establishment and regulation of Internet culture (*wangluo wenhua jianshe yu guanli* 网络文化建设与管理)
- Protection of cultural heritage (*wenhua yichan baohu* 文化遗产保护)
- Popularisation of science knowledge and team building (*kepu sheshi he kepu duiwu* 科普设施和科普队伍)
- Road manners and compliance with traffic regulations (*shimin jiaotong xingwei* 市民交通行为)
- Good deeds [*à la Lei Feng*] (*jianyi yongwei* 见义勇为)
- Charitable donations (*cishan juanzhu* 慈善捐助)
- Volunteer organisations and activities (*zhiyuanzhe zuzhi yu huodong* 志愿者组织与活动)
- Level of GDP per capita (*renjun GDP shuiping* 人均GDP水平)
- Ownership of patents per one hundred thousand people (*mei shiwan ren yongyou zhuanli shouquan shu* 每十万人拥有专利授权数)
- Community health service centres (*shequ weisheng fuwu zhongxin* 社区卫生服务中心)
- Food safety (*shipin anquan* 食品安全)
- Drinking water sanitisation (*yingyongshui weisheng* 饮用水卫生)
- Average life expectancy (*pingjun yuqi shouming* 平均预期寿命)
- Urban and rural social assistance system (*chengxiang shehui jiuozhu tixi* 城乡社会救助体系)
- Per capita public green space (*renjun gonggong ludi* 人均公共绿地)
- Rate of centralisation of treatment of urban sewage (*chengshi shenghuo wushui jizhong chuli lu* 城市生活污水集中处理率)
- Air pollution indices — API index <100 days per year (*kongqi wuran zhishu - quannian API zhishu <100 de tianshu* 空气污染指数 — 全年API指数<100的天数)
- Rate of compliance of stabilising pollutants and emissions from key industrial enterprises (*zhongdian gongye qiye wuranwu paifang wending dabiao lu* 重点工业企业污染物排放稳定达标率)
- Energy conservation and emissions reduction (*jienerg jianpai* 节能减排).



A banner reading 'Create a civilised city and build a harmonious society'.

Photo: Sen Yuan

Note: The Civilised Cities Evaluation Work Manual from which the above list is excerpted is available on Chinese document websites; there is no official website that openly lists these rules and criteria.

Guiding Spiritual Civilisation

Again, as mentioned elsewhere, in 1986 the Party passed a 'Resolution on Guiding Principles for Building a Socialist Society with Spiritual Civilisation'. In 1997, it established a Central Guidance Commission for Building Spiritual Civilisation under the supervision of the Party's Propaganda Department. In 2003, the Spiritual Civilisation Commission set standards and selection procedures for National Civilised Cities at all levels of government administration. There were to be: 'national civilised cities and districts'; 'civilised villages and towns'; and 'civilised [work] units'. In 2005, it promulgated a National Civilised City Assessment System (*Quanguo wenming chengshi ceping tixi* 全国文明城市测评体系) in the form of government manuals for each administrative level, each of the three levels of city (*shi* 市) as well as urban districts (*shiqu* 市区). New, updated editions of the manual appeared in 2008 and 2011.

Evaluation of the implementation of these policies is the work of the City Investigation Team of the National Bureau of Statistics (*Guojia tongjiju chengshi diaocha dui* 国家统计局城市调查队). Team members sign non-disclosure agreements and are assigned to cities where they demonstrably have no conflicts of interest. Their task is to evaluate the goals and achievements of urban civilisation policies. Evaluators learn of their assignments when, en route to the airport, they open a confidential envelope specifying their destination and field sites. Like restaurant critics, they carry out their work incognito, posing as ordinary tourists; they stay in three-star hotels and travel by taxi to observe conditions in major commercial streets and at traffic junctions, in hospitals and markets, as well as some fifty randomly selected sites. They try public telephones, and ride public buses to tabulate how many people do, and do not, give up their seats for the elderly, pregnant women, the disabled and children. All visits are unannounced, including neighbourhood visits during which they interview residents about their participation rates in local activities.

Becoming Civilised

City governments voluntarily apply to be assessed for evaluation. To qualify, jurisdictions must attain the status of being designated an 'Advanced Civilised City' (*xianjin wenming chengshi* 先进文明城市), based on a set of statistical indicators, in order to prepare for site evaluation. Local Spiritual Civilisation Offices in cities co-ordinate with other branches of government to plan and implement activities that will meet their goals in some nine categories, based on over 100 indicators. In 2005, the Spiritual Civilisation Commission recognised ten cities as National Civilised Cities. They were: Xiamen, Qingdao, Dalian, Ningbo, Shenzhen, Baotou, Zhongshan, Yantai, Langfang and Zhangjiagang. Three urban districts made the cut: Tianjin's Heping district, Shanghai's Pudong New Area and Beijing's Xicheng dis-



New Year's poster celebrating civilised behaviour at the CCTV headquarters in Beijing.
Photo: Jim Gourley/rudenoan

CIVILISED TOILETS

In the run up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, one of the city's most widely advertised projects was the construction and renovation of thousands of toilets and the introduction of a star rating system for public facilities. In 2012 and 2013, the state of the nation's toilets continues to be associated with degrees of 'civilisation'.



Sign in a men's bathroom in Beijing: 'Stand closer to the urinal, get closer to civilisation'.

Photo: Danwei

Jinan Open Toilet Alliance

A number of restaurants, department stores, hotels, and universities in Jinan, the capital city of Shandong province, formed an 'Open Toilet Alliance' in November 2012. Members undertook to make their toilets available to the public.

According to media reports in April 2013, the city plans to expand the alliance to 1,000 members by the end of the year, as part of its bid to win recognition as a 'National Civilised City'. The city government also boasts of innovations including 'fragrant toilets' equipped to filter out odours and automatically perfume the air. In April 2013, Jinan hosted a study tour of over 400 urban law enforcers from all over China focused on the city's 'advanced experience'.

Occupy Toilet Protest

Inspired by the worldwide Occupy protest movements, a group of female students in Guangzhou launched their own 'occupy' movement. Fed up with long queues for the ladies', twenty women marched into a men's public toilet carrying colorful placards calling for equal waiting times for both sexes. Local media reported that provincial officials in Guangzhou responded by agreeing to increase the number of women's toilets by fifty percent. Similar moves have been made in other cities. In Shaanxi province, the government ordered that new toilet facilities provide more cubicles for women than men.

Renewed Standards for Toilets

In May 2012, the Beijing Municipal Commission of City Administration and Environment released a new set of standards governing public toilets in the city (toilet campaigns in the 1980s had set the previous targets). The new standards impose a maximum limit of two flies per public toilet, and set out rules regarding odour and general cleanliness. As part of the upgrade, the commission would provide free toilet paper. According to the commission's estimate, this will cost the municipal government as much as eighteen million yuan per year.

In February 2013, the Ministry of Health released draft regulations governing public toilets. Media reports suggest that, if approved, the new regulations will be more strictly enforced than the ministry's previous toilet 'guidelines'. The draft document ranks public toilets into four classes, mainly based on odour. The draft also stipulates that the maximum fly-count for stand-alone public toilets is three per square metre. The public toilets inside other buildings are only permitted one fly each.

A four-star rated toilet approved by the Beijing Tourism Administration.

Photo: Rich & Cheryl



tract. Such formal recognition means that the named city or district can hold the title while continuing to 'civilise' itself over the following three- to four-year period, when they will be re-evaluated.

The introduction to the 2011 manual covering the National Civilised City Assessment System includes the numerous criteria necessary to apply to become a 'Civilised City'; in particular, it emphasises 'ideological and moral construction work' for adolescents. Other prerequisites require clean and disaster-free government. For instance, in the twelve months preceding an application or the review of a positive evaluation as 'civilised', any rule violation or crime committed by a jurisdiction's party secretary or mayor rules out the application or nullifies the place's 'civilised' status. Any serious accident or incident within the jurisdiction, such as water pollution, food safety incident or major construction disaster also prevents a city from applying for the status, or may lead to a city being stripped of the honorific title.

Among the cities named as being 'civilised' in 2005, six have retained their status through the 2009 and 2011 evaluations: Xiamen, Dalian, Ningbo, Baotou, Yantai and Zhangjiagang. Because the program treats provincial-level cities as provinces, urban districts (rather than the city at large), may apply for civilised status. Xicheng district, Beijing and Heping district, Tianjin, retained their 'civilised' status over three rounds. In 2009, meanwhile, the Commission recognised eleven new cities and three new urban districts. Of the cities and districts named in 2005, all except Qingdao and Shanghai's Pudong retained their titles. In 2011, the Commission recognised a record twenty-four cities and three districts. Among existing title-holders, all remained 'civilised' except Shenzhen, Zhongshan and Shanghai's Jing'an district, only recognised in 2009. In 2011, Qingdao and Shanghai Pudong regained National Civilised City status. Currently, there are a total of fifty national civilised cities; sixteen subprovincial, twenty-two at the prefectural level, four at the county level and eight urban districts.

Making the Grade

The current evaluation manual emphasises some categories more than others. Categories four, five and six, which together cover social and cultural resources, management and services, are the most clearly articulated. Among them, category four, ‘healthy human environment’, has the most criteria. Not surprisingly, these include evidence of such ‘civilised behaviours’ as no spitting, littering and so forth. There’s a Lei Feng-style section on moral conduct and sections on volunteerism, which reflect historical practices and values from the Maoist era. More than 90 percent of the citizens of the aspiring Civilised City must be aware of volunteer service organisations, and at least eight percent must undertake volunteer work. This category also includes international-style urban development criteria for cultural affairs and the development of cultural industries. Cities must make an economic commitment to cultural services for which the evaluation standard is evidence of local government spending on the cultural sec-

The Yan’an Elevated Road in Jing’an, Shanghai is illuminated with LEDs on Friday and Saturday nights.
Photo: Robert S. Donovan



tor at a rate in keeping with its general revenue growth. The jurisdiction must provide regular, free activity programs at public libraries and sports facilities and free entry to museums and cultural and exhibition centres.

The Party’s primary concern in the evaluation process is improvement of the conduct of government and party officials. Category one gives priority to ‘continuing education for officials’, including the study of party documents as well as earning the ‘people’s satisfaction’ via significant measures to improve local social problems. To popularise the program and his role in its promotion, in 2009 the mayor of Shenzhen, Xu Zongheng, launched a ‘one-hundred mayors network for the creation of civilised cities’. However, Shenzhen lost its own title when Xu was placed under investigation for serious violations of party discipline and subsequently dismissed for corruption. Shenzhen has since been working hard to regain its lost ‘civilised’ status. In March 2013, it became the first city to implement a ‘civility law’, which imposes fines for ‘uncivilised’ public behaviour.

Making the Civilised City title contingent on a corruption-free officialdom symbolically links in new ways the behaviour of officials to the city’s national standing. In an awarded Civilised City, this link also potentially intensifies public opprobrium of corrupt officials. The seaside Shandong provincial city of Qingdao lost its title in 2009 due to one of the outstanding scandals of the 2000s — the corruption of Du Shicheng, party secretary of the city from 2002, who took millions in bribes and awarded his mistress, Li Wei, large contracts for Olympics-related projects when the city was preparing to host the sailing competition of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Du was removed in 2007 and sentenced to life in prison in February 2008. The Pudong district of Shanghai also lost its title as a consequence of corrupt land and real estate dealings. The Vice-Mayor of Pudong from 2004–2007, Kang Huijun, had earned the nickname ‘the new landlord of Pudong’ and ‘director of real estate speculation’ because he benefitted from control over the access to real estate in Liujiazui and Jinqiao — the two major development zones in Pudong. He also managed to acquire multiple apartments at below-market prices. He was sentenced to life in prison in 2009.



Ribbon dancer in Xiamen.
Photo: Hsing Wei

Category eight in the civilising process requires an ‘ecologically sustainable environment’. This includes the management of air quality based on national standards. The rapidity with which cities have installed air quality monitors since the official recognition of PM2.5 mentioned above, and placed data online, led in 2013 to the creation of a major new website (www.aqicn.org) that collates data from cities across the country. The website features individual maps depicting the locations of air quality monitors in each city and a national map showing simultaneous Air Quality Index readings in dozens of cities.

A National Public Civilisation Index (*Quanguo wenming zhishu ceping* 全国文明指数测评) assesses on an annual basis the progress made by aspiring cities. By the end of 2012, the National Bureau of Statistics revealed that Xiamen in the southern coastal province of Fujian ranked first overall for the second year in a row and, in the area of the ‘moral education of teenagers’, second only to Qingdao, Shandong province. Xiamen’s distinctions also included boasting a 9.6 percent volunteer rate, with increasing numbers of volunteers at airports, bus stations, hospitals and tourist spots. To address public concerns related to food safety, the city government implemented an online supervision system tracking fresh and pre-packaged foods in supermarkets from more than 10,000 companies: when a substandard product is found its producer is publicly identified. Xiamen also hosts blogs for ‘civilised adolescents’ involving more than 380 primary and secondary schools and about 50,000 student bloggers.

Shenzhen’s Civility Law



A group of *chengguan* urban law enforcers in Shenzhen.
Photo: Wilson L.

To promote civilised behaviour, the People’s Congress of Shenzhen passed a law that punishes inappropriate conduct ranging from spitting and smoking to allowing pets to defecate in public places, imposing fines from 200 to 10,000 yuan. It’s believed that the law, called Regulations for the Promotion of Civilised Behaviour (*Shenzhen jingji tequ wenming xingwei cujin tiaoli* 深圳经济特区文明行为促进条例) is the first attempt by a city to promote civic behaviour through legislation.

Multiple offenders with more than five violations within two years face an additional fine of 1,000 yuan. Those who have violated more than ten times in two years will have their offences written into their profile in a national ‘personal credit system’ (*geren xinyong jilu xitong* 个人信用记录系统), with consequences such as a diminished likelihood of getting a home loan or obtaining a credit card. The law allows offenders to do community service work as an alternative to the payment of their fines but only up to one half of the total monetary amount.

The law also encourages good civic behaviour such as blood donation and organ and stem cell donation by dictating that such noble deeds will be recorded in the person’s ‘civilised behavior archives’, entitling them to benefits including cash rewards and priority in receiving blood transfusions.

The city’s urban law enforcement bureau, which oversees *chengguan*, is responsible for enforcing the civility law with assistance from the police. Law enforcement officers are required to issue receipts to people who pay fines for uncivil behaviour. It fails to specify how revenue from the fines will be used, saying only that all revenues will go into the city’s coffers.

Questions remain about how effective the new laws will be. A news report in the English language *Shenzhen Daily* in April 2013 observed that ‘when an unidentified male driver spat out a window of his car last week in central Futian district, nobody showed up to charge him a fine for the act deemed uncivil by a new city law that, so far, hasn’t had any teeth’.

The Idea of Rank

Most countries define cities by population size. China primarily defines cities by their administrative rank, from provincial-level city (*zhixia shi* 直辖市) to prefecture-level city (*diji shi* 地级市) and county-level city (*xianji shi* 县级市). Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai and Chongqing are defined as municipalities that are under the direct control or jurisdiction of the central government on the same level as a province. A city's place in this system determines its 'rank' (*jibie* 级别) in the hierarchy.

The significance of rank is apparent in the documents of the Civilised City program. Reports on the National Civilised City program make no reference to a city's particular history, specific culture, or to distinctive places within a city including World Heritage sites. The standardised outcomes of the National Civilised City program present only the name of a city listed in order of administrative rank, from prefecture-level cities and districts of provincial-level cities to 'civilised town' and 'civilised units'. Documents do not report why a city has attained Civilised City status, or why it has lost it. If a city loses its title, its name simply disappears from the list.

In Chinese, the multiple meanings of the word *pin* 品 help explain some of the deeper meanings of the ideas around 'rank'. Among the slogans appearing in Shenzhen's civilising landscape was 'Construct a High-grade Cultural Shenzhen City' (*ba Shenzhen jiancheng gao pinwei wenhua chengshi* 把深圳建成高品位文化城市). Here the *pin* in *pinwei* or 'grade' covers notions of rank, measurement and status. Yet *pin* has additional meanings. *Pin* is composed of three *kou* 口 or mouths. It implies not merely to 'taste or sample' (*pinchang* 品尝) whether a food is salty or sweet or of high quality as in 'taste (appreciate) fine tea' (*pin ming* 品茗), but also taste in the cultured or 'civilised' sense of the ability to discern quality.

As a single character it can be a noun indicating, for example, a high rank in the dynastic court: it appeared in this sense as early as the Tang dynasty (618–907) and the last dynasty, the Qing (1644–1911), had nine *pin* or 'ranks' of bureaucrats. It could also mean temperament or character, or small commodities or products. As a verb it may mean to sample, appraise, rate or judge. Paired with other characters it can form compounds such

as *pinde* 品德 and *pinge* 品格, both conveying the sense of moral character; *pinxing* 品行, conduct or behaviour; *pinwei* 品味, taste or sensibility; *pinping* 品评, to judge, adjudicate or comment on; *pinzhong* 品种, variety or breed; *pinzhi* 品质, quality; *pinwei* 品位, grade or rank and *pinpai* 品牌, brand. From ancient times to the present, this one character connects these diverse ideas about rank and assessment with notions of inherent quality.

Pin 品 parses and elevates what is distinctive within categories. With uneven social development in China, the concept of *pin* informs party-state concerns about the potential to transform the *suzhi* of the population. Yet the notion of striving for 'scientific' improvement in the *suzhi* of individuals holds less significance today than the historical mission of civilising the collective. In the Reform era, the city is the key collective and holds highest rank among places, and so the National Civilised City ranks first in the official honours for 'civilised' places.



From the series 'Great Mall of China' 中华商城.
Photo: Adrian Suddenly Gordon

Standardising Urban Governance

Both netizens and officials have been critical of China's Civilised City program. They point out that vibrant urban life with a basis in cultural diversity is different from the tireless, standardised check-list of Civilised City criteria as identified by the party-state. Even the style in which a civilising campaign (*chuangzao wenming chengshi* 创造文明城市, *chuangwen* 创文 for short) is launched — floral displays and colourful potted plants lining the roadsides, red banners flying overhead, streets suddenly swept clear of vendors and buzzing with red-jacketed volunteers — recalls the aesthetic style of mid-twentieth century communism and mass mobilisation campaigns. It seems out of step with China's new, high-rise, consumer-oriented urban environments.

The Civilised City program also appears, at least superficially, to be at odds with China's development of modern ranking systems and the Party's emphasis on becoming 'world class' in all areas, from productive capacities to the knowledge economy and cities themselves. But the red legacies of socialism remain strong in China, and have been rearticulated since the rise of Xi Jinping in late 2012. The Civilised City system links enduring values of the party-state with contemporary principles of urban development under global capitalism. The shift to extreme marketisation or neoliberalism in the world economy since the 1980s encourages ranking schemes and quantitative indicators as a way of attracting economic interests. The neoliberal world economy readily accommodates the politics of rank in China — where the market and the state combine in inventive ways that powerfully endorse numbers and urban rankings.

On one level, China's National Civilised City program strives to improve the roles and functions of modern urban government. It promotes the co-ordination of government services, social needs, economic development, environmental quality and culture as conceived by the state. It has grown well beyond the system of political-linguistic techniques that have existed throughout the sixty-four year history of the People's Republic for socialising and coercing citizen conduct. It promotes replica-

Urban Law Enforcers: Agents of Civility or Thugs?

China's urban law enforcement officers, known as *chengguan* 城管 (short for Urban Management Regulation Enforcement Teams, *Chengshi guanli xingzheng zhifa dadui* 城市管理行政执法大队) don't have a very good reputation — the word is sometimes used both online and off as a synonym for 'thug'. *Chengguan* regularly make the news and raise the hackles of commentators on social media for harassing and assaulting street vendors, beggars and others. 'Beat Him, Take Everything Away', a Human Rights Watch report published in 2012, explained the well-intentioned rationale behind the *chengguan* system like this:

The legal basis for the creation of the *chengguan* is the Law of the People's Republic of China on Administrative Penalty (hereafter, Administrative Penalties Law), passed in March 1996. That law did not specifically call for the creation of the *chengguan*, nor did it use that term. Instead, the law empowered provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities to 'entrust an organization ... with imposing administrative penalties' regarding matters falling outside the realm of criminal law and the authority of the Public Security Bureau (China's police) ...

The goals of the Chinese government appear to have been streamlining enforcement of local administrative regulations which were traditionally the responsibility of multiple local government departments, minimizing opportunities for corruption and abuse of power, and better controlling public unrest...



Chengguan officers busy taking down the fence around an illegal construction before demolition, while being filmed by local TV, in Zhabei district, Shanghai, 29 January 2013.
Photo: Remko Tanis

The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences scholar Zhou Hanhua [has remarked:]

Originally [urban social control] issues were handled by the *danwei* (单位), the work unit, to which Chinese employees were once closely bound. The *danwei* ... prevented people from engaging in [commercial] enterprises on the side. The decline of China's state-owned enterprises in the 1990s precipitated the breakdown of the *danwei* system. At the same time, the country grew increasingly urbanized and millions of migrant workers poured into the cities. The traditional [urban social control] system could no longer manage [so] the *chengguan* were established to handle the problems of the urban environment.

It was not until August 2002 that the central government published a directive outlining eight specific areas of administrative law — ranging from environmental sanitation and traffic regulations to urban beautification rules — that provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities may delegate to *chengguan*. But even that directive does not specify permissible and prohibited means of enforcement, or set forth rules to guide the department and accountability of relevant enforcement personnel.

In the absence of such rules and guidelines and operating under municipal and local governments but with shadowy connections to local police, the *chengguan* often employ brutish tactics to keep casual street vendors in order or off the streets, chase away beggars, and regulate outdoor advertising and noise pollution. In some areas, they also manage the allocation and regulation of parking spaces — a growing source of vexation and conflict in Chinese cities.

Chengguan are People Too

A propaganda video appeared online that was said to be the work of Jiang Yifan, a *chengguan* from Changzhou, Jiangsu province. The video was intended to humanise the *chengguan* and show that they are just trying to do a good job. Below is a description of the on-camera action together with a translation of the subtitle to each scene:

Jiang and a fellow *chengguan* point at vendors on the street:
All you ever see are my extremely strict words.

A bowl of instant noodles is steaming on Jiang's desk, his wife is on the phone, he's working overtime: But you don't see all my tears and worries.

A female vendor is cooking snacks on the street: You have your livelihood.

Jiang and his colleague are standing in front of the female vendor and writing in their notebooks: ... and I have my duty.

Other people on the street are laughing and pointing: You can hold our job in disdain.

Street scenes of traffic and buildings: But we can show you who is really beautifying the city.

Close-up images of Jiang working on a computer:
Being a *chengguan* will always be controversial.

Jiang stands watch on the street: We are questioned and mocked wherever we go.

Jiang looks at himself in the mirror while putting on his uniform:
Despite all this, even if no one understands.

Jiang pushes open a door to face the camera: We will march courageously forward.

Jiang looks sternly into the camera: I am a *chengguan*, and I can speak up for myself.



Chengguan badge.
Photo: Willi Grillmayer

ble standards and the involvement of both citizens and officials in developing more open and transparent forms of government behaviour and citizen compliance.

On another level, the program's emphasis on volunteerism or citizen participation in forms of social support and societal monitoring links it to the Maoist era tradition of 'mobilising the grassroots' — the masses — to carry out unpaid social and productive work. It maintains and expands citizen involvement in the policing of public places. Its ideological impact is especially evident in government programs to socialise teenagers and young people by training them to use state-approved online services and blogs in accordance with official guidelines. In these ways, the party-state continues its attempts to control social behaviour and create a future nation of uniformly 'civilised', ideologically homogenous and modern places — a Chinese version of the 'world class' city.

Three people give directions to a bulldozer driver demolishing an illegal structure, Shanghai, 29 January 2013.
Photo: Remko Tanis



The *People's Daily* and Civilised Driving

China's roads may not be the world's most dangerous: India has more road deaths in absolute terms as well as per capita. But neither are they associated with safe and orderly driving. The explosive growth in private and commercial traffic has brought with it frequent gridlock and increasingly blatant road safety violations. While official statistics show a decline in traffic accidents and road deaths over the past decade, the World Health Organization's *Global Status Report on Road Safety 2013* estimates that actual numbers are nearly four times higher than the reported figures.

That China's road safety still lags behind the developed world inspires constant hand wringing in the state media. In 2008, Xinhua noted that the China Traffic Safety Forum's 2007 figure of 5.1 road deaths for every 10,000 motor vehicles was worse than every developed country and more than double the global average. Xinhua specifically highlighted problem behavior including switching lanes without signaling, ignoring traffic lights, driving against the traffic and reversing on a highway to catch a missed exit.

In October 2012, the *People's Daily* published an opinion piece on the state of 'uncivilised driving' in China and what to do about it. It quoted from the 2011 'China Automobile Community Development Report' (*Zhongguo qiche shehui fazhan baogao* 中国汽车社会发展报告), which predicted that there would be 86.5 million private vehicles on the road in China by 2013. (The most recent edition predicts over 100 million this year.) The newspaper, the Party's official mouthpiece, observed that while China has become a car society, it has not succeeded in teaching people behind the wheel to drive properly. How to remedy the state of uncivilised driving? Mostly by the cultivation of healthy driving habits, the paper insisted, backed up by strict enforcement of rules and regulations.

From 1 January 2013, a new set of rules, Regulations Covering the Application for and Use of a Motor Vehicle Driver's License (*Jidongche jiazhizheng shenling he shiyong guiding* 机动车驾驶证申领和使用规定) impose hefty penalties on traffic violations. Anyone caught running a yellow light has six points deducted from their license. Those who cover up their license plates to avoid being identified by surveillance cameras (a common ruse) risk losing twelve points — effectively an automatic license suspension. Online, drivers harshly criticised the new rule governing yellow lights: if going through a yellow light is forbidden, they asked, then why not just have green and red lights?

Whether as a result of self-restraint or heightened enforcement, just one month after the promulgation of what a social media meme called 'the most severe traffic law in history', Xinhua was able to report an improvement on China's roads: 'China reported a dramatic decline of traffic violations and road accidents in January'. According to the Traffic Administration Bureau, the death toll from running traffic lights and speeding fell 13.3 percent and 71.2 percent respectively compared with the previous year. There were about 1.37 million cases of traffic light violations in January, a 40 percent decrease from the same period in 2012, and 285,000 cases of speeding — a 32.5 percent drop.



Without lines or traffic lights,
a variety of vehicles jammed in the
middle of the street.

Photo: Let Ideas Compete

