

## Unifying Urban-Rural Public Cultural Service System: Taking Chongqing as an Example

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### Abstract

In the 18<sup>th</sup> Third Plenary Session, the Party put the enhancement of cultural building among the top rank of their executive purposes, to make it come true, the unified building of urban-and-rural public cultural service system becomes the largest breach to breakthrough. This thesis, on the basis of defining the concept of unified building of urban-and-rural public cultural service system, gives an adequate introduction to How does Chongqing explore its way in dealing this task, and points out four challenges in respects of dual economic structure, public cultural services consuming ability, the quantity of public cultural facilities and residents' cultural cultivation of both areas. At last, the thesis gives four effective solutions to the task; they are: Top-down planning, offering cultural services of public interests, giving more official supports and encouraging social sector's involvement.

**Key words:** Public cultural service system; Unified building; Chongqing; Verification

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### INTRODUCTION

Scholars at home and aboard have harvested fruits on studying the unified building of urban-and-rural public cultural service systems. The study abroad generally goes through three phases: The first one is from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to the Second World War eve, which can be called "free market" phase, in this phase scholars generally approved that the government without intervention is a good government and proposed the theory of limited intervention and market's dominant role in allocating resources; the task of unified building of urban-and-rural public cultural service systems was thus neglected; The second is from postwar to the early 1980s, which is actually a phase of modern administration. In this phase, governmental intervention was widely accepted, responsibilities for public cultural service system building were frequently stressed, and variety of public-cultural administration institutes, organizations, models, institutions and policies were set up; in the third phase from the late 1980s till now, theories of public choice, public management, public service and public treatment were continuously formed. The core of this phase lies in the transmission of thought from administration to service and the improvement of people's cultural rights. The domestic study on this subject is still at its starting point, and studies on this topic in scholar circle are mainly manifested in the followings: Wang Fengqing, under the condition of understanding problems in the process of building a unified urban-and-rural public cultural service system, points out that we must set up an effective performance evaluation system as soon as possible, accelerate the building of public cultural service system in rural areas and generate innovative institutions for profitable interaction and mutual benefits between urban and rural areas. Researchers in Public Management Collage of Sichuan University, pointed out that the initial end of the system is to meet the public's cultural needs and to protect their cultural rights, and also it has

the duty of narrowing the cultural gap and coordinating cultural development between urban and rural areas, and as a result to conserve and exploit Chengdu's traditional cultural resources and create a famous culture brand.

## 1. THE MEANING OF BUILDING A UNIFIED PUBLIC CULTURAL SERVICE SYSTEM

The thesis believes that, public cultural service system, as a part of public service system, is to meet the public's cultural needs and to provide cultural products and services to the public. Combined with all related institutions and systems, they make up its whole meaning. To make it more clear, the essence of unified building of public cultural service system is to realize the equalization in standard and quality of public cultural service and to make more residents enjoy public cultural services no matter where they are from through ensuring their rights to watch TV, to listen to broadcasting, to read newspaper, to appreciate a cultural product or to participate in cultural activities. There are three essential conditions for successfully building a unified public cultural service system: First, powerful public fiscal support; second, fully playing the leading role in public cultural service institutes; third, providing services to every single citizen (Implementation Outline of Public Cultural Service System, during the 12th five-year planning, Ministry of Culture).

## 2. CHONGQING FACES CHALLENGES: IN THE PROCESS OF BUILDING A UNIFIED PUBLIC CULTURAL SERVICE SYSTEM

Chongqing, a city with large urban and rural areas the latter concluding large areas of reservoirs, mountains and relic areas, finds itself facing a serious situation of dual economic structure. The huge gaps between urban and rural areas directly lead to increasing difficulties. These gaps are mainly manifested in social economic structure, quantity of public cultural facilities, and citizens' technical cultural cultivation, which are becoming the top challenges to the task.

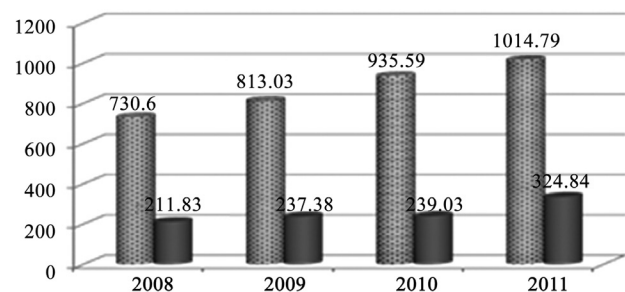
### 2.1 Difficulties Caused by Urban-and-Rural Dual Economic Structure

Chongqing, as the largest direct-controlled municipality in west China, has a significant strategic status. With a larger administrative area, a larger population scale than the other three direct-controlled municipalities, it is a typical megalopolis. But meanwhile, Chongqing covers a large territory of villages and countryside which exceed that of the urban areas. The city is under the burden of rural areas and numerous state-level poverty-stricken counties, and has a wide gap between urban and rural areas to be filled. The

dual economic structure leads to two consequences: The separation and mutual exclusion between urban and rural areas; the slower and lower-level of development of rural areas. These consequences thus widen the gap of public cultural service system construction which has already existed. This gap is mainly manifested in three aspects: Construction level and speed, unbalance of public cultural services, quantity and quality of service residents gained. To conclude, Chongqing, as an experimental district of urban-rural unified construction, its development between urban and rural areas is uncoordinated, inconsistent and out of balance. The city groups only have milk teeth, not real bite. Districts and counties and autonomous counties barely follow the pace of urban areas. Large poverty-stricken populations scattered here and there (Chongqing Government Work Report of 2013). The serious dual economic structures make it a tough task to the unified building of public cultural service system.

### 2.2 The Gap in Cultural Services Consuming Ability Between Urban and Rural Areas

The existence of dual economic structure directly leads to the great gap of income level and consuming ability on cultural services between urban and rural areas. According to statistics, the average income of urban family in 2013 reached up to 22,968 RMB per person, three times as the amount of rural family (7,383 RMB). In 2012, the average consuming expenditure of urban resident was 16,573.14 RMB per person, 5,018.64 RMB more than that of rural resident, three times as the amount of the latter(11,554.5 RMB); In 2011, the average expenditure of urban resident on cultural products and services was 1,014.79 RMB/per person, almost three times as the amount of rural resident(334.84 RMB). These comparisons suggest that rural residents' culture consuming ability falls far behind the urban residents'. Limited by low income and poor consuming ability, the gap of cultural consuming level (in which residents pay for the cultural cost themselves) still exists. Meanwhile, because the range of public cultural service system covered is not wide enough to serve all the people, it is hard to truly build a "half-an-hour culture service circle in rural areas"; thus, the cultural consuming ability of rural residents falls far behind that of urban residents.



**Figure 1**  
The Average Expenditure on Cultural Services and Products: A Comparison Between Urban and Rural Residents in Chongqing

Note: Grey bars represent average expenditure of urban residents on cultural products and services; Dark bars represent average expenditure of rural residents on cultural products and services  
 Source: Chongqing Statistics Bureau's website: <http://www.cqtj.gov.cn/html/tjfx/12/12/6287.html>

### 2.3 The Gap in Cultural Service Facility Quantity Between Urban and Rural Areas

Another barrier for the unified public cultural service system is the gap of cultural service facility quantity between urban and rural areas. Up to the end of 2012, in the urban areas, Chongqing's broadcasting system covered 98.16% of its population with TV system 98.76% of its population, while the percentage probably is much lower in rural areas. The gap of public cultural facilities still exists. At the same time, there were 150.05 sets of color TV per hundred urban families, but only 107.78 sets per hundred rural families. The number of the former was 42.27 sets more than that of the latter. According to a survey, in 2010, there were six local districts and counties all together whose annual fiscal appropriations were lower than the lowest national standard (0.3 RMB) per person; eight districts and counties' book funds were lower than the lowest national standard (40,000 RMB). Among all public cultural service institutes, only city-owned institutes have a comparatively better support, others in districts or counties like public cultural museums, public libraries and town-owned cultural centers are all in short of financial support such as facility maintenance fee, regular activities funds and development funds. The gap of financial support is still large. To the end of 2012, the number of professional comedy groups, cultural museums (including art museums) and libraries were respectively 244,41 and 43, most of which are in the downtown of the city and the center of counties, but there were barely one in rural areas. The gap of cultural facility quantity between urban and rural areas is still large.

**Table 1**  
**The Number of Chongqing's Culture Organizations in Recent Years**

Year	Comedy group	Cultural & art museum	library
2008	177	41	43
2009	160	41	43
2010	381	41	43
2011	282	41	43
2012	244	41	43

Note: The statistical standards for comedy groups are readjusted from 2006 which included two parts—intra-system and extra-system.

### 2.4 The Gap Between Residents' Cultural and Technical Cultivation

Besides influenced by the external factors, the task of building a unified public cultural service system is also limited by ideas and thoughts of residents. Because of rural residents' traditional consuming outlook and

poor consuming power, especially the absence of sense of modernization, the gap is still large. Therefore, in addition to the gaps in cultural consuming ability and cultural facility quantity, the gap in cultural and technical cultivation is also large. According to observation, the gap of education is also obviously large. For instance, many children drop out school in an age of compulsory education, plenty of teenagers and mid-life people abandoned education to work in an early age, and elderly are generally in low education. In contrast, things get better in urban areas with much more residents getting compulsory and higher education than those in rural areas.

According to statistics, the average educated years of urban residents are 4 to 5 more than that of rural residents. This difference in education in return widens the gap of cultural consuming ability and thus affects the building of a unified public cultural service system.

## 3. EFFECTIVE WAYS WHICH CHONGQING CHOOSES TO USE IN BUILDING A UNIFIED PUBLIC CULTURAL SERVICE SYSTEM

Although facing numerous challenges, Chongqing, under the support of central and local policies, also meets opportunities. In this sense, the effective ways or methods are the bridge binding dream and reality together.

### 3.1 Top-Down Planning

As a macro-strategy, top-down planning has a significant meaning for setting a proper framework of building public cultural service system. Under the guidance of strategic direction, lines and time table designed by Top-down Planning, we must provide a stronger institutional and legal support. During the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Planning period, Chongqing marched in a new era of industrialization, information, urbanization and cultural modernization, which raised new requirement for the task. First, set a system of interactions and mutual benefits, allocate public cultural resources more efficiently, give more support to rural areas and poverty-stricken areas and ethnic areas, thus form a new situation in which cities and villages help and are bind together. Second, properly define the power boundary of government, of public cultural institutions and enterprises, most important, figure out their responsibilities and duties. Play the deciding role in the market, and meanwhile, play the leading role in the government, thus form a situation in which government leads, society involves, government and society cooperate well. Third, on the basis of each part taking their own responsibility, we must properly allocate four fundamental factors (arena, labor, fund, and activity) to push the enterprise forward.

### **3.2 Enhancing Urban-Rural Unified Building of Public Cultural Services**

Public cultural service underlines its publicity and its public interests, urban-rural integration underlines equity, namely, the equity of right to enjoy public cultural services. Of course we pursue comparative fairness. To get the task done, we must reform the public cultural service institutes and enterprises and facilities between urban and rural areas under a unified standard. First, quicken the reformation of public-interest cultural institutes; build a legal-person-managed, energetic and independent institution for public cultural service enterprises. Second, quicken the development of public cultural service enterprises; ensure the cultural rights of both urban and rural residents. Open up public cultural service facilities and host non-interest activities to the public. Popularize science and technology and healthcare enterprises to rural areas and grassroots communities, encourage cultural activities such as national fitness activity and reading activity to enrich residents' spiritual life and boost the prosperity of public cultural service enterprise. Third, quicken the process of providing public cultural service facilities; provide more facilities both for urban and rural residents. Build in large number non-interest archives, industry museums, libraries, cultural museums, broadcasting station, town-owned cultural service centers, village book houses and community cultural facilities.

### **3.3 Increasing Support for the Unified Building of Urban-Rural Public Cultural Service System**

With more attention drawn upon social welfare, governments of all levels have attached greater importance to the functions of social public service, have invested more resources in cultural construction as well as the unification construction of urban-rural public cultural service system. The unification construction of urban-rural public cultural service system mainly lies in governments' assistance, the huge amount of investment in public finance in particular, which can be seen in progress made in Chongqing over the past few years. Therefore, in terms of the unification construction of urban-rural public cultural service system in Chongqing, we need to increase the proportion of investment in fiscal budgets each year, establish special funds and rationally recognize the spending responsibility and obligation scope in cities, counties, towns and villages. We should strive to receive the special funds of cultural construction from central government and prioritize the central financial transfer payment in the public cultural construction of towns and administrative villages. We should invest our financial fund in the construction of backward areas, support and intensify the investment in network construction of public cultural service system in rural areas in particular, and bridge the gap between urban

and rural areas via establishing township comprehensive cultural stations and rooms and implementing such projects as Radio and TV Broadcasting Coverage to Every Village Project and Farmers' Bookstore. Thus, establishing a broad urban-rural unified public cultural system platform is characterized by even service and management level. In addition, we should also put more efforts in the producing talents in public service system construction, especially in the training and proper deployment of talents in rural areas.

### **3.4 Appealing Social Organizations to Participate in the Unified Building of Urban-Rural Public Cultural Service System**

In the process of the unification construction of urban-rural public cultural service system, given the government bears limited resources, there are many fields that government cannot touch but the society needs. In nowadays, while both the government-society relationship and social organizations enjoy rapid development, public cultural service system also needs to rationally utilize social forces in urban-rural unification construction. First of all, encourage social organizations to participate in the construction under the government's proper guidance and policy support. The Chongqing municipal government should carry out special encouragement and aid policy paper, and guide social forces to participate via major project like financial pay interest, tax reduction and government procurement. Secondly, guide enterprises and non-profit organizations to participate in the public cultural construction and bringing immigrant workers and rural dwellers into the urban-rural public cultural service system. Especially encouraging these organizations to provide rural areas with flow service and outlet service, and promote urban public cultural products and service to the rural areas in a chain or flow manner. Thirdly, guide the diversified financing system. On the basis of fully utilizing public finance, properly utilize bank credits, business capital, and non-governmental capital, stock market financing and overseas capital in the construction.

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## **CONCLUSION**

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It has been an important task for Chongqing to construct demonstration zones which coordinate urban and rural reforms and urban-rural public cultural resources, which is of significance to ensure that both urban and rural dwellers enjoy the same public cultural service. However, there exists a huge gap in reality; it still takes a long way to go in unification construction. Therefore, we must push forward our efforts in urban-rural unification, eventually bridging the urban-rural gap in public cultural service construction and realizing unification of public cultural service among urban and rural dwellers.

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