CHAPTER 1

Introduction

> A whole history remains to be written of *spaces*—which would at the same time be the history of *powers* (both these terms in the plural)—from the great strategies of geo-politics to the little tactics of the habitat, institutional architecture from the classroom to the design of hospitals, passing by economic and political installations. . . . Anchorage in a space is an economico-political form which needs to be studied in detail.
>
> Michel Foucault, 1977[1]

This book is an attempt to write a history of a particular kind of space in urban China—the space of the socialist work unit, or *danwei*. The point of doing this is not simply to provide descriptions of physical spatial forms and their transformation over time, but rather, as Foucault suggests, to explore the relationships between space and power. In focusing on the *danwei*, the basic unit of urban life under socialism, I particularly want to investigate how the political and economic strategies of government in China have impinged upon the everyday lives of the urban population through the ways in which they create and structure particular forms of spatial order. The underlying premise of this book is that detailed study of spatial formations can provide new insights into the nature of political and social relationships in China. The *danwei*, as I hope to demonstrate, provides especially rich terrain upon which to develop this kind of analysis.

The approach I adopt here is based heavily on methodologies developed in the work of Michel Foucault. First, in tracing the history of the *danwei* I utilize what Foucault referred to as the "genealogical" method. This approach differs from conventional historical method in that it does not seek to reconstruct the past or provide a seamless narrative of development; rather the aim is to explore how particular institutions of the present took shape through the layering of often disparate, unrelated, and discontinuous practices.[2] Since the *danwei* emerged through the juxtaposition of a wide range of disciplinary, governmental, biotechnical, and spatial practices over a considerable period of time, it seems to me that the genealogical method offers a particularly appropriate framework for analysis. Second, I adopt Foucault's conception of power as a complexity of interrelationships between knowledge, institutional disciplinary practice, and biotechnical strategies at the micro level of everyday life. Saturated as it has been with social, political, and economic significance, the *danwei* provides fertile ground for applying and developing this micro-physical model of power. Third, I employ Foucault's technique for analyzing the rationalities of government, or what he terms "governmentality." In this body of work Foucault challenges many conventional assumptions in posing a whole series of questions on the nature of government: what is the object of government? what problems are deemed appropriate for government intervention? how is intervention made thinkable? how can populations be mobilized to govern themselves? and so on. The rationalities that underpin modern forms of governmental activity and the practices through which they operationalize their objectives have varied over time and location. In the case of China, I argue in this book that the *danwei* has been central to a distinctive form of socialist governmentality. Initially the *danwei* was an answer to a range of organizational and practical problems faced by the CCP-led government in the 1940s and 1950s and became one means through which a form of socialist governance could be deployed among the urban population. Later the *danwei* itself became part of the problem, influencing the parameters and possibilities for governmental intervention. Through detailed study of the *danwei*, fundamental questions on the nature of governance in China can be further illuminated and refined.

The research strategy underpinning this work is avowedly interdisciplinary. I have attempted to develop an analytical perspective based on the use of primary and secondary materials covering a long historical period from a range of disciplinary fields including architecture, urban planning, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and political science. Since I am neither an anthropologist nor a sociologist I did not attempt to undertake systematic fieldwork, case studies, or surveys. Instead I sought to build upon the many fine existing empirical studies of urban China and to integrate my own research findings with the existing archive of knowledge within a new interpretive framework. But before providing more detail on my approach to the topic, it is perhaps appropriate to introduce more fully the subject of my study.

What Is a Danwei?

"Foreign academics usually translate this term [*danwei*] as *unit*; however, the word *unit* comes nowhere near to expressing the rich substance contained by the Chinese concept of *danwei*. The *danwei* phenomenon is the most typical and most comprehensive expression of the many unique features that have been formed over many years as a result of China's economic and political practices."[3] The problem of terminology is always magnified in translation—especially in translating from a character-based language into a phonetic-based language. The Chinese term *danwei* can mean "unit," as in "unit of measurement." It can also mean something quite different and far more complex: namely, a specific form of social organization that came to dominate socialist China's cities. Like Zhu Guanglei (quoted above), I feel that *unit* is entirely inadequate as a representation for the "rich substance" implied by this second meaning of *danwei*. Rather than adopt an English approximation, then, I think it is preferable to simply use the romanized form of the term, *danwei* (as it is represented in the *pinyin* system of romanization for modern standard Chinese). This goes some way, at least, toward capturing a sense of the uniqueness of the institution and its grounding in Chinese socialist practices.

Perhaps the best strategy is to begin with a fairly simple definition: *danwei* is a generic term denoting the Chinese socialist workplace and the specific range of practices that it embodies. In the introduction to his pioneering study of the *danwei*, Lu Feng highlights the way in which the term *danwei* marks a common "system" shared by all urban Chinese workplaces: "In China everyone calls the social organization in which they are employed—whether it be a factory, shop, school, hospital, research institute, cultural troupe, or party organ—by the generic term *danwei*. This phenomenon clearly shows that, over and above their individual characteristics, . . . all types of social organization in China have a common characteristic: the characteristic of being a *danwei*."[4] Clearly, then, there can be many kinds of *danwei*, as He Xinghan explains: "There are big units [*danwei*[5]] and there are small ones, there are enterprises and businesses, there are publicly owned units as well as collectively owned utilities, there are even Party, government and military units. Even Buddhist temples can be divided into rank order in this way, with prefectural level and county level units and so on."[6]

Despite the wide variety in the type and size of *danwei*, they all share a common range of functions. As Li Hanlin points out, the *danwei* offers far more to its members than simply a regular salary: "In China the *danwei* not only provides members of society with economic reward for their work; in addition, through the provision of housing, free medical care, child care centers, kindergartens, dining halls, bathing houses, service companies, and collective enterprises to employ the children of staff, the *danwei* provides its members with a complete social guarantee and welfare services."[7]

A full complement of material benefits—the so-called iron rice bowl (*tiefanwan*)—is, however, only one aspect of *danwei* functions, for, as He Xinghan acknowledges, "It is also in charge of ideological remolding, political study, policing and security matters, marriages and divorce, entry into the Party, awarding merit and carrying out disciplinary action."[8] The *danwei*, then, takes on a wide range of political, judicial, civil, and social functions. Because of this, the *danwei* has become the principal source of identity for urban residents:

> It bestows upon its members rights, social identity, and political status to act within and without the *danwei*. For example, to go to another *danwei* on business, to buy an airline ticket, or to stay in a hotel . . . a Chinese citizen requires a letter of introduction from his or her *danwei*. Members of any *danwei* respond to an outsider according to the status of the outsider as set out in the letter of introduction provided by his or her *danwei*.[9]

The question of status is critical to the *danwei* member, for it bears heavily upon the important issue of *mianzi*, or "face." Yi Zhongtian illustrates this point in the following passage:

> The work unit is one's rice bowl but it is also one's "face." So if a person doesn't have a work unit then they will have no face. Not only does the lack of a work unit exclude the possibility of a person having face, but even worse, without a work unit they are often pigeon-holed as being "suspicious characters" or "dangerous persons." One can even go so far as to say that, without a work unit, such people come to be regarded as "unemployed idlers."[10]

If the *danwei* provides identity and face to its members within broader society, it also supplies them with a social identity, a community, and a sense of belonging:

> "We are of the same work unit" at once captures the warmth and feeling between sisters and brothers, but also potentially signifies the enmity between those in the grip of an on-going struggle. Because the traditional conception of self is so dim, it is only within a life built around human inter-relationships that Chinese people feel comfortable. . . . So, even though the work unit isn't perfect, it is preferable to being lonely and roaming around in society without one.[11]

Feelings of community and belonging are further bolstered by the design of the archetypal *danwei*—a walled compound that has become the basic spatial unit of the Chinese city. This point is well illustrated by American reporter Fox Butterfield in his description of a Chinese informant's *danwei* compound:

She lived in an apartment in a vast compound of five-story gray-brick buildings managed by her ministry. All her neighbors were also employed by the ministry. To go in or out of the one entrance, she had to walk past an army guard in uniform, and if she brought any visitors into the compound, they had to register in the sentry box. The woman's nine-year-old son went to school in another building inside the compound; she shopped for groceries in the compound store; when the family was sick there was a clinic in the compound.[12]

In summary, it would be no great exaggeration to contend that the *danwei* is the foundation of urban China. It is the source of employment and material support for the majority of urban residents; it organizes, regulates, polices, trains, educates, and protects them; it provides them with identity and face; and, within distinct spatial units, it forms integrated communities through which urban residents derive their sense of place and social belonging. The importance of the *danwei* is further highlighted by the fact that any person who does not have a *danwei* is considered to be "suspicious" or even "dangerous."

Readers who are familiar with contemporary China will no doubt protest that I should refer to the *danwei* in the past rather than the present tense. I readily admit that some of the features outlined above are no longer common or universal, that many urban residents now survive comfortably outside of the *danwei* and that for many others the role and importance of the *danwei* has diminished significantly in recent years.[13] In my defense, however, I can offer two points for consideration. First, the bulk of this book focuses on examining the origins of the archetypal, pre-reform socialist *danwei*.[14] In this respect, the description outlined above provides a useful and relevant introduction to the subject as archetype. Second, for the moment at least, I would like to forestall premature claims as to the demise of the *danwei*. As I will argue in Chapter 7, it seems to me that certain aspects of the *danwei* system remain influential to the present. One of the major themes throughout this study is that forms and practices from the past are constantly redeployed and reinvented in the present. For this reason I believe it is unwise for us to write the *danwei* out of China just yet.

Studying the Danwei

In the last decade the *danwei* has emerged from relative obscurity to become a major area of concern within Chinese studies. This occurrence has undoubtedly been due to a conjunction of events: first, the greater access since the mid-1980s afforded Western scholars to undertake case studies of grassroots Chinese workplaces; and second, the reemergence of sociology within the Chinese academy.[15] In China the latter development has meshed with the particular concerns of the reform period, namely the desire to transform economic and institutional modes of operation, resulting in much academic investigation being focused upon the basic-level economic and social structures that have underpinned what is now termed the "traditional" socialist system.[16]

The growing literature on the *danwei* is characterized by a number of key fault lines which divide scholarly opinion. The first area of contention concerns the question of origins: is the *danwei* a purely socialist institution, or was its formation primarily influenced by traditions from China's presocialist past? Scholars have also developed quite divergent views on the nature of the *danwei*; it has been characterized variously as a remnant of feudal paternalism, a tool of social control, a welfare community, and a system for cultivating political and managerial elites. Finally, debate has raged over the fate of the *danwei*; some commentators have readily forecast its demise at the hands of economic and structural reform, while others argue that although diminished, its influence remains significant.

In relation to the origins of the *danwei* there have been a wide range of views. Andrew Walder, perhaps the best known and most often quoted authority in this subfield, specifically rejects the need for a cultural perspective in understanding the *danwei*.[17] According to his analysis, the methods of industrial personnel management developed under socialism in China had more in common with practices in the Soviet Union and other socialist states than with traditional practices of China's past.[18] With the exception of Barry Naughton, who provocatively claims that "the danwei system emerged during the mid-1960s,"[19] most other scholars venture across the 1949 divide in looking for its origins. Some, including Lu Feng, Xiaobo Lü, and Brantly Womack, focus on what they see as the *danwei*'s "revolutionary" origins in the "communist supply system" and other practices developed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) during the Yan'an period.[20] Others, like Elizabeth Perry and Wen-hsin Yeh, have looked to labor and management practices in urban Republican China to find the precedents for the *danwei*.[21]

In one of the more recent additions to the subfield, based on case studies of several Chinese factories that operated both before and after 1949, Mark Frazier concludes that the *danwei* system "can be understood as a matrix of labor management institutions overlaid at different periods between the 1930s and the late 1950s."[22] In many respects, Frazier's work can be seen as providing a synthesis of previous scholarly efforts. Rather than looking for a definitive point of origin in a particular policy or period, he suggests that the *danwei* emerged through the layering of a whole range of practices over time. In this way, we can view the *danwei* as a composite institution that bears the marks of Republican, CCP, and Soviet influence. While this model appears to provide satisfactory explanations in relation to practices like labor management, wage systems, and welfare distribution, it leaves other aspects of the *danwei* system unanswered. How, for example, can we explain the spatial arrangements of the archetypal *danwei* compound—the high enclosing walls and the symbolic axial layout of the key buildings? To my mind such questions necessitate a deeper look into the question of origins.

A few scholars have hinted at much earlier origins for the *danwei*. While Lu Feng traces the organizational foundations of the contemporary *danwei* to the Yan'an period,[23] he also argues that it was founded upon a much deeper historical connection to the clan system of feudal times: "In form, the *danwei* and the traditional style clan have a lot in common: they both exert a patriarchal-type authority over their members; the responsibility of individuals to the group is more emphasized than are individual rights, while the group must take total responsibility for the care of its members."[24] Having made the comparison, however, Lu provides no evidence to support a historical link between the two. Indeed, this part of his argument seems to be founded upon a fairly simplistic binary opposition between tradition and modernity. Under this model, the fact that the *danwei* exhibits signs of "patriarchy" and "collectivity" is taken as sufficient evidence of feudal influence.

Cultural historian Yang Dongping provides a more convincing argument that the *danwei* has earlier historical links. In his comparative study of Beijing and Shanghai, Yang identifies "walls" as the key sign that there is a connection between the modern *danwei* and cultural practices in premodern China.[25] In particular, he argues that the persistent use of the walled compound spatial form from ancient times to the present provides clear physical evidence to support this link. Unfortunately, Yang provides little actual evidence to bolster his observation, but he has flagged a line of inquiry that seems to me very worthy of further exploration. My study, then, will begin with a reexamination of China's traditional spatial practices and formations in order to more fully explore the genealogy of the *danwei* as a sociospatial artifact.

To posit a connection between the modern *danwei* and practices from the premodern past, however, is not to suggest that the *danwei* is itself a "feudal remnant." On the contrary, I argue that the *danwei* is certainly an entirely modern institutional formation. The point is that what is "modern" invariably bears many traces and influences from all those practices that preceded it. The *danwei* has been influenced by spatial practices from China's past, but also by practices from the more recent Republican period, from the CCP's own revolutionary history, and from the Soviet Union. There is no one point of origin or primary source of influence, but rather a complex process of layering disparate practices on top of each other. It is impossible for a conventional historical approach to bring this complexity to the fore—the genealogical method, however, is well suited to precisely this kind of problem.

Toward a Genealogy of the Danwei

Foucault's genealogical method is instructive in that it makes no a priori assumptions about the nature of "the state" or the relevance of conceiving of social organization in terms of a binary state / society relationship. On the contrary, by taking seriously the complexity of mundane daily practices, it aims to challenge the view that deeper "truths" lie at the root of surface appearances. In this respect such a project could be thought of not as a conventional narrative history, but rather as a "history of the present."[26]

Four broad areas of concern are central to Foucault's genealogical studies. First, Foucault insists on the interconnectedness of power and knowledge: "There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations."[27] Foucault's genealogical study of the prison system illustrates this relationship clearly by showing the close connection between fields of knowledge such as criminology and regimes of disciplinary power that emerged within the institutional practices of the modern prison.[28] In the following chapters I will argue that the power / knowledge nexus is, likewise, critical to understanding the emergence and operation of the Chinese *danwei*. Through analysis of a number of different fields—for example, economic planning, labor management, and architecture—I will demonstrate the ways in which the production and practices of knowledge were intimately tied to the modes of power relationships that operated within the *danwei*.

Second, Foucault's genealogical studies emphasize the importance of technologies of the body to modern power relations. "Bio-power," as Foucault terms it, "brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge / power an agent of transformation of human life."[29] This occurred particularly through institutional settings such as workshops, barracks, prisons, and hospitals, where bodies were subjected within disciplinary regimes aimed at maximizing the usefulness and uniformity of individuals.[30] As I will show, bio-power played an important role in the *danwei* through a range of disciplinary spatial practices aimed specifically at transforming individual bodies into productive proletarian subjects. Unlike in the Western institutions studied by Foucault, however, body-centered technologies within the *danwei* tended to promote collectivized rather than individualized subjects.

Third, the genealogical method emphasizes the importance of uncovering the operational principles, or rationalities, of government. Governmentality, as Foucault refers to it, is closely related to bio-power since it is concerned with "the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc."[31] However, where bio-power refers to the various micro-level disciplinary practices which bear directly upon individual bodies, governmentality invokes the numerous sciences of population—policing, economic management, accounting, statistics, insurance, welfare, education, sanitation, urban planning—concerned not with individual bodies but rather with the management of the many bodies that constitute a population.[32] Based on the premise that planned intervention can improve society, the practice of government everywhere is underpinned by an element of utopianism. Under socialism, where the end objectives are more clearly articulated, the scope of governmental intervention tends to be much wider than under capitalism. From their beginnings during the Yan'an period, the practices developed by CCP-led governments emerged to create a distinctive form of socialist governmentality. In the chapters that follow, I explore the emergence of these practices, the logic that informed them, and the key role played by the *danwei* as the basic unit within this system of urban governance.

Finally, Foucault insists upon the necessity of incorporating the problem of space into his broader modes of genealogical analysis.[33] The linkages that connect space to the broader genealogical project and, specifically, to the issues of power/knowledge and bio-power are most fully developed by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, with his analysis of Bentham's "Panopticon."[34] According to Foucault, the Panopticon is much more than merely a device for maintaining surveillance within a prison; rather it should be viewed as a symbol of a new kind of relationship between power and space. In the Panopticon, careful spatial planning has been deployed in order to produce an individuating disciplinary effect.[35] Foucault's analysis demonstrates the importance of spatial techniques to the operation of modern forms of power, alerting us to the realization that the spatial dimension can no longer be ignored in the study of modern institutions.

Spatial considerations are obviously fundamental to this study. As I will show, the archetypal *danwei* is a highly determined, regularized, and ordered spatial formation. Through application of the genealogical method, I describe the ways in which the spatiality of the *danwei* emerged and became linked to the particular strategies of power, knowledge, discipline, government, and subject formation within urban China. Spatial arrangements are significant, then, not simply for aesthetic or descriptive purposes, but more importantly because space itself is a productive medium implicitly bound up with and constitutive of the various biotechnical practices that define the *danwei*.

Despite the groundbreaking work of Foucault and a few other scholars, spatial analysis has remained at the margins of scholarly work in the social sciences and humanities.[36] In Chinese studies, the neglect of the spatial question is perhaps even more marked. Histories of Chinese architecture and urban planning have seldom strayed beyond conventional aesthetic concerns and standard periodizations, while only a very small handful of studies from other disciplines have attempted to incorporate spatial analysis into commentaries on economic, social, and political themes. The exceptions include Paul Wheatley's study of the spatial heritage of the imperial city;[37] Francis Hsu's study of traditional family life in southwestern China, which contains a detailed examination of spatial forms within the traditional home;[38] and Francesca Bray's exploration of gendered space and the role of women's work in late imperial society.[39] Until quite recently the archive of scholarly work on post-1949 China was even more devoid of studies relating to space. Lisa Rofel's case study of factory space,[40] Michael Dutton's work on the prison and on "streetlife,"[41] and Li Zhang's analysis of "migrant" space in Beijing's Zhejiang Village[42] are all good examples of ways in which this long-term neglect is beginning to be redressed.[43] Nevertheless, there are still many gaps in our understanding of space in contemporary China. This study of the *danwei* aims to help fill some of the remaining gaps.

Theorizing Urban Space

After a long period of neglect, *space* has recently become somewhat of a buzzword within certain branches of contemporary scholarship. However, many of the studies that purport to examine space or even that contain the word *space* in the title in fact provide negligible genuine analysis of spatial formations or practices.[44] In this light, it is worth exploring in more detail the problematic of space and the implications of "spatial analysis." I have already referred to Foucault's work on the Panopticon as a reference point for developing a methodology for spatial analysis, but there are other perspectives on this question that need consideration.

The relevance of spatial formations and the analysis of space to the study of human society—in particular, the study of urban society—has been the subject of some debate over the last four decades. The debate has crossed a number of fields: urban sociology, geography, architecture, planning, cultural studies, and the interdisciplinary field of critical theory.[45] Yet even among those scholars who have championed its importance, there has been much controversy on the basic question of what is meant by the term *space*. For example, should space be considered a geopolitical concept, a geographical concept, an economic commodity, a product of architectural design, or a realm of governmental planning? Commentators, of course, have reached different conclusions depending upon their disciplinary background and methodological outlook. However, much of the credit for the recent surge in interest on the question of space can be attributed to developments in the discipline of geography.

The conventional view of geography as an applied science based on descriptive and quantitative analysis of the physical and human environment was challenged in the late 1960s with the appearance of Marxist geographers who sought to link questions of space to their critique of capitalism.[46] David Harvey, for example, sought to build a spatial dimension onto Marxist theories of capitalist economic cycles, while Doreen Massey proposed that class relations could be properly understood only within a spatial context.[47] These approaches, however, tended to subordinate the question of space to the Marxist valorization of social relations or, to be more precise, class inequality. By privileging the socioeconomic domain as the fundamental element in modern human society, they relegated spatial considerations to the role of mere geographical variable.

Henri Lefebvre demands a much broader and more central role for spatial analysis.[48] He rejects what has hitherto been acknowledged as the orthodox Marxist position on space: namely, that spatial form is simply a superstructural reflection of underlying economic relations. In contrast, Lefebvre asserts that space is one of the central elements driving the production, reproduction, and constant transformation of capitalism.[49] Moreover, he sees multiple forms and possibilities implicit within the spatial problematic and attempts to develop a multilayered theoretical analytic to account for this complexity. Thus Lefebvre considers not only geographical and geopolitical space but also the architectural and institutional spaces of everyday life. As well as addressing the built spaces of capitalism, he attempts to account for the imaginative and theoretical processes involved in the thinking and planning of spaces. For Lefebvre, space is integral to capitalism not simply because it mirrors or bolsters class inequalities as expressed in regional unevenness, but because the multiple aspects of capitalist space structure the practices and possibilities inherent within all aspects of everyday life. It is Lefebvre who insists that the political conception of space be extended to include not just the macro geographical spaces of convention—the nation, region, city, town, village, and so on; but also the micro spaces of daily life—the home, school, workplace, street, and so on. It is this innovation in spatial thinking that influenced Foucault and others to introduce a spatial dimension into their genealogies of everyday institutions. And it is the methodology that has developed out of this trend that is the starting point for my analysis of the Chinese *danwei*.

Having established his broad conception of space, Lefebvre theorizes that the actual production of space is driven by a dialectical struggle between what he terms "social space" and "abstract space." Social space describes the complex array of spatial practices that emerged layer upon layer over centuries of "natural" social interaction.[50] With the rise of capitalism, however, social space became subject to all sorts of interventions demanded by capital's pursuit of productive economic relations. Lefebvre considers these interventions to be "abstract" in the sense that they were predicated upon developing a series of technical, theoretical, and intellectual processes that allowed space to be conceived of as an object amenable to manipulation, planning, and reconstitution in ways favorable to the more efficient and productive operation of capitalism. Abstract space, then, is the space of the administrator, the technocrat, the urban planner, and the architect. But above all, abstract space is the space of the capitalist state: "Each new form of state, each new form of political power, introduces its own particular way of partitioning space, its own particular administrative classification of discourses about space and about things and people in space. Each such form commands space, as it were, to serve its purposes."[51]

Although Lefebvre's work is insightful in many respects, it is overly skewed toward a state-centered analysis. His contention that all attempts to plan and program the production of space necessarily serve the interests of the capitalist state is, to my mind, both too generalized and too simplistic. It is too generalized because it subsumes all types and strategies of planned intervention under a single generalized category;[52] and it is too simplistic because it ignores the complex interests involved in the development and implementation of spatial interventions. The true level of complexity becomes apparent if we abandon the assumptions inherent within the Marxist position and instead apply the principles of the genealogical method. Utilizing this approach, I suggest that the planning of space should be viewed as a governmental practice which has emerged, on the one hand, out of particular rationalities of governmental action and, on the other hand, within particular contexts of social relationships. It is not something that has been simply imposed from above, but rather a set of practices that has developed through long processes of experimentation, theoretical debate, and practical experience. To analyze a particular regime of spatial practice, it is necessary to consider the logic and rationality that informs it, the particular spatial forms that it attempts to realize, as well as the historical and social context into which these interventions are made. Only through attending to all these interrelated aspects can a full understanding of such spatial practices be reached. Lefebvre's method is simply unable to account for this degree of complexity in the production of space.

It is no doubt true that there is a close relationship between the rise of capitalism and the emergence of spatial planning as a strategy of government. However, to view this new spatial practice as entirely monolithic and seamlessly dominant is to misconstrue and overestimate its role. For although it is premised on the belief that strategic interventions into spatial formations can transform social reality for the better, attempts to implement governmental plans are rarely straightforward. To begin with, the logic that informs planned spatial intervention is an unstable and ever-changing field of applied knowledge, subject at any given time to numerous contesting positions. Moreover, accepted views on what constitutes appropriate intervention can change rapidly within a short space of time.[53] Second, planning is routinely constrained by competing economic and political interests which often mean that projects are only partially realized, or realized in quite a different form from that intended by the planners. Third, even when fully realized the effect of the spatial intervention is unpredictable; it may be used or appropriated by communities in ways quite different from those that were intended. Finally, spatial formations have a physical presence that may remain for many years. Over its life span, any given space may be reappropriated, redeployed, or reinterpreted in many different contexts. In short, the planning and implementation of spatial interventions involves the complex interweaving of several factors: unstable and contestable fields of knowledge, competing priorities among governmental agencies, the unpredictable response of subjects to new spatial forms, and the unimagined outcomes of historical transformation. These are among the factors I will take into account as I reconstruct a genealogy of the *danwei* over the subsequent chapters.

I should emphasize here that for the most part throughout this study I treat the *danwei* as an archetype. Clearly there has been wide variation in the size and spatial layout of individual *danwei*. My point, however, as many other scholars have averred, is that there is an overall unity in the history, function, purpose, and design of *danweis* such that it makes sense to treat them all as variations on a general archetypal theme. Moreover, it is through analysis of the archetype that we can most fully understand the genealogical heritage, the spatial significance, and the governmental rationale of the *danwei*. Many individual *danwei*, in various ways and for various reasons, fall short of the archetype, but this fact does not negate the relevance of the overall study. It merely indicates that within some *danwei* the archetypal system was not fully realized or developed.

I commence the genealogical project, in Chapter 2, with an exploration of the ways in which sociospatial practices from premodern China have influenced the contemporary *danwei*. I focus on the ubiquity of walls and walled compounds throughout Chinese history and examine how these spatial forms were linked to specific regimes of discipline and governance. I suggest that the principal role of the walled compound was to define realms of social governance and that internally these spaces were organized to promote the production of collective-oriented subjectivities. While the defining logic of this presocialist spatial order was Confucian, the spatial forms that emerged proved readily adaptable to other forms of collective society.

In Chapter 3, I pursue the genealogy of the *danwei* in two key modern locales: the industrializing cities of Republican China and the revolutionary base areas under CCP control. I show that, despite significant differences in rationale, in both locations the organization of work and regulation of communities was influenced by traditional practices emphasizing the collective over the individual. Moreover, in my analysis of CCP organizational practice, I point to the rise of a distinctly pastoral mode of socialist governmentality that was centered on the *danwei* system and implemented by a corps of highly dedicated cadres.

The analysis in Chapter 4 is premised on my contention that some aspects of *danwei* spatial practice are influenced by a modern European tradition of revolutionary architecture and planning. Utilizing Foucault's concept of governmentality, I discuss the way in which the discipline of urban planning emerged in Europe as a technique for policing and transforming social relations through intervention in spatial formations. I then show how revolutionary architects and utopian socialist planners appropriated some of the strategies of urban planning in order to facilitate radical transformations of society. The Russian Revolution provided great impetus to this movement, and a sympathetic political environment under which radical spatial planning could actually be realized in practice. Subsequent developments in Soviet architecture and urban planning became very influential in China after 1949.

Discussion in Chapter 5 centers on the emergence of the *danwei* as the key unit of social and political organization in post-1949 China. I outline the way in which key CCP governmental practices, particularly those related to the provision of a social guarantee (*baoxialai*) and the political mobilization of the urban population (*zuzhiqilai*), contributed to the formation and solidification of the *danwei* system. I show how some of the practices that were to become emblematic of the *danwei* were actually adopted as contingent and temporary solutions to unforeseen circumstances. Moreover, I also consider how the rejection of the Soviet model affected the *danwei* and signaled the reaffirmation of pastoral forms of leadership amongst grassroots cadres.

The significance of the *danwei* as a spatial unit is the focus of Chapter 6. First, I explore the development of urban planning after 1949, especially around the question of how to deal with traditional city formations like that of Beijing. Second, I seek to explain how central government planning and investment strategies resulted in the *danwei* becoming a virtually independent spatial realm within relatively weak city jurisdictions. Then, through a detailed reading of architectural and design practice and the emergence of standardization, I argue that *danwei* space was arranged in order to directly promote socialist collectivity and proletarian consciousness among its members. In this respect, the *danwei* became a spatial machine for the production of good socialists.

Chapter 7 looks at some of the effects of economic reform and restructuring on the *danwei* over the last two decades. The emergence of "scientific" labor management, a nonstate sector of the economy, and new spatial forms brought about through the large-scale reconstruction of the urban environment have all contributed to displacing the socialist *danwei* as the focus of urban life. However, as I demonstrate, in other respects the *danwei* still plays a critical and influential role in the lives of urban residents and has even adapted to take advantage of opportunities brought by the market. Moreover, some of the new institutions that have begun to take over the role of the *danwei*—the *xiaoqu* and the *shequ*—have clearly adopted some of its characteristics. The trends explored in this chapter illustrate the complexity of the social, spatial, economic, and political transformations that China is currently undergoing. My analysis highlights the weaknesses inherent within the simplistic "market transition" models of change favored by many commentators.

Chapter 8 concludes the study with a reconsideration of the key methodological issues that underpin this book and a summary of the main arguments. In particular, I emphasize the points of divergence with previous studies. I argue that my interdisciplinary analysis of the *danwei* system provides ample evidence to justify a deep skepticism as to the existence of the so-called party/state in China. The *danwei* is and was an institutional formation made of many disparate and even contradictory practices. The only way to understand its significance is to examine each of its various practices in its specificity and in combination, rather than impute some overall coherence, coordination, and control to a mythical party/state.