

Chengdu

Global Research City

Aide Memoir

to a *unique project*

initiated by the *Globalization and World Cities (GaWC) Research Network* (Director: Professor Peter J Taylor)

in association with the *Center for City and Competitiveness* (Director: Professor Pengfei Ni) of the *Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*

for the *Publicity Department of Chengdu Municipal Government*

Preamble

- GaWC is the **leading academic think-tank for studying cities in globalization** (www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc)
- The fundamental purpose of this GaWC project is to **understand how successful cities grow**
- The success of a city is a result of **the multiple successes of its many firms**
- In the contemporary era such successful cities are on **trajectories to become what are called world cities or global cities**
- Specifically at this time, **there are more successful cities growing in China than anywhere else in the world**
- Chengdu is an important case of this national achievement: as a key inland city it shows **the economic transformation is much more than coastal interface with the world economy**
- Chengdu is a successful city on a trajectory to become a **'continental' world city through the multiple successes of its many firms** – like Chicago in the USA in the late nineteenth century
- The project aims to understand how this success has happened in the last two decades and as such **we have designated Chengdu GaWC's first 'Global Research City'**
- **The project is unique** in that no previous research will have subjected a city and its firms to such detailed scrutiny for understanding city success

Key outcomes

1. The basic output will be a smorgasbord of successful business practice, myriad stories of winning firms - in other words a **living archive of knowledge celebrating Chengdu's economic success**
2. Detailed knowledge of how Chengdu grew through its successful firms will be disseminated as **a major book publication using a renowned international publisher on global urban issues**
3. In this way Chengdu will become well-known in both academic and policy circles as **a model representative of city trajectories to world city status**, a place for other cities to emulate
4. As such it will be seen worldwide as **an exemplar of contemporary urban globalization** just as Baltimore and its waterfront was an exemplar of urban modernization in the late twentieth century
5. All this will make Chengdu's name synonymous with 'successful city' and 'emerging world city' thus providing **highly appropriate raw material for developing city branding options** for the Publicity Department

Project work

1. Selecting the firms

At this time we are NOT interested in large-scale foreign inward direct investment but **the focus is on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)** – firms now, or in the past, with less than 250 workers

Therefore the first task is to select **200** such firms that are to act as **business representatives of Chengdu's economic success story** – taking on this role should be seen as **an honour, a recognition of the contribution the firm has made to Chengdu's city economy**

The selection should cover **all the leading economic sectors** of Chengdu's city economy

The selection should cover both **firms that produce for the local economy** and **firms that produce for export** beyond the local economy

The selection should include **older firms**, perhaps founded more than twenty years ago, through to the **newer firms** formed in the last five years

The selection should include a **range of sizes of firm** from very small firms with 10 or less workers through to previous SMEs that are so successful they NOW employ more than 250 workers

The selection should include firms that **originated in Chengdu** and other Chinese firms that have **moved to Chengdu**

Overall the purpose is to produce a **reasonably authentic representation of firms that have contributed to Chengdu's economic success story**

2. Identifying the key contact in each firm

For each firm it is very important to get the right contact to ensure **full and reliable information** on the firm is forthcoming

It is desirable for the contact to have been **with the firm for some time**, ideally from the firm's beginning

It is important that the contact has a position in the firm where he or she has developed **an overview perspective** on the firm

It is important that the contact is at such a level within the firm that he or she can **commandeer others' help to fill in gaps in knowledge**

Generally, **the higher up in the firm, the better the contact**

3. Distributing and collecting the questionnaire

The idea behind the questionnaire is that it will **channel each firm's 'story'** into four parts so that we have comparable materials across firms from their beginnings to the present

The **questionnaire** is reproduced as an appendix to this Aide Memoir and is also available **as a separate word document file**

The questionnaire should be sent by email as a file **to the contact in each of the 200 firms**

It should be **an attachment to an email letter** in which the project is briefly described, its importance to Chengdu indicated, and the mayor's endorsement noted

A date for return should be indicated, and late returns followed up until **a full 200 questionnaires are completed and collected in**

These results should be sent to **Professor Ni at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences** who will pass them on to **the GaWC research team for this project**

4. Analysis and dissemination

This will be supervised by **Professor Taylor** as Director of GaWC in collaboration with **Professor Ni**

There will be **two strands of work: academic** to produce the book and **practical** to produce the archive as a Publicity Department source of information

The latter is planned to be a **'living archive'** as the changes in the firm's activities are regularly monitored to bring information up to date

There will be **two major events** emanating from this work and bringing the project to a close

First, a **workshop for personnel in the Publicity Department** and associated municipal government employees – this will provide an insider insight into what the results mean and how they might be used

Second, there will be **an academic and policy conference by invitation** on **"Chengdu: Global Research City"** that will include launching the book and living archive

Peter J Taylor, 23/01/11

Appendix

The questionnaire

CHENGDU SUCCESS STORY SURVEY
This is an exploratory joint project between the Cities Competition Centre of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Globalization and World Cities (GaWC) Research Network to understand the phenomenal economic growth of Chengdu.
As one of the leading economic players in the city, we are interested in the commercial biography of you and your company. We would like you to tell us your commercial story under the series of four headings (stages) below. Please feel free to include anything you consider relevant to your success and that of your company.
We are particularly interested in how your firm links to other firms within and beyond Chengdu. For each of the stages that follow you might mention your top 5 suppliers (and their locations) and your top 5 clients/markets (and their locations).

