

ULTRA

Positions and Polarities Beyond Crisis

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ULTRA

Positions and Polarities Beyond Crisis

SESSION 4: *Design Practice and Questions of Tradition*

The Trajectory of Collective Life: The Ideal and Practice of New Village in Tianjin, 1920s-1950s

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Abstract

Originated from New Village Ideal in Japan, New Village was introduced to China in the early 1920s and became a byword for social reform program. Many residential designs or projects whose name includes the term "Village" or "New Village" had been completed in China since that time. This paper uses the Textual Criticism method to sort out the introduction and translation of New Village Ideal theory in China, and to compare the physical space, life organization and concepts of the New Village practices in ROC with in early PRC of Tianjin. It is found that the term "New Village" continued to be used across several historical periods, showing very similar spatial images. But the construction and usage of New Village and the meaning of collective life changed somewhat under different political positions and social circumstances: New Village gradually became an urban collective residential area which only bore the living function since it was introduced into modern China. The goal of its practice changed from building an equal autonomy to building a new field of power operation, a new discourse of social improvement and a new way for profit-seeking capital. With the change of state regime, the construction had entered a climax stage. New Village then became the symbol of the rising political and social status of the working class, and the link between the change of urban nature and spatial development. Socialism collective life and the temporal and spatial separation or combination between production and live constructed the collective conscience and identity of residents. The above findings highlight the independence of architecture history from general history, help to examine the complexity of China's localization New Village practice and the uniqueness of Tianjin's urban history, and provide new ideas for the study of China's modern urban housing development from the perspective of changes in daily life organization.

Introduction: New Village Ideal and Early Practice

1. Zhou Zuoren (1885-1967), a famous modern Chinese essayist, literary theorist, critic, poet, translator, thinker, pioneer of Chinese folklore and outstanding representative of the New Culture Movement.

2. Early 20th century, Japanese idealist writer Mushanokoji Saneatsu (1885-1976) launched the Atarashiki Mura (New Village) Movement in Japan to transform society, with the goal of promoting Human Life. His theory was based on naturalistic literature and inspired by the Mutual Aid theory of anarchist Peter Alexevich Kropotkin and the Pan-laborism theory of writer Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy.

3. Ogawa Rikan, "Re-discussion of the Influence of Japanese New Village on Zhou Zuoren," *Modern Chinese Literature Studies* (Apr.2018), 147.

4. Before the May 4th Movement, the article *New Villages in Japan* by Zhou Zuoren that published in the journal *Xinqingnian* (新青年) which was an important position of the New Culture Movement. Zhou went to Japan in mid-July to live in the headquarters of New Village in Hiuga for four days and participated in labor to "experiencing the happiness life of the right person". Then he opened a branch of New Village in his home in Beijing in February of the following year.

5. Zhou Zuoren, "New Village in Japan," *Xinqingnian*, no.6 (Mar.1919), 266.

6. After the Russian Revolution of October and the June 3rd Movement in China, Chinese intellectuals paid more attention to the role of laborers and gradually advocated labor, especially manual labor. Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培) also shouted: "Labor is sacred." See Li Shaobing, "A New Study of New Village Ideal in the May 4th Period," *Journal of Historical Science* (June. 1992), 68.

There has been no evidence whether Zhou Zuoren¹ was attracted by the Japanese New Village Ideal² for he spent his childhood in a turbulent society and yearned for the life philosophy of "Great Harmony (大同)" in the primitive clan society of China, he was influenced by the literary thought of "individualist humanism" of Japanese Shirakamba (白桦派は) or he worried that the Russian October Revolution would brought the hope of saving China and violent revolution at the same time.³ However, the New Village Ideal he actively promoted and organized started at the climax of the New Culture Movement.⁴ In all his articles or speeches, Zhou repeatedly emphasized that the spirit of New Village was to promote "person's life", establish an ideal society where "everyone could do their best and obtain what they need" and "everyone could be cooperative, free, helpful and independent" and "advocate collective faith and freedom" through peaceful and improved ways.⁵ His thoughts were in line with the ascendant movement of saving China from subjugation and ensure its survival in the early twentieth century as well as the anarchism that advocated personal freedom at that time. In addition, New Village's advocacy for voluntary labor, especially manual labor, catered to the "Work-study Program" trend at that time.⁶ Therefore, New Village evoked repercussions in China from 1919 to 1921, with many celebrities from all walks of life actively discussing it and trying to practice it to call on people to move out from the city and create an ideal living environment characterized by equality, self-sufficiency and mutual help through improving traditional villages.

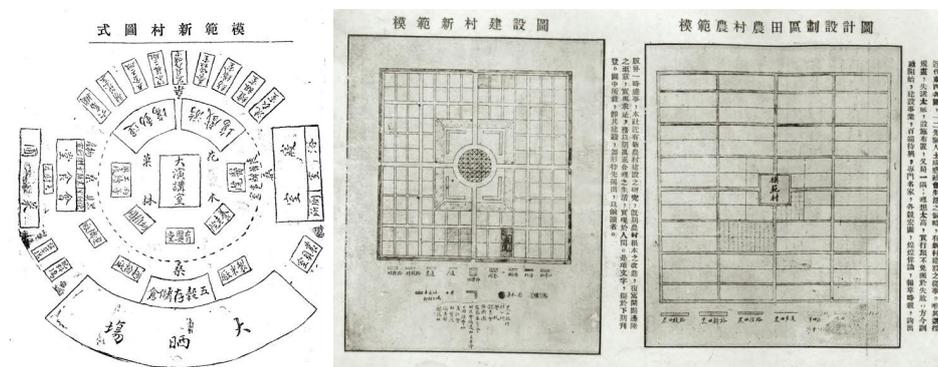


Figure 1: Model New Village proposal in 1922, Drawing by Gao Lvzhen (高履贞). Source: *Daoluyuekan*, no.3 (Jan. 1922), 95.

Figure 2: Proposal of Farming area and construction planning of Model New Village in 1928. Source: *Sanminbanyuekan* no.1 (Mar, 1928), 1.

During that stage, the construction of New Village including Longhua New Village (龙华新村) in Shanghai, Qixin Agricultural Factory (启新农工厂) in Nanjing as well as the Caiyuan New Village (菜园新村) and the Work-study Mutual Aid Team (工读互助团) established by Wang Guangqi and Li Dazhao was in full swing. However, the New Village builders only imitated the systems and models of Japanese New Village movement. Without the guidance of professional architects, these social reformers involved in the constructions overemphasized the existence of certain material spaces and failed to pay attention to specific planning and design.

Translation: Spatial Model and Three Kinds of Practices in Tianjin

7. Hu Shi. "Non-individual's New Life," *Xinchao* (新潮), no.2 (Mar.1920), 475.

Hu Shi argued that the "Individualistic New Life"⁷ advocated by the New Village Ideal in Japan was not applicable as it would break the great social division of labor and people's connections to external world, which was proved by the rapid bankruptcy of early New Village practices. From 1921, the New Village Ideal gradually slipped out of the popular consciousness. However, as a Utopian ideal, the term "New Village" had gradually become synonymous with social reform or urban reform. Foreign theories or practices similar to it, such as "Fallon Staier", "Agricultural and Manufacturing Villages of Unity and Mutual Cooperation", "Garden City", "Model City" and "Industrial Model Village" were all named "New Village" and introduced by social reformers of China.

8. Wu Shan, "Preface and Illustrated Explanation for the Establishment of Model New Village," *Daoluyuekan* (道路月刊), no.3 (Jan. 1922), 94-97.

9. Anonymity, "Proposal of Farming area and construction planning of Model New Village," *Sanminbanyuekan* (三民半月刊), no.1 (Mar, 1928), 1.

Based on more foreign theories and cases, domestic scholars started to develop the New Village spatial model. Both the "Model New Village" spatial model (Figure 1) concept proposed firstly in 1922 in the article *Preface and Illustrated Explanation for the Establishment of Model New Village*⁸ and the New Village Model (Figure 2)⁹ mentioned in the journal *Sanminbanyuekan* (三民半月刊) in 1928 were all based on rural reconstruction. Except that the latter reflects slightly the traditional planning method of Chinese "Square-fields System (井田制)", they are exactly the same as the "Garden City" in terms of functional layout and are hub and spoke based: in the center of a New Village is a park or lecture hall for gathering people, surrounded by various public service spaces needed for modern living, and in the outer space are residential units and production place supporting the economy of the New Village.

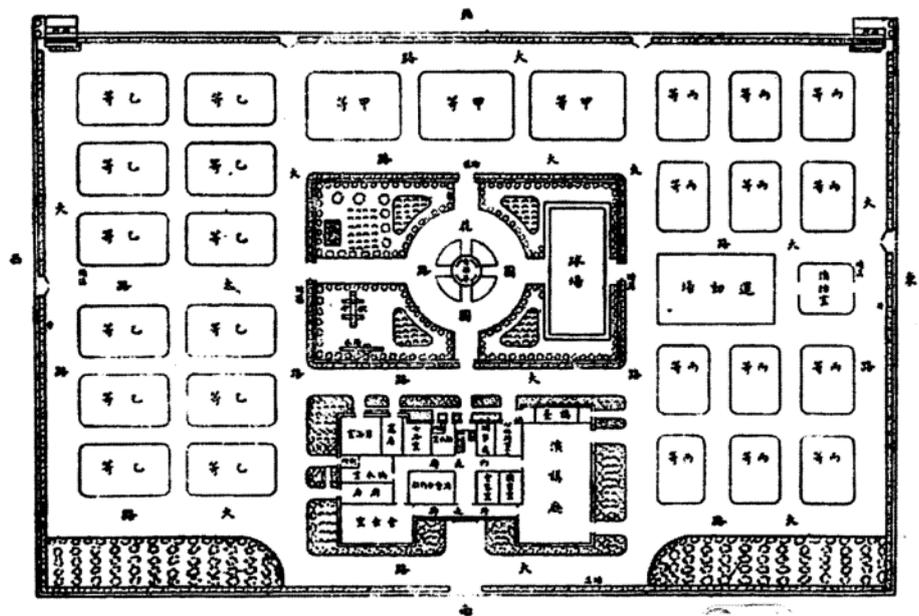


Figure 3: Proposal of the Laborers' New Village general layout standard. Source: *Laogongyuekan*, no. 2 (Jan.1933), 16.

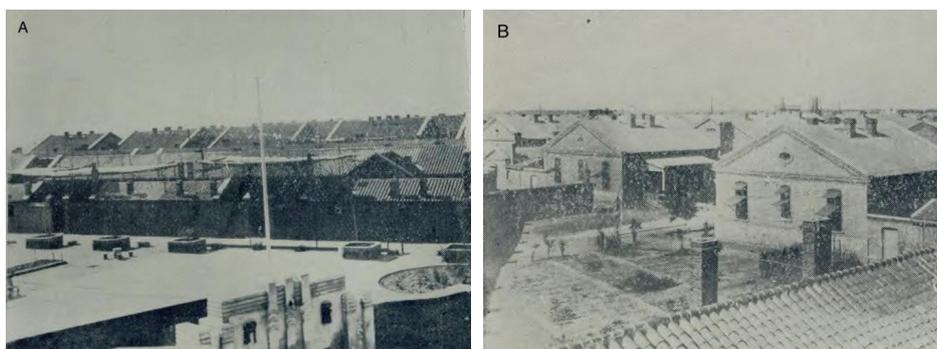


Figure 4: Photos of Qian New Village (a) and Hou New Village (b), Tianjin, 1935. Source: Haiwang, no.7 (1935), 558\562.

10. Ju He, "Outline of Laborers' New Village Facilities," *Laogongyuekan* (劳工月刊), no.2 (Jan.1933), 82-83.

11. Rang, "Our New Villages," *Haiwang* (海王), no.7 (1935), 491-493.

12. Anonymity, "Improvement Plan of Tianyi Village in Tianjin," *Dianyetongxun* (电业通讯), no.43 (1948), 16.

13. The Oriental Corporation Ltd. Tientsin's, *Annual Journal of the Oriental Corporation Ltd. Tientsin's* (Tientsin: The Oriental Corporation Ltd. Tientsin's, 1934), 108-109.

14. The outline pointed out that the necessary facilities in a New Village includes a primary school, a labor cram school, a reading room, a lecture hall, a rumpus room, a clinic, a public bath, a park, a playground, a home craft factory, a fire station, a cooperative, a nursery, an orphans and disabled home, etc. See Labor Department of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, *Outline of Laborers' New Village Facilities* (Peking: Jinghua Press, 1930), 9.

Around the 1930s, there were already no public utilities such as public fields, property, industry and commerce or collective consumption that satisfied daily life needs such as clothing, food and housing in the Laborers' New Village model (Figure 3).¹⁰ The Laborers' New Village had become a new aggregated residential model built for laborers with the purpose of improving their living space and facilities, educating their children, cultivating their good characters and at the same time forming an autonomous group thus to build a sound new society.

For example, four companies named Yongli Industrial Company (永利制碱公司), Jiuda Salt Company (久大精盐公司), Huanghai Chemical Industry Research Institute (黄海化学工业研究社) and Yongyu Salt Industry Company (永裕盐业公司) had built staff residences in Tanggu District, Tianjin, called Qian New Village (前新村), Zhong New Village (中新村) and Hou New Village (后新村) (Figure 4). In addition to various staff residences, there were also gardens, tennis courts, clubs, children's playgrounds and kindergartens.¹¹ The No.1 Power Station of the Tianjin Branch of Jibei Electric Power Company (冀北电力公司天津分公司第一发电所) had improved the living conditions of its staffs who lived in Tianyi Village (天一邨), expanded the club, the library and recreation room, and increased the educational public games and sports equipment for children. They also actively held gardening and indoor cleaning competitions and other competitions.¹² The workers' dormitories of the Oriental Corporation Ltd. Tientsin's (天津东亚毛呢纺织有限公司) adopted more stringent management like turning off lights uniformly to control workers' work and rest and cultivating their hygiene habits and self-discipline awareness by arranging them to do cleaning in turn. A positive institutional environment was the prerequisite for the normal development and education function of staff dormitory.¹³ Its Regulations for Staff Dormitory Management (职工宿舍管理规则) was quite consistent with the "Regulations" in the *Outline of Laborers' New Village Facilities* (劳工新村设施大纲)¹⁴ promulgated in the later period of the ROC.



Figure 5: Photos of Daxing New Village (a) and Chuhui New Village (b). Source: Photos by authors, 2020.

It was worth noting that many residential areas named “Village” in Tianjin foreign concessions were still built or purchased by enterprises for staffs to live in, such as Daxing Village (大兴邨) and Chuhui Village (储汇邨) (Figure 5). Daxing Village included two parts, Daxing Old Village and Daxing New Village, both of which were built by Daxing Engineering Company (大兴工程公司). At that time, most of dwellers were staffs of the company and the family members of company’s chairman. Chuhui Village originally named Tian’anli (天安里), was changed into the dormitory of the Postal Savings and Remittance Bureau in 1945, and named with “Village” that showed the characteristics of the enterprise and New Village. At material level, these dormitories for staffs was built in pursuit of sanitation, non-traditional housing space and collective housing to achieve “supervision” over the daily lives of them; however, with the gradual disappearance of public service space, it was not different from other commercialized New-styled Lilong (里弄) named after the term “Village” or “New Village”.

15. Yang Yi, “Villages, Lilong and Villas in Tianjin Concessions,” 369 *Huabao* (三六九画报), no.17 (1942), 20.

The commoditized New Village was essentially the housing problem of modern society and was the core content of a whole set of discourse, knowledge, analysis about collective residence. Around the 1940s, many residences developed by the real estate enterprises in the Tianjin foreign concessions were named after the word “Village” but did not have the features of real villages. “The celebrities, hermits and traditional Chinese culture fans who lived there” were actually “Modern ladies or men in suits and leather shoes.” The house was new-styled, with flowers, plants and fruit trees in the courtyard. The roads in the village were wide and suitable for daily activities and communication.¹⁵ With the development of national industry, the emerging middle class raised and tried to strengthen their identity through space consumption. The real estate developers made efforts to build marketing strategies by consuming modern, hygienic spatial intention contained in the word “New”, as well as taking advantage of the Chinese attachment to the traditional connotation of the word “Village”. The New Village became a symbol of identity and modern collective residential space. The concept of social improvement almost completely disappeared from it. In addition to the New Villages built by enterprises and real estate developers, the government-led Public Housing for Low-income became the third form of New Village. The Kuomintang (KMT) government chose a simplified Laborers’ New Village model to solve the living dilemma of poor people and relevant social problems to demonstrate its governing ability and political legitimacy. However, due

to the lack of fund, the supporting facilities and space of Low-income New Villages were often imperfect. The government could only take management and collectivization as the way to tackle the lack of public space and an institutional method to discipline the civilians. Though Tianjin Municipal Government had drawn up construction plans for many times, the actual number of completed housing was only eight; most of the planned public service spaces had also been abandoned to increase the number of residences like Xinminli (新民里) municipal housing; and even some basic public facilities such as tap water and toilets needed to be afforded by dwellers like Dongbei New Village (东北新村) built in 1948 (Figure 6).

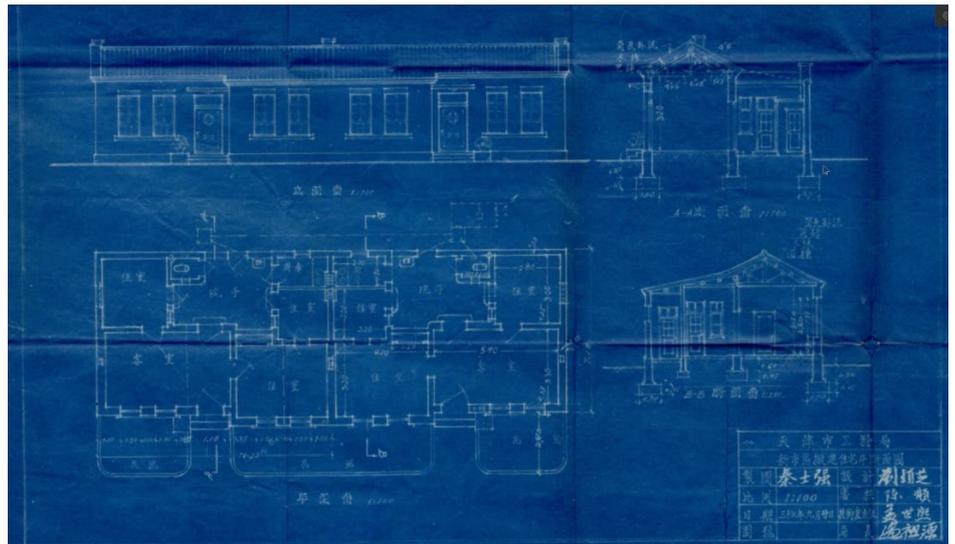


Figure 6: Architectural drawings of the houses in Dongbei New Village. Source: Tianjin Municipal Archives,[J0101-1-001416].

Climax: Collectivized Expression of New Village in Socialist Country

16. The Party Literature Research Center of the CPC Central Committee, *Mao Zedong's Early Manuscripts* (Changsha: Hunan Publishing House, 1990), 413.

During the New Culture Movement, Mushanokoji's New Village Ideal had an important influence on the early Communists. In 1919, Mao Zedong explored work-study program on the basis of the New Village and made a relatively specific description.¹⁶ He even visited Zhou Zuoren for advice in the spring of 1920. After a long period of translation, New Village was chosen by the Communists again in 1949 when China became a socialist country. Then a new round of New Village construction began, which reflected and praised the new society and new system. From a practical point of view, when a new regime was established, the more blank the land was, the more favorable it was for the ruling party to build ideal New Villages, choose ideal residents and set up new living standards. The newly established regime could also provide a good political and institutional guarantee for the New Village Ideal, which was particularly evident during the nationwide construction of Workers' New Village.

After the founding of the PRC, the new regime formulated a development path of "more accumulation and less consumption" to realize the China's industrial modernization and economic development. The "more accumulation" of the economy enabled the rapid development and expansion of urban industries. At the Second Plenary

17. Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol 4 (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1965), 1492.

Session of the 7th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Mao proposed to increase the number of industrial workers, "turn a city of consumption into one of production", and "rely wholeheartedly on the working class"¹⁷ to accomplish production goals. Then the political and social status of the working class had been improved as never before.

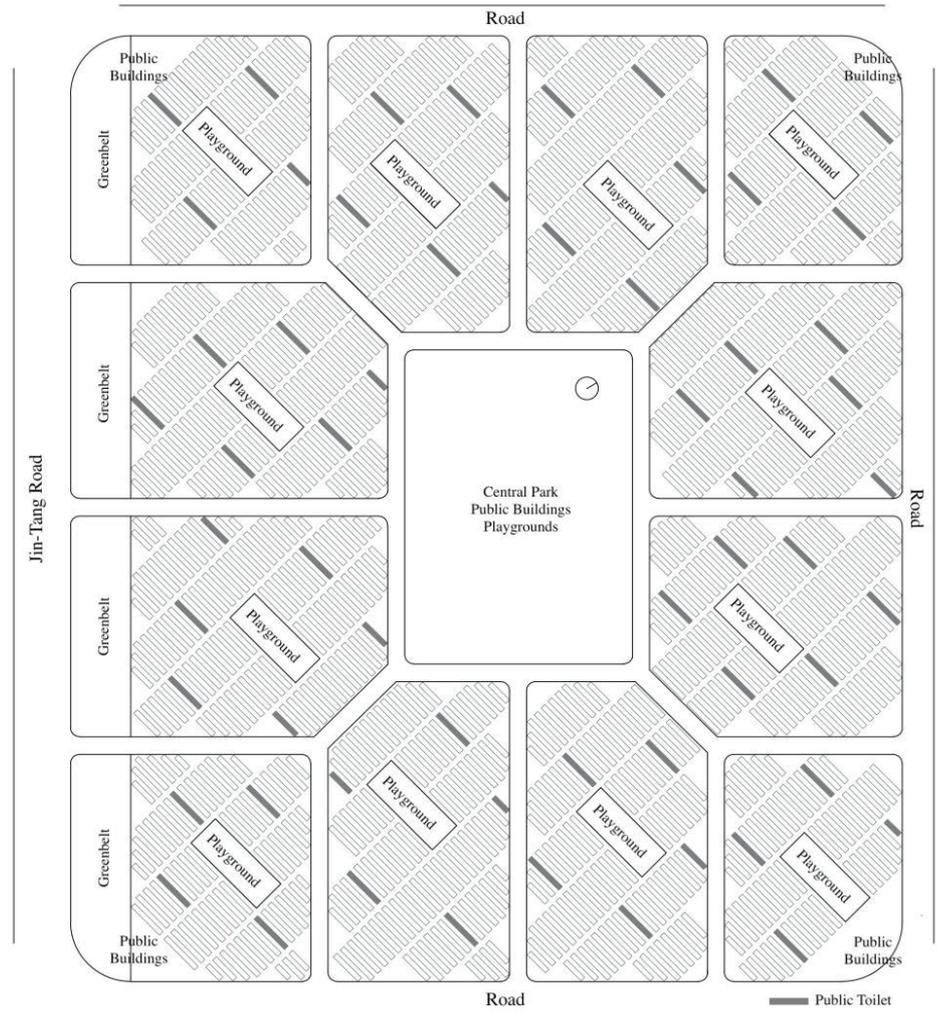


Figure 7: General layout of Zhongshanmen Workers' New Village (中山门工人新村) in Tianjin. Source: Diagram by authors based on the drawing obtained from Tianjin Municipal Archives, [X0159-C-000032-001].

18. The number of employees in Tianjin was 281,902 in 1949 and 451,814 in 1952. Among them, the number of employees in the state industrial sector was 111,705 in 1949 and 231,375 in 1952. See Tianjin Municipal Bureau of Statistics, *40 Years of Tianjin (1949-1989)* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 1989), 273\291\415.

19. The Party Literature Research Center of the CPC Central Committee, *A selection of important documents since the founding of the PRC, vol 2* (Beijing: Central Party Literature Publishing House, 1992), 40-41.

From 1949 to 1952, the number of workers in Tianjin increased by 60%, with the number of employees in state-owned enterprises increasing by 107%,¹⁸ much higher than the national level during the same period. At that time, the issue that workers across the country were facing serious housing shortages or poor living conditions. In addition, with the regularization of industrial production competition and the continuous expansion of production scale, the connection between workers and factories had become closer and the construction of concentrated worker dormitories had become an urgent task. At the beginning of 1951, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China clearly required that "in urban construction plans of various regions, serving production and workers should be prioritized",¹⁹ and the construction of Workers' New Village should be vigorously promoted as one of the welfare undertakings of national construction.

In the spring of 1952, the Tianjin Municipal Government established the Construction Management Committee (CMC) to mobilize all forces and built seven concentrated Workers' New Villages. The residences in the Workers' New Village were all bungalows arranged based on the planning theory of Neighborhood Unit with complete public and supporting facilities, forming a complete living community. With more than 55,000 residential units of the Workers' New Villages being built successively from the end of 1952 to the beginning of 1953, the long-term housing difficulty of 170,000 workers and their families was resolved.

20. Ten types of bungalows were designed by the CMC, and was built as model rooms by Tianjin Building Material Factory. The CMC invited worker representatives to visit twice and solicited their opinions, then determined the final style, including one type for family housing and two types for bachelor quarters. See Zhou Kang, "The First Step to Solve the Workers' Accommodation Problem Thoroughly- Record the Construction of Workers' Dormitories by People's Government of Tianjin," *People's Daily* (人民日报), May 21, 1952.

21. "The First batch of Workers' Dormitory Bases are being Surveyed Today and the Constructions will Start Next Week," *Tianjin Daily* (天津日报), March 28, 1952.

Although the foundations of Workers' New Villages in Tianjin are different, they are built based on the same standard drawing for residential building.²⁰ The building is a simple brick-wood structure bungalow with a coke button ground inside, 25 centimeters red brick walls, reed wattle roof of red tile. Each residential unit is a simple one-bedroom with wooden frame glass windows installed at the front and rear to ensure ventilation and lighting. Every 10-12 residential units are connected in a row, and several rows form a section, each of which is equipped with some faucets, public toilets and grocery stores. A New Village is planned according to the topography, composed with sections as repeating units and set up gardens, sports fields, service spaces and other public facilities (Figure 7).²¹ However, the stylized residential design, unified residential indicators and various institutionalized construction standards have resulted in the monotony and inflexible spatial form. The residential buildings are arranged in a barracks style making the New Village more regular but not flexible enough. But it is the pursuit of homogenization that highlighted the social concept of absolute fairness (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Photos of the housing interior (a) and Zhongshanmen Workers' New Village (b). Source: Zhongshanmen Workers' New Village Museum, Tianjin.

If the spatial images of equality, justice, cleanliness and hygiene in the construction of previous New Village were adopted by the new government to create socialist living space, then the single function of the residences, that is, almost all other living needs besides sleeping relied on the public space, laid the foundation for the possibility of collective life. A large number of daily life practices occurred in public spaces greatly increased the contact and communication between workers and their families. Lowering housing standards, reducing and publicizing private space also alleviated the contradiction between the growing housing demand and the shortage of supply.

The activities in the public space in Workers' New Village had not only public attribute, but also collective attribute, which was reflected in housing construction and distribution, staff life and management.

22. Zhu Lin, "The Production of the Socialism Collective Space-In the Case of Tianjin Zhongshanmen Worker Model Village in 1950s," (Master diss., Nankai University, 2018), 35-36.

23. Tianjin Municipal Archives, [X0044-Y-000422-006].

24. Yan Lifei, "Changes of Village Imagination and the Image of the City: from Workers' Village to Century City Rebuild," *Urban Cultural Studies* (Jan. 2015), 221.

During the construction progress, both the government and work units encouraging even compelling workers to voluntarily participate in the construction and the active mutual assistance of workers in the later stages of house building had been continuously strengthening workers' sense of belonging and identification with the collective. The housing distribution was conducted according to the work unit and concrete shifts of the workers.²² At that time, the relationship between the workers and the work unit established through production was extended to life, creating a collective space. Compared with the Unit System (单位制), the Street Office System (街居制) had a greater impact on the daily life management of workers and their relatives. It had eliminated the spatial divisions associated with work units and promoted the development of the concept of collectivization of residents within the jurisdiction scope through the organization of various publicity, education and mass activities such as the patriotic health campaign, activities of the mutual aid group, the shift duty of family members and the nursery service in the New Village.²³ Besides, this collectivization concept was cultivated for production.

As a kind of new socialist space, the spatial reproduction of the Workers' New Village not only promoted the collectivization of the residents' daily lives but also adjusted the industrial layout of industrial city. In Tianjin, the construction of Workers' New Villages was a part of the urban spatial layout and industrial layout all the way. It was clarified in the 1954 *Preliminary Planning for Tianjin Urban Construction* (天津城市建设初步规划方案) that Tianjin was an industrial city. The planning of the industrial zones were conducted based on the location of the Workers' New Villages to form industrial belts around the city, which overlapped or were close to them spatially.²⁴ The Workers' New Villages and the new industrial zones constituted the power source and growth poles for the vigorous development of this socialist industrial city with their marginal spatial locations, and had become the basic characteristics of Tianjin for a long time.

Conclusion

The New Village Ideal was introduced from Japan to oppose human alienation as a tool of labor, advocate autonomous common work and life and try to establish a Utopian ideal society far away from the urban. However, in modern Tianjin, it was locally translated into a social improvement housing project for the development of enterprise dormitories, municipal welfare and market commodities. The first two were basically conducted in accordance with the model of Laborers' New Village, strengthening the internal organization to enhance local and collective cohesion to resist external mobility and uncertainty; or adopting strong discipline connotations to break the balance between individuals and collectivities and make individuals subject to the organization, which was far from the New Village spirit Zhou Zuoren advocated. The New Village, which had become a bulk commodity, was completely irrelevant to the connotation of social improvement but served as the tool for making profit. It could only provide people with imaginative space for modern life and leisurely rural life through naming. The luxury space created had also become the tool for the differentiation and polarization of the production society. After the

liberation of China, the Workers' New Village reflected the special political concern of the CPC and the new regime for the working class, and produced space with three attributes: political space, productive space and residential space. The new space shaped the daily life of the workers in the New Village and even the residents themselves; a series of collective activities further strengthened the egalitarian and collectivist concepts of daily life in the Workers' New Village.

25. Zhang Huakan studied construction engineering in the United States, and participated in the engineering design of the 22nd arsenal of the Military and Political Department of the Nationalist Government in 1936. In January 1949, he became the director of the Tianjin Municipal Public Works Bureau and began to perform the function of managing the construction of the Tianjin urban area.

26. Xiao Qiusheng, "Song Zhuqin: Tianjin Enters a New Era," *Tianjin Daily*, August 26, 2009.

It is undeniable that at the material level, the planning form and spatial intentions of the Workers' New Village were influenced by various theories and practices of New Village before liberation. During the early period of New China, the new construction system had not yet been established. Some individual architects, architectural design firms and contractors continued to practice under the old construction system. At that time, some experts who were already experienced in urban management, construction and planning before liberation and represented by Zhang Huakan,²⁵ deputy director of the CMC were in charge of the planning and design of Workers' New Village in Tianjin.²⁶ Therefore, the knowledge about the New Village reflects a kind of continuity in terms of professional thinking and professionals, highlighting the important difference between architecture history and general history. However, the connection between the Workers' New Village and New Village Ideal or Laborers' New Village had been intentionally or unconsciously concealed in the new government's discourse system. That the workers' collective residential area was named "New Village" highlighted the yearning for the communist ideal life characterized by that "everyone was equal and interdependent". The ideal life belonged to the working class who was the master of New China. The term "New Village" thus became a political symbol.

For early modern China, the New Village was a product of modernity, with ideality, modularity and advancement unmatched in traditional society; many planning and construction theories it contained had provided very important references for China's later practice of living space. The collective living form advocated by the New Village emphasized the relationship between individual and collective as well as the life form of individual in the collective. Although the practice of the New Village before liberation advocated the form of collective living, it paid more attention to the privatization of the family rather than public space. The New Village in the early stage of socialism embodied the "public private life" in the era of collectivization. The more the living space of individual was compressed, the more the will of the state could be conveyed to the masses. The Workers' New Village created a equal, voluntary and interdependent collective space and life. All the conveniences of life would be shared fairly by all the working class that generated wealth. It demonstrated the deep aspects of the imagination for socialist and collectivist city and reached another climax during the "Movement to Form Rural People's Communes (人民公社化运动)" which began in the late 1950s.