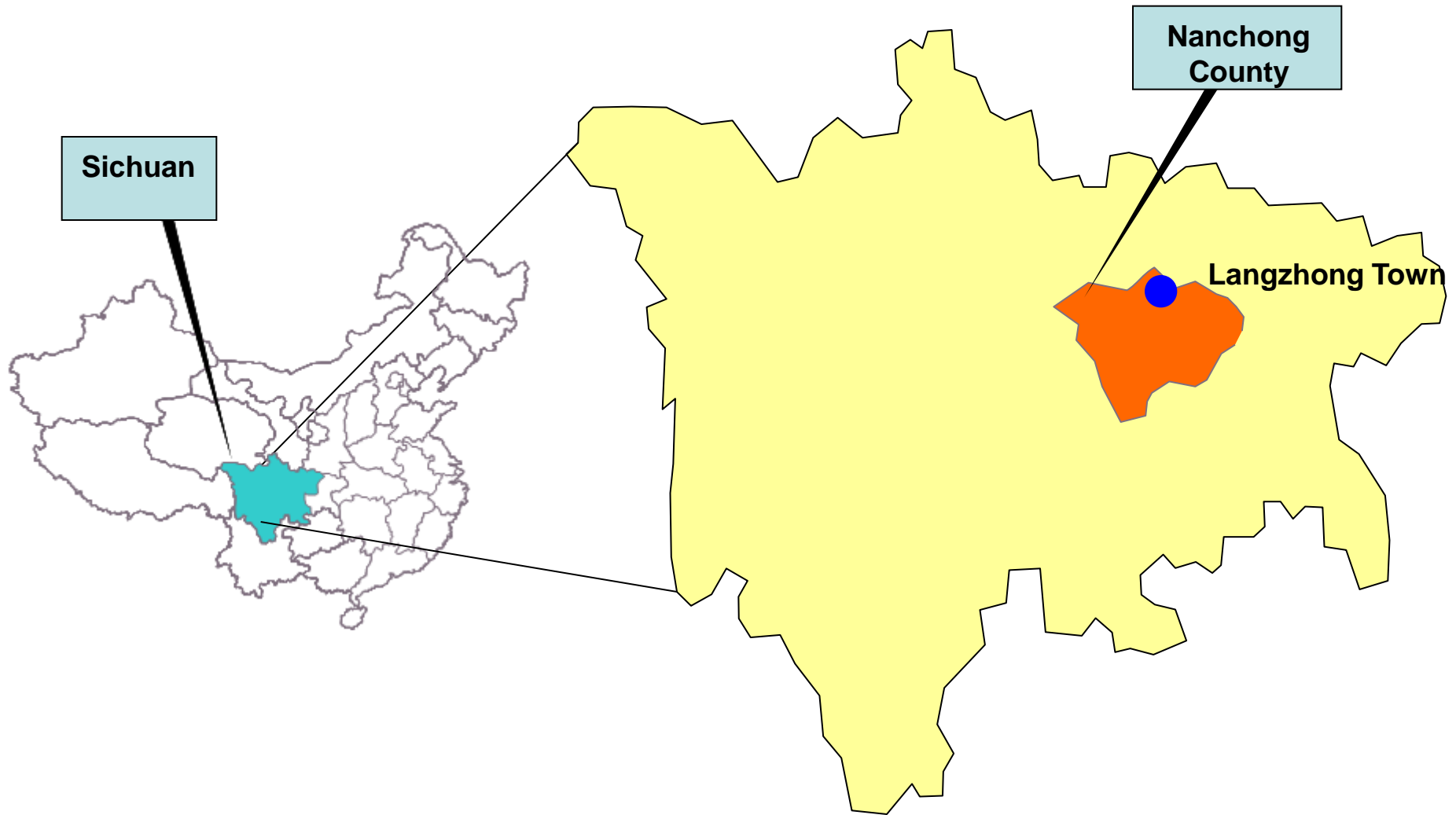


A photograph of a man in a red and grey sweater carrying two black buckets on a wooden yoke across his shoulders. He is walking through a field of young trees with pink blossoms. In the background, there are tall, dark evergreen trees and a misty mountain range. A white plastic sheet is visible on the ground to the left.

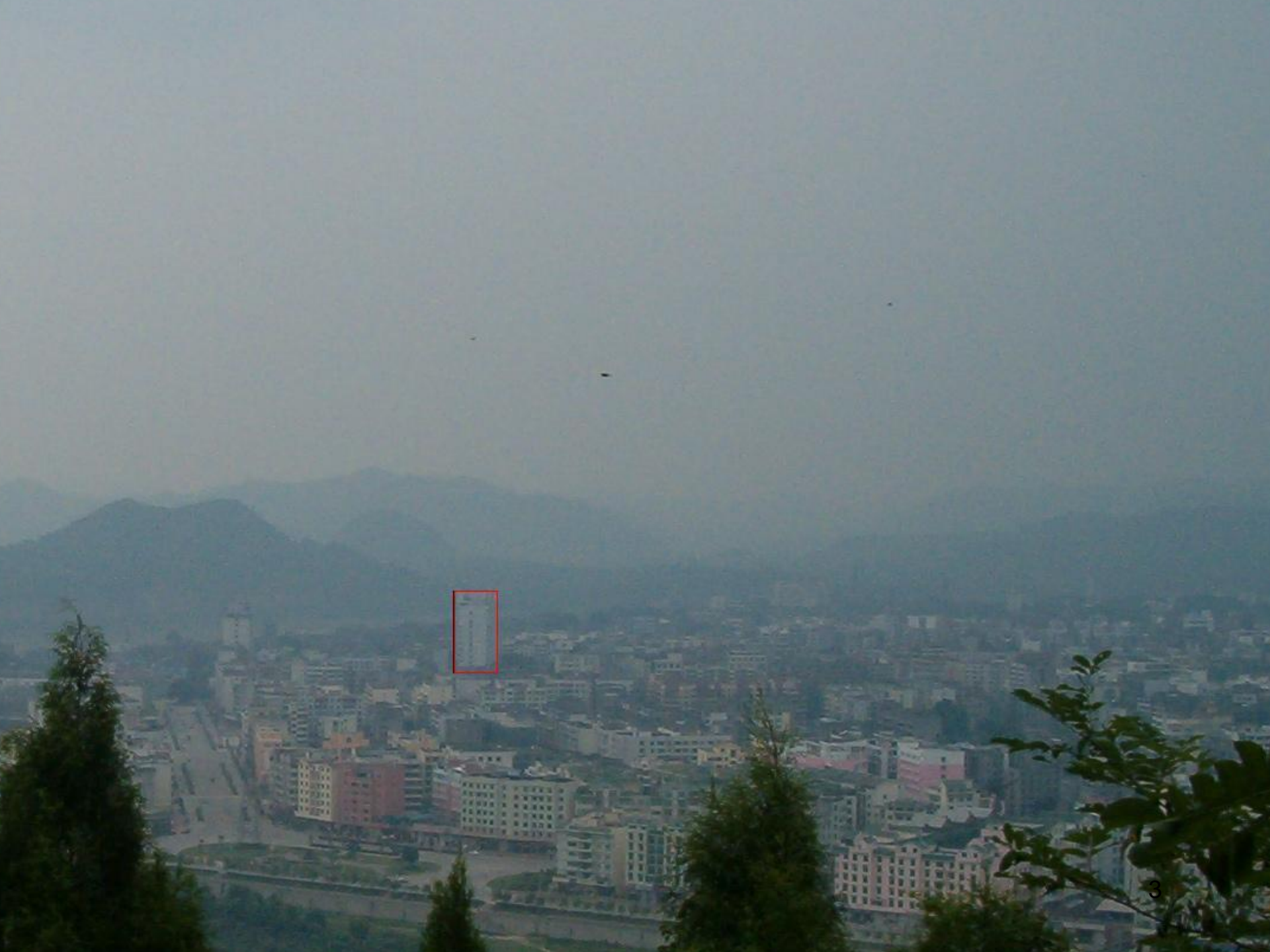
# **Fighting for breath: living morally and dying of cancer in a Chinese village**

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# The research setting



















<b>ILLNESSES 2003-7 in 50 families</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Cancer* (NB across the entire village)</b>	6	5	11
<b>Rheumatisms**</b>	0	6	6
<b>Tumour (not developed into cancer)</b>	1	5	6
<b>Chronic stomach-ache and poor digestion</b>	1	5	6
<b>Glaucoma</b>	1	4	5
<b>High blood pressure</b>	0	4	4
<b>Mental problems</b>	2	2	4
<b>Tuberculosis</b>	1	2	3
<b>Chronic headaches</b>	0	3	3
<b>Diabetes</b>	2	1	3
<b>Suicide</b>	2	1	3
<b>Thyroid</b>	0	2	2
<b>Leukaemia</b>	1	0	1
<b>Hepatitis</b>	1	0	1
<b>Fatal heart attack</b>	0	1	1
<b>Bone marrow disease</b>	1	0	1
<b>Parkinson's</b>	1	0	1

# Researching cancer

- Cancer as the leading cause of mortality in China
- Increasing reports of ‘cancer villages’ due to industrial pollution – but troubles compiling evidence
- But what of areas where there is no agreement on the cause? Who or what is blamed? What is done about it?



# Cancer in Langzhong

- Cannot answer 'why' are there high cancer rates
- Complex causality and uncertainty in environmental health
- Baoma NOT a cancer village in the classic sense (not polluted)
- Obstacles:
  - inconclusive study on paocai
  - Neibu material
  - Villagers often die at home, lack diagnosis
  - Cancer as a new term vs 回食病 and 哽食病
- Fighting for breath as physical, social and moral struggle







# **Causes of cancer: individual, family and social responsibilities**

- Anger (individual) and anxiety (family)
- Smoking and drinking
- Limited diet
- Farm chemicals
- Suffering induced by state campaigns

Each is telling of attitudes to the current socio-economic context (poverty, consumerism and development in particular) and entails ideas about who may be blamed for the development of cancer and what may be done about it.

# Book structure

- Part one: introductory chapters
- Part two: what villagers think causes cancer
- Part three: strategies of care

Today I will talk about part 2



# Meishan's case

- First visit in 2005, some locals (Baohua) argued water is to blame for high cancer rates – want redress from government
- 2006 journalist visited, no outcome
- Visit in 2007: CDC water test, 'shui you wenti' but not clear correlation with cancer





# Individual and social responses

- Baohua blamed water pollution for high cancer rates in his village, hoping to gain state redress
- The Centre for Disease control found water pollution (not proven as a cause of cancer), but claimed lack of capacity
- Alternative aetiologies of cancer (hard work, anger, pesticides in the food) also contended with water and undermined Baohua's attempts to argue that water was the cause of cancer
- For families of sufferers, if they feel that they will get no redress through blaming water, why are more likely to blame other factors, and to explain cancer on an individual level – not due to ignorance of pollution
- Blaming pollution for cancer as a “weapon of the weak”

# Farm chemicals

- “it is the chemicals, think of our neighbour, he was in his 40s. They said he got leukaemia and it turned to cancer, he used so much farm chemicals, he ate himself to death (*ziji chi sha*)” (05/07/2005).
- “in the past few people got cancer, they used to eat maize and nothing else, now we use too much fertiliser, but if you don’t use it stuff just dies” (02/07/2005).











# Blaming farm chemicals

- implicates the moral economy of the market which requires their use: compete in the market and rely on old people to farm
- Endows locals with a degree of agency: can limit use on crops for their own consumption



# Preserved vegetables and *xiguan*

- Epidemiological correlation with cancer
- CDC blame paocai and avoid responsibility
- Villagers mostly do not blame paocai, because they are rooted in xiguan, food shortage is normalised, “不干不净不生病”
- Paocai and suancai are seen as a green alternative



谢谢  
祝您们身体健康

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