

**Reimagining Shenzhen Urbanism:
Villages-in-the-City, Architecture Biennales, and Modern City-Building**

by

Jieqiong Wang

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Robert Fishman, Co-Chair
Professor Emeritus Jean Wineman, Co-Chair
Associate Professor Yuen Yuen Ang
Associate Professor Andrew Herscher
Dr. William Thomson, Newcastle University

Jieqiong Wang

jayqwang@umich.edu

ORCID iD: [0000-0002-2698-2693](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2698-2693)

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Dedication

To my family

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Abstract

This dissertation tells an alternative story of Shenzhen's emergence of one of the world's great manufacturing cities by focusing on the transformation of over one thousand former farming and fishing villages within the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone into *Villages-in-the-City* [ViC] that today house about 10 million out of Shenzhen SEZ's 14 million people. Instead of showing these villages as places of scarcity, precarity, and conflict, I approach them as critical sites of production and supply, providing sites for small-scale manufacturing, local retail, and above all affordable housing for newly arrived migrants. Yet, these ViCs are not only visually concealed between hypermodern urban structures but also omitted in the dominant narrative of Shenzhen's model-city building process. With historical materials and ethnographic observations, I identify three prominent sets of actors: (1) urban planners (concretizing central plans and visions); (2) architects (representing the global imagination); and (3) local villagers (as bottom-up forces), in shaping the ViCs' spatial evolution and their relationship to the larger urban transformation. As I show, this complex top-down/bottom-up formation of the ViC's is very different from the more familiar model of informal settlements in the global South.

My analysis of a maps, planning atlases, government reports, and photographs reveals that the spatial transformation of ViCs was not outside of planning. Instead, from the 1950's socialist ideal of perpetuating villages as cooperative production sites through the 1980's and

1990's development strategy of supporting village manufacturing industries and affordable rental housing for migrant workers, planning played a guiding role in the process. My participation in an urban renewal project/event (architecture biennale) targeting ViCs further unveils the expanding agency of the architectural imagination during China's on-going modernization process. Global architects operating mostly through the Shenzhen Biennales turned creative power into political and market power through their partnerships with local architects and with the local government. In addition, through extensive interviewing and other fieldwork in a selected ViC, I reveal a growing gap between the original local villagers and their descendants who collectively own the ViC land and the migrant workers who constitute the majority of ViC occupants. Local villagers' collective land ownership allows them to partner with the local government in attracting foreign investment for rapid growth and increased rents. While the original villagers have profited greatly from Shenzhen's rise, the migrant workers who provided the labor-power to build the new city have nevertheless become a vulnerable group subject to displacement in Shenzhen's on-going effort to build a modern, progressive, and innovative global image. This study of Shenzhen's ViCs sheds light on the evolving process of city-building in China, which adds local complexities to current debates in globalization and urbanization studies.

Chapter 1 Introduction

How did the economic and political dynamism from top-down and bottom-up interactions shape the city-building processes in post-reform China? This dissertation explores the world's emerging city-building mechanisms with special reference to Shenzhen Special Economic Zone and the city's thousands of villages. In 1980, Deng Xiaoping, the central leader of the Chinese government, designated a southern border area, which at that time was mostly covered by mountains, farmland, and about two thousand farming and fishing villages, as its first special economic zone and then named it Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (SEZ) (Figure 1-1).¹ Over the past four decades, Shenzhen SEZ has experienced tremendous population growth, with its population jumped from 0.31 million in 1979 to 2.02 million in 1990 and over 13 million as of 2019 (Figure 1-2).² The fast growth has allowed Shenzhen SEZ to jump from a border zone to a tech megacity, taking up an increasingly leading role in the global “maker” movement.³ Yet, more than two-thirds of Shenzhen SEZ'S population is rural-to-urban migrants, with only temporary residence permits or not officially registered. They were almost entirely housed by the

¹ Shenzhen Planning Bureau and China Academy of Urban Planning and Design, “The General Planning of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (Atlas)” (1986).

² <http://tjj.sz.gov.cn/zwgk/zfxxgkml/tjsj/tjnj/>

³ Jim Demuth, *Shenzhen: The Silicon Valley of Hardware*, 2016; Jonathan Chatwin, “The Shenzhen Effect: Why China’s Original ‘model’ City Matters More than Ever,” CNN, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/style/article/shenzhen-effect-china-model-city-intl-hnk/index.html>; M. Silvia Lindtner, *Prototype Nation: China Ans the Contested Promise of Innovation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020).

one thousand and eight hundred villages visually concealed between hypermodern urban structures.

At first glance, Shenzhen SEZ's growth looks familiar in comparison to the industrial boomtowns in urban history, especially when we consider a particular type of industrial production crowding together in creating the agglomeration of economies, ranging from textile manufacture in Manchester in the late eighteenth century to the garment industry in New York in the late nineteenth century, and auto industries in Detroit in the earlier twentieth century. As a border city, Shenzhen SEZ's industrialization started with grouping factories to process imported materials (such as leather and cloth), manufacture imported samples (of clothes and shoes), and assemble imported components (of appliances and electronics). The city's two thousand rural villages inhabited by local peasants were primary sites for these factories. In the new century, the local government moved the former two types of factories to the inland area in the north and supported the third one (assembling and producing electronic components) to become Shenzhen's leading industry, which made the city now China's hub of tech innovation. From the crowding of village-based processing factories to a world-class modern metropolis in four decades, the mechanism that created the new scale and speed of Shenzhen's city-building process is worth exploration.

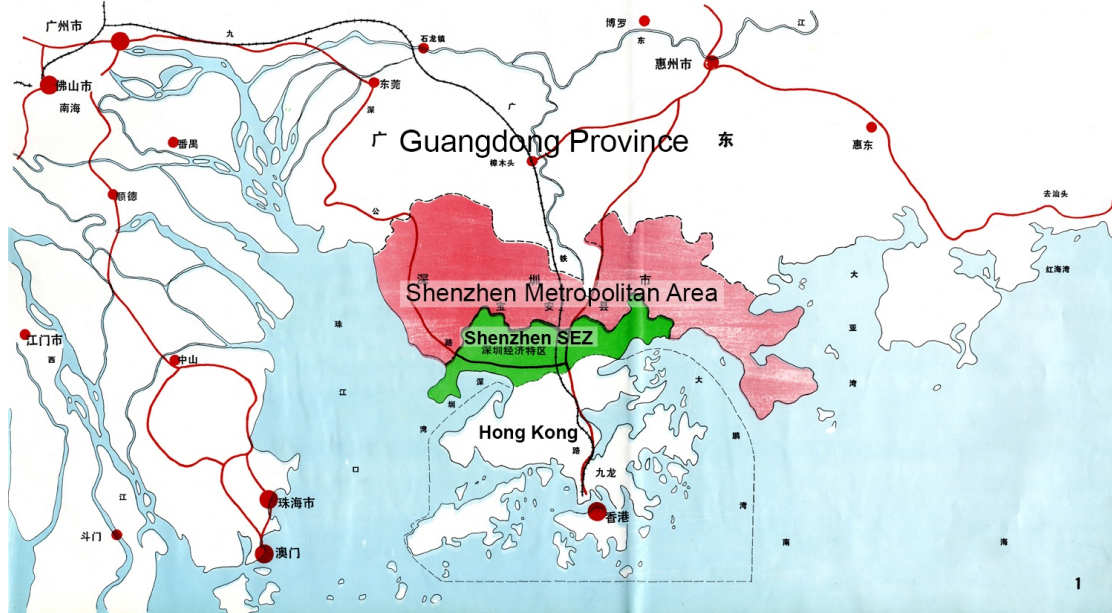


Figure 1-1. The location of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone in the General Planning of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (Atlas)

(Map from Shenzhen Planning Bureau and China Academy of Urban Planning and Design, 1986, 1)

This dissertation focuses on where Shenzhen SEZ’s industrialization began and changed through the transformation of almost two thousand local villages in relation to Shenzhen’s broader urbanization processes. These villages, also known as “urban villages” or “villages-in-the-city,” currently house approximately ten million people, accounting for two-thirds of the city’s entire population.⁴ As shown in Table 1-1, among the five major housing types in Shenzhen, ViC housing accounted for about 50% percent of the city’s total housing construction area (about 4,942 acres).⁵ In 2012, about 6.5 million ViC housing units in the city accounted for over 60% of the total housing units. Yet, the density within these ViCs was much higher, as the average size of ViC housing units was only half of the size of other types of housing units, about

⁴ Jian Jiao, “Shēnzhèn Chāo 70% Rénkǒu Réng Zhù Chéng Zhōngcūn Fùzhì Xīnjiāpō Móshì Néng Fǒu ‘Jū Zhě Yǒu Qí Wū’? [Over 70% of Shenzhen’s Population Still Live in Villages-in-the-City; Can Copying Singapore’s Model Be Able to Fulfill ‘Home Ownership’?],” *Caijing (Ts’eye-Ching)* (Beijing, China, August 2020).

⁵ Shenzhen Housing and Construction Bureau, “Shēnzhèn Shì Fángwū Jiànshè Guīhuà (2016-2020) (Shenzhen Housing Construction Plan [2016-2020])” (2016).

40 square meters, similar to factory dormitories. The extreme density and subdivision of the housing units allow ViCs to accommodate millions of people.

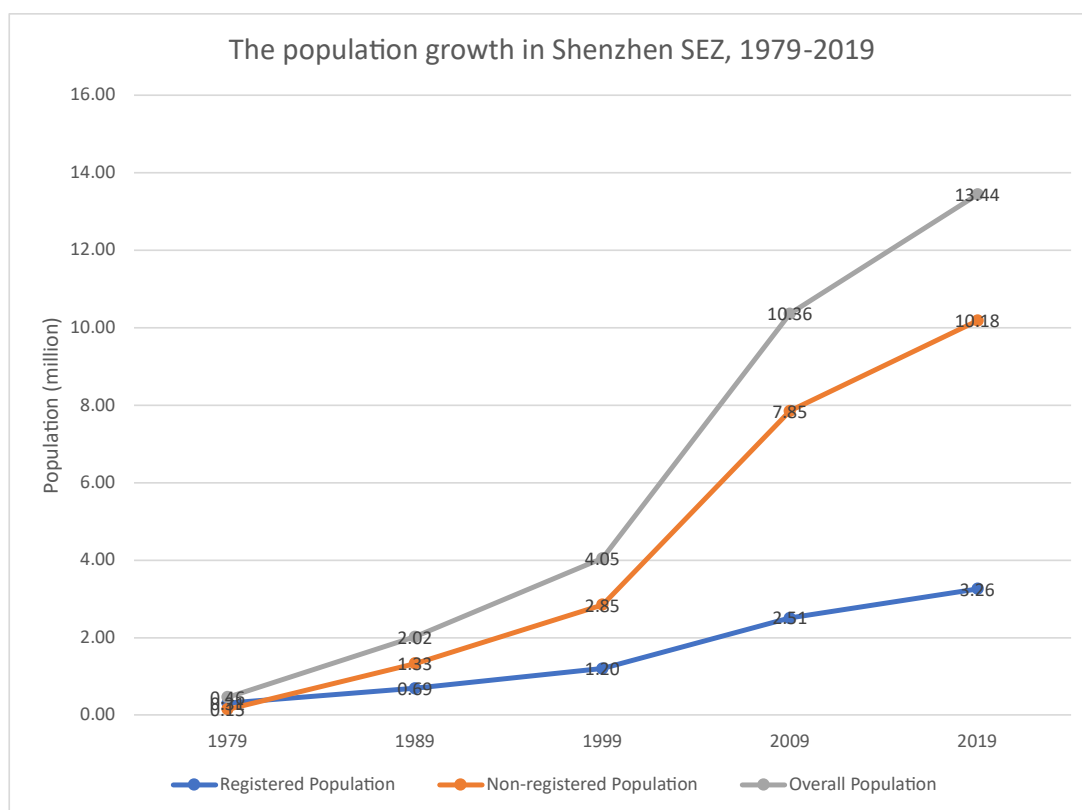


Figure 1-2. The population growth in Shenzhen SEZ, 1979-2019

(Data from Shenzhen Statistics Bureau, Shenzhen Statistical Yearbooks, 1979-2019)

Table 1-1 Housing types and percentages in Shenzhen (as of 2012)

(Data from Shenzhen's Housing Construction Plan (2016-2020), by Shenzhen Land Planning Commission)

Housing Types	Building Area (million m ²)	Unit Number (million)	Average floor area per unit (m ²)	Percentage of Building Area	Percentage of Unit Number
Commodity Housing	11.9	1.28	93	23.0%	12.4%
Public Housing	2.8	0.34	82	5.4%	3.3%
Work-unit Housing	4.7	0.55	86	9.1%	5.3%
Village-owned Housing	26	6.50	40	50.0%	62.8%
Factory Dormitory	6.5	1.68	39	12.6%	16.2%
Total	52	10.35	50	100%	100%

In addition to the tremendous amount of housing units that ViCs provided, what makes Shenzhen's ViCs unique phenomena in urban history is the mechanism of how the farming and fishing villages were transformed into ViCs and who took a leading role in that process. Currently, these ViCs are walled-off from hypermodern urban structures and faced with gentrification or demolition (Figure 1-3). Many studies, therefore, compare ViCs to the worldwide phenomena of urban slums, where similar underdeveloped or disadvantaged urban spaces accommodate labor for industrialization, which later became the politically contested sites in gentrification. In addition to the diachronic analysis of Shenzhen's connection to the world's earlier boomtowns, emerging studies have also juxtaposed Shenzhen with a set of the world's fast-growing cities in the present situation. These studies tend to view Shenzhen's ViC phenomenon as one manifestation of the more generalized model of neoliberal urbanism, featuring the dominance of market forces and the suspension of government controls and planning regulations to facilitate the city's development.⁶ Such tendencies, therefore, generate quite contrasting fragments of urban forms in the newly developed cities. New concepts and frameworks have also emerged, such as informal urbanism, enclave urbanism, and plot urbanism, to identify similar emerging patterns shared by these fast-growing metropolises in Global South, including Lagos, Kolkata, Istanbul, Shenzhen, to name a few.⁷ Again, the parallels identified among these emerging metropolises are insufficient to understand the so-called Shenzhen model of city-building and its local and global effects.

However, the earlier stages of the ViCs' transformation, as crucial sites of localized industrialization led by local villagers, are often omitted. Before these villages became

⁶ Martin J. Murray, *The Urbanism of Exception: The Dynamics of Global City Building in the Twenty-First Century*, 1st ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Christian Schmid et al., "Towards a New Vocabulary of Urbanisation Processes: A Comparative Approach," *Urban Studies* 55, no. 1 (2018): 19–52, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098017739750>.

⁷ Schmid et al., "Towards a New Vocabulary of Urbanisation Processes: A Comparative Approach."

Shenzhen's primary housing areas for rural-to-urban migrant laborers, these villages were places where the capital accumulation through foreign investment first arrived and was fixed. The key actors and the ways they worked with each other to make the transformation possible are the focus of this study.



Figure 1-3. An aerial view of a residential area in Luohu District in Shenzhen

(Photo by author)

Villagers, who were originally peasants and granted collective land ownership of non-urban land in the Chinese land regime, took a leading role in the initial process of Shenzhen's industrialization. They collectively invested in the village land by leasing it to foreign industrialists (mainly from Hong Kong), through which local villagers were transformed from peasants to factory workers and also shareholders of these village-based factories. These local villagers were the first generation of reserved labor during Shenzhen's very first stage of industrialization. At the same time, the salaries, shares, and profits gained by villagers helped them accumulate capital and empowered them to become "developers" who later produced the

building boom of migrant housing. The local government was not absent in the process; local officials encouraged and guided that villager-foreigner cooperation by giving loans to villagers and subsidizing foreign investors.

Such a mechanism that local villagers led the localized industrialization and housing production differed from those earlier industrial boomtowns in urban history. In those earlier boomtowns, capitalist entrepreneurs and developers predominantly led the industrialization processes and produced housing booms. In nineteenth-century Manchester, the workers attracted to the growing textile industry were housed in either the overcrowding basement dwellings built in the old section of the city or back-to-back houses built by speculators through the subdivision of suburban fields.⁸ In twentieth-century New York, contractors in the garment industry grouped international immigrant laborers into overcrowded contract shops converted from the tenements in Lower East Side, which later were infamously known as tenement sweatshops.⁹ Similarly, in twentieth-century Detroit, the auto industry attracted rural-to-urban migrant workers who were often crowded in boarding houses, and speculators and developers quickly dominated the building boom of working-class neighborhoods through the expansion and subdivision of low-density farmland.¹⁰ These earlier industrial boomtowns, where capitalist developers, entrepreneurs, or speculators took a dominant role in the housing production, fueled industrialization and urbanization processes. In contrast, the Shenzhen case suggests that local villagers, who represent bottom-up forces, were given a certain level of power in partnership

⁸ Frederick Engels, "The Condition of the Working Class in England," *The Sociology and Politics of Health: A Reader*, 1845, 8–13.

⁹ Benjamin Powell, "A History of Sweatshops, 1780-2010," in *Out of Poverty: Sweatshops in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 112–27; Smithsonian Institution, "History of Sweatshops: 1880-1940," National Museum of American History (Behring Center), accessed March 20, 2021, <https://americanhistory.si.edu/sweatshops/history-1880-1940>.

¹⁰ Michael McCulloch, "Building the Working City: Designs on Home and Life in Boomtown Detroit, 1914-1932" (University of Michigan, 2015).

with the local government in producing housing booms to accommodate Shenzhen's reserved labor.

ViCs are not limited to Shenzhen; it is a general urban phenomenon in the Pearl River Delta (PRD) region. A wide range of cities, including Guangzhou, Dongguan, Foshan, and Zhuhai, have experienced similar building booms of ViC housing. These were prominent places where Deng Xiaoping's economic reform policy and experiment with market economies began. The different economic and political dynamism generated in China's transitional age all contributed to shaping the transformation of ViCs and their relationship to the overall city-building processes of Shenzhen.

This dissertation explores the unique mechanism of Shenzhen's city-building through the transformation of over one thousand former fishing and farming villages into ViCs in three regimes of urbanization: the socialist production and controlled urbanization in the 1950s, the localized industrialization in the 1980s, and the post-industrial urbanization in the twenty-first century. Built on recent discussions on emerging forms of planetary urbanism in the global South, I approach ViCs beyond the conventional understanding of them as informal settlements. Instead, I view them as evolving sites of urban production and social transformation, where local bottom-up productive forces navigate and make use of both top-down imagination and global flows of capital and expertise. I argue that Shenzhen's ViCs are neither products of top-down planning nor bottom-up formation. ViCs are hybrid products of bottom-up forces in negotiation and partnership with the state. The complex top-down/bottom-up formation of the ViCs is very different from the more familiar model of informal settlements in the global South, which sheds light on the evolving process of city-building in China and adds local complexities to current debates in globalization and urbanization studies.

Situating Shenzhen SEZ's Villages-in-the-City: Geographic, Temporal, and Social-Political Context

From England to the United States, East Asia, and China, the ever-increasing speed and geographic scale of urbanization processes resulting in new dynamism continue to challenge our conventional understanding of city-building. It took almost one century for earlier industrial boomtowns in England and the United States to move to post-industrial stages. But it only took half of the time (approximately 50 years) for the following East Asian cities, including Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, to step into the developed world. Chinese cities, many of which joined the global urbanization in the 1980s after the nation's economic reform and open-door policy, used about three decades to jump from the massive farmland and rural villages to modern metropolises. Shenzhen SEZ is a prominent example. In the past four decades, it has developed from a border area covered by two thousand farming and fishing villages to one of China's wealthiest cities with its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita hitting \$22,112 in 2013, almost catching up with Taiwan and South Korea.¹¹ After incorporating three counties in the north into its metropolitan area in the new century, it has become the second-largest metropolises in South China (following Guangzhou) and the essential component of the urban agglomeration in the Pearl River Delta region.

The geographic location of Shenzhen SEZ created unique economic and political conditions for its industrialization and urbanization, which differentiates it from autonomous zones in the wide range of global urbanism and many Chinese cities, including the three other SEZs including Zhuhai, Shantou, Xiamen that followed. On the one hand, within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) allowed Deng

¹¹ In 2013, Taiwan's GDP per capita was 21,945, and South Korea's GDP per capita was 27,182. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?end=2013&locations=KR&start=1960>

Xiaoping to resume power, which marked the break from Mao Zedong's ideological campaign within China. Between 1949-1976, China had experienced highly controlled urbanization under Chairman Mao's ideological campaigns of anti-capitalist cities until Deng Xiaoping's rise to power at CCP. Meanwhile, China's resumed diplomatic relations with the United States in 1979, and a global shift of industrialization and urbanization forces to the Global South coincided with Deng's decision to prioritize the nation's economic development by opening its market to the West.¹² Different from Mao, Deng adopted pragmatic strategies to fight the country's massive insufficiency and poverty. Setting up Special Economic Zones (SEZ) in South China was one of Deng's pragmatic strategies to experiment with market economies by opening up part of the country to the West. In 1980, Deng designated a border area across Shenzhen Bay facing Hong Kong as China's first SEZ, named Shenzhen SEZ (Figure 1-4). The geographic proximity to Hong Kong has allowed Shenzhen SEZ to become the primary "gateway," leading China to connect to the global market in the 1980s.

What differentiates Shenzhen SEZ from autonomous zones in the wide range of global urbanism is its unique political association with the nation's overall transition from Mao's socialism to Deng's pragmatism. Studies tend to theorize emerging autonomous zones worldwide as repeatable ways of privatizing spaces in global urbanism, which empowers private real-estate operations to override public laws.¹³ While Shenzhen SEZ may be seen as a place of exception outside of the state law of Mao's socialism, it can also be seen as the place where the new law of Deng's envisioned socialist modern state was born. What remains unchanged in the transition nonetheless is the state power over urban production.

¹² China's five SEZs include Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Xiamen, Shantou, and Hainan.

¹³ Murray, *The Urbanism of Exception: The Dynamics of Global City Building in the Twenty-First Century*.

Shenzhen SEZ was created as a test field or “buffer zone” for the central government to test Deng’s idea of a socialist market economy and filter and control what could be imported into the massive mainland area. At that time, the enormous mainland area was cautiously separated from Shenzhen SEZ and kept under the regime of the socialist planned economy. To implement the separation and control, the provincial government set up inspection stations and wire fences between Shenzhen SEZ and inner counties, which marked the “second borderline” (*èrxìàn chāhuā dì*) in addition to the first borderline between Shenzhen SEZ and Hong Kong (Figure 1-5). The famous “corridor” area between the wire fences along the “second borderline” was once outside of both the jurisdiction of Shenzhen SEZ and inner cities. That said, Shenzhen SEZ itself was less a zone of exceptions than the initial site of enacting the nation’s reform policies.

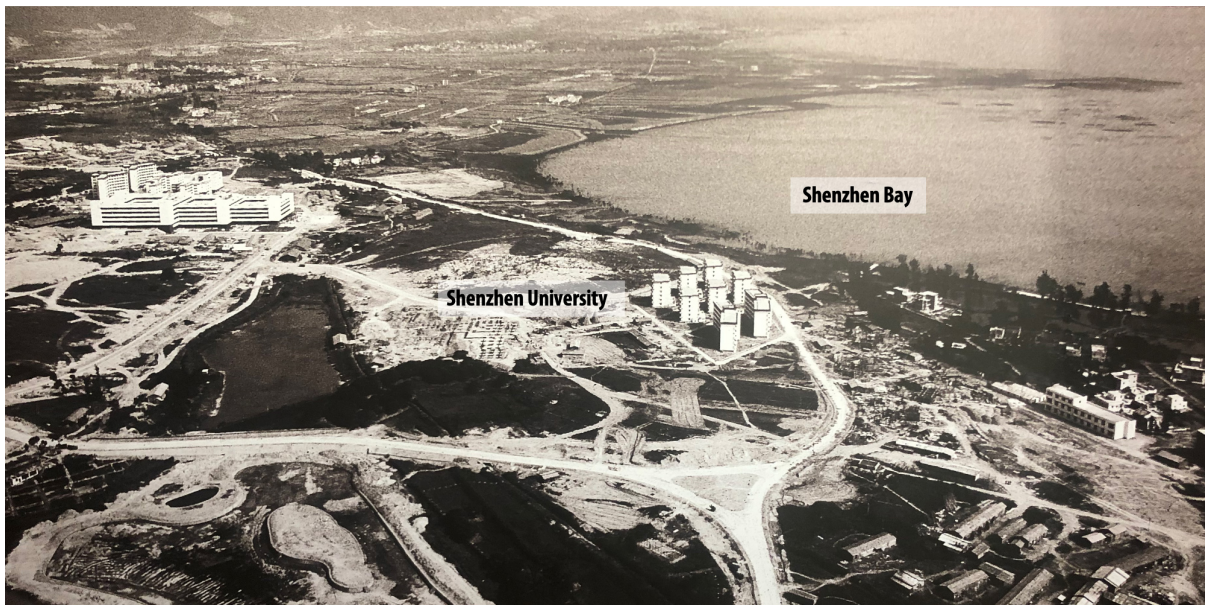


Figure 1-4. An aerial view of Shenzhen’s Nanshan District in 1983.

(Photo from Shenzhen Planning Museum)



Figure 1-5. *Left*, the “first borderline” between Hong Kong and Shenzhen SEZ; *right*, the “second borderline” between Shenzhen SEZ and inner areas (èrxiàn chāhuā dì)

(*Left*, photo by Leroy W. Demery, Jr.; *right*, photo from Chinese Photographers Association)

This study aims to uncover the complex top-down/bottom-up mechanism of building Shenzhen SEZ enmeshed in global urbanism by placing the geographic emphasis on the former farming and fishing villages within Shenzhen SEZ that provide sites for small-scale manufacturing, local retail, and above all, affordable housing for newly arrived migrants. Shenzhen SEZ’s location and terrain differ from Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, built on the footprints of existing urban fabrics. The area of Shenzhen SEZ and Hong Kong used to be under the same jurisdiction of *Xin’an* county in history until the Qing Dynasty government ceded the Hong Kong area to England after losing the Opium War in 1841. Despite the enormous gaps in economic development and regime, the connections between Shenzhen SEZ and Hong Kong existed and were rooted deeply in these original villages through family kinships and clans. That created the precondition for these old villages’ leaders to reach out to Hong Kong investors upon Shenzhen SEZ’s establishment and eventually made villages favorable sites for small-scale manufacturing. By focusing on the transformation of these villages into ViCs, the research looks at capital flows, policymaking, and labor migration at multiple (global, national, and local) scales.

This study's temporal frame involves three regimes of urbanization experienced by Shenzhen SEZ: the socialist cooperative production and controlled urbanization in the 1950s, the localized industrialization through land finance in the 1980s and 1990s post-industrialization through urban renewal projects in the twenty-first century. A typical story of Shenzhen SEZ often begins with Deng's delimitation of the zone in 1980, whereas this study focuses on the transformation of ViCs and thus leads us back to Mao's decisive policies that reorganized the relationship between the city and the countryside in the 1950s. Mao's distrust of large cities led him to implement a set of planning ideas and policies to control the size of cities, including granting peasants collective land ownership in the countryside, perpetuating villages as self-contained cooperative production sites (comparable to work units in the city), and restricting the mobility of labor (especially peasants from moving to the city). The 1950s' socialist ideals and policies that aimed to decentralize and control the size of cities ironically allowed peasant-landlords in villages in rapidly developing areas, such as Shenzhen SEZ, to gain a certain level of power to participate in the capitalist development. Even today, the legacies of the 1950s' policies significantly impact people and places under the urbanization processes in China.

The second stage was localized industrialization through land finance between the 1980s and 1990s. Upon establishing Shenzhen SEZ, the municipal government and local peasants were land rich but cash poor. The central government granted 200 million RMB (including a loan of 30 million from the national bank) for the newly composed municipal government to set up the "Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Development Corporation" and authorized special rights for the local government to develop land within the SEZ.¹⁴ On the one hand, this state-owned corporation began to reach out to and collaborate with Hong Kong investors in constructing

¹⁴ Zhongheng Liang and Zhonglin Zhang, eds., *Shenzhen Tequ Jianshe de Diaocha Yu Yanjiu (The Investigation and Research on the Construction of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone)* (Shenzhen: Haitian Publishing House, 1989).

large-scale office-buildings and commodity-housing neighborhoods near the Luohu Port. On the other hand, as compensation for local peasants' lost farmland or woodland, the municipal government allowed and encouraged them to collectively start up their own small manufacturing industries, join in the investment with foreign capitalist developers, or lease vacant village land to foreign companies. As of 1984, among the three primary modes of village-based industries in Shenzhen SEZ, village-owned factories accounted for 50% of the total production, followed by village-foreigner cooperatives (30%) and foreign companies (20%), which were still growing at that time.¹⁵ In this way, local peasant-villagers became entrepreneurs, landlords, shareholders, and factory workers simultaneously. The former three roles were almost the same with the local government in urban production.

The initially accumulated capital allowed local villagers to invest in their individual homesteads and houses when millions of migrant workers poured into Shenzhen SEZ in the late 1990s. During this time, local villagers retreated from factories and became individual landlords who worked with contractors to demolish their old houses (usually more than one piece coming from compensation) and rebuilt rental apartment buildings up to five stories and nine stories on the original lots to house migrant workers. The increase in living density and subdivision of the housing units turned the one thousand and eight hundred industrial villages into ViCs that currently house ten million people in Shenzhen SEZ. A typical lot of homestead in old villages in South China is about 80 square meters, often occupied by a courtyard house for one family (Figure 1-6). In the late 1990s, villagers rebuilt apartment buildings on the same lot and divided the floor area into two units, each of 40 square meters, to house newly arrived migrants. In the recent decade, newly built ViC rental apartment buildings usually are divided into five to six

¹⁵ "Shenzhen Shi Tongji Ziliao 1984 (The Statistic Data of Shenzhen 1984)" (Shenzhen, 1984).

units on each floor, each unit including just a bedroom and a bathroom. Between the 1980s and 1990s, when rural villages transformed from industrial sites into ViCs that house Shenzhen SEZ's labor power, local peasants also transformed from factory partners and workers into almost real-estate developers.

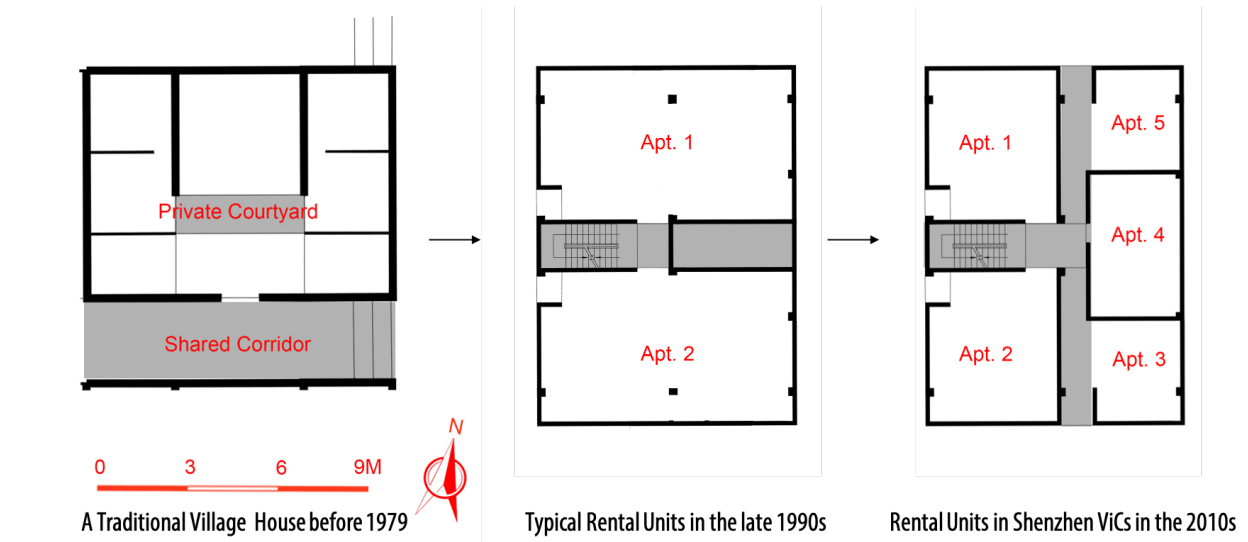


Figure 1-6. The subdivision of a typical ViC housing unit with a floor area of 80m² over time

The third stage featured a state-led post-industrialization process in the twenty-first century, aiming to redevelop the land occupied by old industrial sites and ViCs within the SEZ. Near the end of the 1990s, more than 50% of the SEZ's land had already been occupied.¹⁶ The municipal government realized the expansion of land development was not sustainable for the city and decided to redevelop inner places. Also, the labor-intensive material-processing manufacturing (in glass, leather, cloth, and flour) caused the over-crowdedness and segregation of migrant workers in ViCs. It further resulted in water pollution that affected its neighboring cities. Faced with these crises, the municipal government decided to evict material-processing factories, locate them in more inland areas in the north, and simultaneously increase the support

¹⁶ Zhongyang Guangbo Dianshitai (CCTV), *Shenzhen Gushi (The Story of Shenzhen)* (Mainland China, 2018).

for high-tech industries, including the foreign electronics manufacturer *Foxconn* and local start-ups such as *Huawei* and *Tencent*. Hand in hand with the broad economic reconstruction was a master plan of spatial restructuring by demolishing ViCs and old industrial sites and replacing them with Central Business Districts (CBD), commodity-housing complexes, or innovative centers.

What has been experienced by Shenzhen SEZ in the new century is comparable in some ways to the top-down attempt of implementing urban renewal projects in New York. Although the municipal government and partner developers remain as dominant agents in Shenzhen SEZ's urban reconstruction process, the increasingly prominent role taken by architects and urban designers should not be neglected. Planners and architects joining with industrialists and developers in producing a building boom and creating a modern culture of urban living to amend the chaos that resulted from industrialization were not new either when we look back at Manchester, New York, Detroit again.¹⁷ Yet, in contrast to earlier modernist planners and architects who drew on environmental determinism and relied on formal solutions to social problems, architects' participation in the twenty-first century tends to shift to creating cultural events at a global scale to engage with local disadvantaged places faced with redevelopment.

The global proliferation of international biennial exhibition events in architecture contributes to this new form of collaboration in modernization projects. Since the beginning of the new century, Shenzhen SEZ's urban reconstruction project has seen an increasing impact of a recurring biennial exhibition event, the Shenzhen\Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism (UABB), initiated and led by a group of local planners and architects. In 2017, the

¹⁷ Robert Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier* (New York, New York: Basic Books, 1977), <https://doi.org/10.2307/1855161>; Robert G. Barrows, "Beyond the Tenement: Patterns of American Urban Housing, 1870-1930," *Journal of Urban History* 9, no. 4 (1983): 395-420; McCulloch, "Building the Working City: Designs on Home and Life in Boomtown Detroit, 1914-1932."

UABB located its exhibition sites in five ViCs, which attempted to provide alternatives to the dominant top-down demolition-replacement approach but ended up unleashing gentrification forces. The 2017 UABB that convened global and local architects and artists in Shenzhen's ViCs suggests a new level of intensity and scale of partnerships between architects and local forces. By focusing on the encounters between the UABB events and ViCs, this study explores the changing forces in reorganizing ViC spaces in Shenzhen's post-industrialization era

The temporal end of this study is the present time (the year 2020). It allows the study to examine the continuing impacts of the architectural imagination through UABB on Shenzhen SEZ's ViC redevelopment plans and operations. Also, as the fortieth year of Shenzhen SEZ's establishment, the central government envisioned a new position of Shenzhen SEZ within the nation and in the "One Belt One Road" international plan. Between 1978 and 2018, the population living in cities has jumped from 17.92% to 59.28% of the country's population and will go over 70% by 2030, as planners anticipated.¹⁸ Whereas Shenzhen SEZ set up a city-building paradigm for China's "first round of urbanization," the central government and planners aim to create a new paradigm of city-building as "a pathfinder for the second round of urbanization in China."¹⁹ Xiong'an, thirty-five miles to Beijing's southwest and consisting of three old industrial counties in Hebei Province, becomes a new place for the model city-building imagination in the new century. Planners further claimed to correct the chaos experienced Shenzhen SEZ, including the administrative system, living environment, housing provision, and public transit, by planning Xiong'an to house up to 10 million people working in high-tech industries, businesses, universities, and hospitals relieved from Beijing in the next two decades.²⁰

¹⁸ Jin Su, "Zhongguo Chengzhenhua Xiabanchang [The "Second Half" of the Urbanization Process in China]," *Jingji GuanCha Wang (EEO)*, 2019.

¹⁹ Dongting Jia and Xiaojiang Li, "Xióngān Shì Chéngzhènhuà Zhuǎnxiàng Xiàbànchǎng de Tànlùzhě [Xiong'an Is a Pathfinder for A Second Round of Urbanization in China]," *Sanlian Shenghuo Zhoukan [Lifeweek]* 989, no. 22 (2018).

²⁰ Jia and Li.

In addition to the domestic replication, China also aims to export the Shenzhen SEZ model through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, also known as the New Silk Road), where a plan of building fifty special economic zones modeled after Shenzhen in Central Asia. Therefore, the present time marks a juncture in Shenzhen SEZ's new imagined role in the national and global network of cities.

A Mixed Historical-Spatial-Ethnographic Approach

This study approached ViCs by seeing them as specific spatial forms resulting from the globalized capitalist urban production and the localized social relations. I situate the formation and transformation of ViCs in the globalized capitalist urban production by putting my observations in conversation with recent debates in critical urban geographic theories. Also, I analyze ViCs as expressions of social transformation with local specificity by engaging with recent ethnographic approaches to globalization. Combining the structural analysis with ethnographic observations allows this study to approach the ViC phenomenon at multiple scales and explore the local complexity of the city-building process in globalization.

Recent discussions on the rescaled capitalist urbanization processes in globalization are mainly built on two Marxist urban sociologists' theories —Henri Lefebvre and Manuel Castells. Whereas Lefebvre conceived of cities as virtual objects providing geographic conditions for capitalist growth, Castells theorized cities as functional units and specific forms that expressed capitalist production and social relations.²¹ Recent frameworks of planetary urbanization or global cities have further dissolved the conventional geographic divides of city-countryside,

²¹ Neil Brenner, "The Urban Question as a Scale Question: Reflections on Henri Lefebvre, Urban Theory and the Politics of Scale," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 24, no. 2 (2000): 361–78, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00234>; Manuel Castells and Edward Arnold, *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977); Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities, Analysis*, vol. 53 (London: Blackwell, 1996), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>.

urban-rural, and core-periphery, which extended the reproduced social or labor relations in local places to the international scale, including a restructuring of the economy and a reconfiguration of spaces.²² In the context of globalized urbanization processes, a ViC in Shenzhen is not merely a locally bounded settlement unit but a place where local politics constantly encounter global flows of capital, labor, and imagination.

Global urbanism and new scales of urbanization. The question of “scale” related to the globally connected economic system is central to recent discussions of global urbanism. Friedmann’s world city hypothesis merged the globalized city-forming processes with the new international division of labor.²³ In this hypothesized system of global cities, the reproduced socioeconomic polarization was reflected in the spatial organization at new scales: at the worldwide scale, there co-existed extremely wealthy countries (and their top-level global cities) and impoverished countries; at the regional scale, global cities with high-level amenities were often surrounded by impoverished rural regions lacking necessary infrastructure; within these global cities, upscale residences of corporate professionals were juxtaposed with substandard settlements of low-skilled workers.²⁴ Though Friedmann’s assumption of hierarchical relationships among global cities received many criticisms, the new “scale” of spatial organization and labor division gained much scholarly attention in the following decades.

The “scale” question is the central topic in Brenner’s call for epistemological changes in urban studies. Brenner pushed back against Castells’ approach, which assumed “the urban” as a fixed functional and analytical unit of social processes; echoing Harvey’s geographic view of

²² John Friedmann, “The World City Hypothesis,” *Development and Change* 17, no. 1 (1986): 69–83, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.1986.tb00231.x>; Saskia Sassen, “Whose City Is It? Globalization and the Formation of New Claims,” *Public Culture* 8, no. 2 (1996): 205–23, <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-8-2-205>; Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid, “Planetary Urbanism,” *Urban Constellations*, 2011, 10–13.

²³ Friedmann, “The World City Hypothesis.”

²⁴ Friedmann.

capitalism, he called for a theoretical shift to supra-urban spaces and processes as central geographic conditions for capitalist accumulation.²⁵ Brenner *et al.* further named such forms and processes of urbanization as planetary urbanism.²⁶ Invested in Lefebvre's "implosion-explosion" hypothesis, planetary urbanism assumed the rescaled capitalist urbanization processes not only blurred the conceived urban-rural or core-periphery boundaries but also exploded across the urban, regional, national, global scales.²⁷ The epistemological shift to a new "scale" of urbanization refuses to view a city as a defined settlement unit with clear territorial boundaries; instead, it requires discarding the conventional geographic divides of city-countryside, urban-rural, and core-periphery in urban studies.

The building process of the city of Shenzhen since the 1980s has undoubtedly been part of the global restructuring of space and labor division across geographic scales. In particular, the "scale" problem is essential to understanding ViCs' transformation in relation to the Shenzhen-Hong Kong urban agglomeration. In Shenzhen's transformation from Hong Kong's "backyard factory" into a partner, the two cities have formed a super "city" in the world-system of the labor market. Some studies see Hong Kong as "the big master" for Shenzhen SEZ in the reform era, especially in terms of experimenting with urban governance based on land revenue and land finance, where the local government and its partner-developers accumulated capital by selling the land use right to foreign investors.²⁸ Others nonetheless emphasize the specificity of China's urban politics and economies by arguing that the state remains a dominant actor in initiating and

²⁵ David Harvey, "Capital, and Class Struggle Capitalist Societies around the Built Environment in Advanced," *Policies & Society* 6, no. 3 (1976): 265–96; Kent Mathewson and David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, *Geographical Review*, vol. 87, 1997, <https://doi.org/10.2307/215233>; Brenner, "The Urban Question as a Scale Question: Reflections on Henri Lefebvre, Urban Theory and the Politics of Scale."

²⁶ Brenner and Schmid, "Planetary Urbanism."

²⁷ Brenner, "Urban Theory without an Outside," 19.

²⁸ Mee Kam Ng and Wing Shing Tang, "Land-Use Planning in 'One Country, Two Systems': Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Shenzhen," *International Planning Studies* 4, no. 1 (1999): 1–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563479908721724>; Jun Zhang, "From Hong Kong's Capitalist Fundamentals to Singapore's Authoritarian Governance: The Policy Mobility of Neo-Liberalising Shenzhen, China," *Urban Studies* 49, no. 13 (2012): 2853–71, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098012452455>.

leading urban development projects, and market agents turn out to represent the state, known as the “local state corporatism.”²⁹ The third set of studies recognize that “China’s market transition started in rural areas,” where the local villages and towns engage with external market forces to accumulate collective capital through kinship or social networks, especially in the PRD region.³⁰ Some scholars call it “local capitalism.”³¹ Whereas the industrialization of villages in Shenzhen SEZ in the 1980s and 1990s represented what the “local capitalism” describes, the master plan of ViC renewal in the new century nonetheless suggested a return or presence of top-down planning. To understand the specificity of localized capitalist industrialization coming from bottom-up reactions to top-down planning, a more on-the-ground investigation is needed, as complementary to the historical-structural approach.

Localized social struggles around the built environment. Despite the blurry of spatial boundaries, societies are not placeless. In addition to understanding cities as they relate to expanding networks and flows, another set of studies concerns the grounded impacts of global urbanization forces on local places. In Sassen’s anthropological account of globalization, the inflow of labor forces constituted by transnational immigrants to the local site created new contested terrains of exploitation, where she found ethnic and cultural identities adding to the current struggles over wage rates and housing conditions.³² As a simultaneous result of expanding spatial production and labor division, the reproduced social struggles also meant migrated or peripheral cultural identities sliding into a dominant category in local places.

²⁹ Fulong Wu, “Emerging Chinese Cities: Implications for Global Urban Studies,” *The Professional Geographer* 68, no. 2 (2016): 338–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00330124.2015.1099189>; Fulong Wu, “State Dominance in Urban Redevelopment: Beyond Gentrification in Urban China,” *Urban Affairs Review* 52, no. 5 (2016): 631–58, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087415612930>.

³⁰ Alan Smart and George C.S. Lin, “Local Capitalisms, Local Citizenship and Translocality: Rescaling from below in the Pearl River Delta Region, China,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 31, no. 2 (2007): 280–302, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2007.00732.x>; Wu, “Emerging Chinese Cities: Implications for Global Urban Studies.”

³¹

³² Sassen, “Whose City Is It? Globalization and the Formation of New Claims.”

In addition to being critical sites of small-scale manufacturing, ViCs are widely known as the Chinese versions of informal settlements, providing affordable housing Shenzhen SEZ's reserve labor-power. The spatial segregation, extreme density, and over-crowdedness of ViC housing recall Engels' observation of 1845's Manchester, which depicted how working-people's quarters were standing next to middle-class residences but sharply separated from them and concealed in the city.³³ The housing crisis turned out to be essential to "the urban question" in Castells' inquiries: in a process dominated by the logic of industrialization, which was to pursue productivity rates and profits, the sudden increase in the number of migrant laborers concentrated in a specific location was beyond building capacities, resulting in social struggles marked by residence segregation.³⁴ Resonant with Castells' theorization, Harvey further observed a more comprehensive range of modern housebuilding and maintenance activities integrated into the capitalist market economy:

The split between the place of work and the place of residence means that the struggle of labor to control the social conditions of its own existence splits into two seemingly independent struggles. The first, located in the workplace, is over the wage rate, which provides the purchasing power for consumption goods, and the conditions of work. The second, fought in the place of residence, is against secondary forms of exploitation and appropriation represented by merchant capital, landed property, and the like... Apart from space as a basic condition of living we are concerned here with housing, transportation (to jobs and facilities), amenities, facilities, and a whole bundle of resources that contribute to the total living environment for labor...

Step by step, activities traditionally associated with household work are brought within the capitalist market economy--baking, brewing, preserving,

³³ Engels, "The Condition of the Working Class in England."

³⁴ Castells and Arnold, *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach*, 149.

cooking, food preparation, washing, cleaning, and even child-rearing and child socialization. And with respect to the built environment, housebuilding and maintenance become integrated into the market economy. (Harvey, 1976: 267)

In Castells' and Harvey's observations, labor's struggle to control the social conditions has moved beyond workplaces. The creation and maintenance of living environments have been largely commodified and have become a new instrument for capital accumulation. While land and space have become essential resources in the market, the labor struggle has also become a struggle over the location and the built environment. Turning to more recent urbanization processes in the Global South, Harvey observed the reproduced social struggles marked on built environment at new scales. He called for a return to Lefebvre's initial cry for the fundamental human right to living the city:

Urbanization, we may conclude, has played a crucial role in the absorption of capital surpluses, at ever-increasing geographical scales, but at the price of burgeoning processes of creative destruction that have dispossessed the masses of any right to the city whatsoever. (Harvey, "The Right to the City," 2008: 37)

These urban theories that associate the creation and maintenance of living and working environments with the reproduction of social struggles are critical to understanding contemporary urban conditions in Shenzhen. The sharp contrast of landscapes in juxtaposition, including superblocks of commercial complexes, gated communities of high-rise apartments, golf courses, cultural innovation parks, old industrial sites, and ViCs, manifests the increasingly segregated living environment and stratified social structure. To a large extent, Shenzhen's ViCs resemble those many slums and ghettos where the poor and dispossessed groups were displaced during the urbanization.

However, the social implications of Shenzhen SEZ's ViCs are different in terms of the resulting localized exclusions based on two different citizenships: local peasants and migrant workers. Previous ethnographic research has identified a mechanism of the capitalist economy in the PRD region, subordinated to and reliant on existing local relations and connections.³⁵ Such a bottom-up perspective has further emphasized China's unique system of household registration (*hukou*), which determines the way of redistributing social resources and profits from development.³⁶ Whereas local peasants with *hukou* and hence entitlements of citizenship are granted collective land ownership, access to social welfares and a certain power to develop the land, migrant workers without local *hukou* remain excluded from accessing social welfare services. Observations on the localized capitalist production combined with a local-citizenship entitlement system that resulted in the polarization of former peasants reveal the complex politics generated and grounded inside. The ethnographic approach that pays attention to social interactions and processes on the ground, therefore, adds a new level of understanding to the dualistic global/local framework.

From spatial fix to cultural/creative fix. Initially, Harvey used the concept of "spatial fix" to theorize globalization as a way of capitalist accumulation searching new territories; the "spatial fix" describes how the construction and reconstruction of physical spaces, such as urban structures and infrastructures, as material carriers to fix investments and spatial solutions to the crises caused by capital accumulation.³⁷ Like Harvey's "spatial fix" of capital, recent studies tend to associate globalization with cultural imagination to seek new territories through the

³⁵ Smart and Lin, "Local Capitalisms, Local Citizenship and Translocality: Rescaling from below in the Pearl River Delta Region, China," 285

³⁶ Smart and Lin, 286.

³⁷ David Harvey, "Globalization and the Spatial Fix," *Geographische Revue* 2, no. 3 (2001): 23–31.

global diffusion of material practices in creative manners.³⁸ These studies identify the prevalence of large-scale cultural events as carriers of values complementary to the physical buildings and infrastructures that fix capital and labor.³⁹ Particularly in the places undergoing post-industrialization, the emerging creative forces, including architects, artists, technicians, and various professionals, have become vital agents in circulating specific aesthetic and cultural values in globalization through their material practices.⁴⁰ Such cultural perspectives in art and architecture provide criticisms to the dark side of the globalization of the alleged creative events as ways of cultural homogenization. As studies argue, whereas the symbolic effects of such events allow a more dominant set of aesthetic and cultural values to be transferred into market values in the world system, local differences will be marginalized or totalized.⁴¹

The cultural accounts add a critical perspective to understanding Shenzhen SEZ's post-industrialization process in the new century through UABB events. Architecture biennales are among the emerging interfaces through which international capital, technologies, and values intensively flowing into local places. The original purposes of biennial exhibitions were to provide alternative forms to modern museums and offer immediate and flexible responses to the emergence of contemporary arts and accommodate peripheral artists.⁴² Biennial exhibitions are more and more incorporated into the host cities' broader urban development plans, reoccurring

³⁸ Charlotte Bydler, "The Global Art World, Inc.: On the Globalization of Contemporary Art," in *The Biennial Reader*, ed. Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal, and Solveig Øvstebø (Bergen, Norway: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004), 378–405.

³⁹ Shenjing He, "The Creative Spatio-Temporal Fix: Creative and Cultural Industries Development in Shanghai, China," *Geoforum* 106, no. 7 (2019): 310–19, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2017.07.017>; Shenjing He and Jun Wang, "State-Led Creative/Cultural City Making and Its Contestations in East Asia: A Multi-Scalar Analysis of the Entrepreneurial State and the Creative Class," *Geoforum* 106, no. 10 (2019): 305–9, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.10.004>.

⁴⁰ Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life* (New York, New York: Basic Books, 2002); Richard Florida, *The New Urban Crisis: How Our Cities Are Increasing Inequality, Deepening Segregation, and Failing the Middle Class—and What We Can Do About It* (New York, New York: Basic Books, 2017).

⁴¹ Jeannine Tang, "Of Biennials and Biennialists: Venice, Documenta, Münster," *Theory, Culture & Society* 24, no. 8 (2007): 247–60, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276407084709>; Francis Francina, "Berlin, Paris, Liverpool: 'Biennialization' and Left Critique in 2012," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 2, no. 1 (2013): 2–31, https://doi.org/10.1386/jcs.2.1.2_1.

⁴² Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal, and Solveig Øvstebø, "Biennialology," in *The Biennial Reader*, ed. (Bergen, Norway: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010): 12–27.

periodically (biennially triennially, or every five years) and dispersing its exhibition venues across the city. In globalization, the duplication of biennial format worldwide has built up the infrastructure for “biennialization,” allowing curators or directors at prestigious art institutions, well-known artists and architects, and high-profile critics to travel across the globe to create exhibitions.⁴³ The rise of the figure of curators and their expanding power in engaging with various market forces and the local government provide a new understanding of the post-industrial urban reconstruction processes.

Built on these theories, this study identifies three themes or forces that help understand the transformation of ViCs and their relationship to Shenzhen’s city-building process. The first one is the changing state’s role in mobilizing the local forces in capitalist production (implicitly or explicitly). Instead of adopting “local capitalism,” this study echoes those studies that recognize the dominant role of the municipal-level government as the dominant agent in making urban changes. Shenzhen SEZ has experienced a higher level of bottom-up processes of industrialization than other cities, but the state role has never been absent. Yet, different from accounts of “state entrepreneurship” or “state capitalism,” this research explores the state role by focusing on the group of planners, who represent the state in implementing top-down ideas on the one hand and are experts of planning techniques in making urban regulations on the other. How does urban planners’ dual-position affect their capability in engaging with the urban processes?

The second theme is the role of architects, as emerging global creative forces, in shaping the post-industrialization/modernization/gentrification processes in the twenty-first century.

⁴³ Paul O’Neil, “The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse,” in *The Biennial Reader*, ed. Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal, and Solveig Øvstebø (Bergen, Norway: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010), 244; Tang, “Of Biennials and Biennialists: Venice, Documenta, Münster”; Frascina, “Berlin, Paris, Liverpool: ‘Biennialization’ and Left Critique in 2012.”

Moving beyond the role of producers in the material and environmental senses, global architects who carry a set of cultural values engage with both the state power and local forces through UABB events. The expanding influence of large-scale cultural and creative events in turning symbolic values into real-estate values remains a gap in the accounts for the globalized urbanization and reconstruction processes. How does global architects' imagination power engage with various political and economic forces in shaping the city's spatial reconstruction process?

The third theme is the two citizenships produced around housing. China's separate administrative systems in rural and urban areas engendered various restrictive policies to control rural residents' mobility and migration to cities. While local peasants become fundamental bottom-up forces in negotiation with the local state and foreign investors in development, low-income migrant workers without local *hukou* are excluded from accessing social services (especially affordable housing programs) in the host city. How do two groups of former peasants living in ViCs position themselves in the city, respectively, and how does the continuing modernization process reshape the relationship between the two groups? This study uses Shenzhen as an example to examine the complicated relationship among the state (including various market agents), urban planners, architects, local peasant-landlords, and migrant workers in Shenzhen's city-building processes.

Sources and Methods

This study combines archival research and spatial-ethnographic research to answer the questions raised above. The archival research identifies sources for Shenzhen's urban planning and policy changes over the past four decades, including planning atlases, government reports, photographs, and household title deeds. These sources present three phases of Shenzhen's city-

building process: 1) the creation of urban work units and village cooperatives as self-contained yet separate production sites under the socialist planning ideologies and in the 1950s; 2) the planned industrialization of peri-urban villages as development strategies to attract foreign investments and increase local revenues between the 1980s and 1990s; and 3) the massive demolition of ViCs in urban reconstruction since 2004, to promote an official discourse of building a modern socialist city.

The ethnographic research focused on the ongoing urban reconstruction/modernization project through my participant-observations by working with architects and in-depth interviews with planner-officials and ViC occupants. The primary site was Nantou Old Town, 9 miles away from the central Citizen Square in the west (Figure 1-7). The ethnographic method allowed me to approach ViCs by “being there,” listening to people there, and writing in “thick description.”⁴⁴ My experience of using ViC spaces and moving around them in combination with qualitative data from in-depth interviews becomes my additional instrument of knowing, complementary to the theoretical lexicon and historical analysis.

Like many ViCs in Shenzhen, *Nantou* used to be a rural village surrounded by farmland before Shenzhen’s establishment as an economic zone. Currently, it provides affordable rental housing for low-income migrant workers, as well as workplaces for street vendors, shopkeepers, and as initial sites for the offices of young entrepreneurs. What made *Nantou* an appropriate case for study is that it retains the traditional spatial arrangement of streets and traces of the built environment over more than one hundred years. Before it became a rural village, it was first built as a fort city hundreds of years ago. Due to its complexity, the old village-town was also selected as the primary site for the 2017 Shenzhen/Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Architecture and

⁴⁴ Carole McGranahan, “What Is Ethnography? Teaching Ethnographic Sensibilities without Fieldwork,” *Teaching Anthropology* 4 (2014): 24, 27.

Urbanism (UABB). The UABB brought in international artists and architects convening in the old village-town seeking alternative urban redevelopment approaches. This case offered an extreme but also typical example of spatial production in the global age. It allowed this research project to examine the interactions among international forces (involved in the exhibition of architecture), state agents (the local government, planners, and developers), and local actors (local organizations, landlords, and migrant workers).

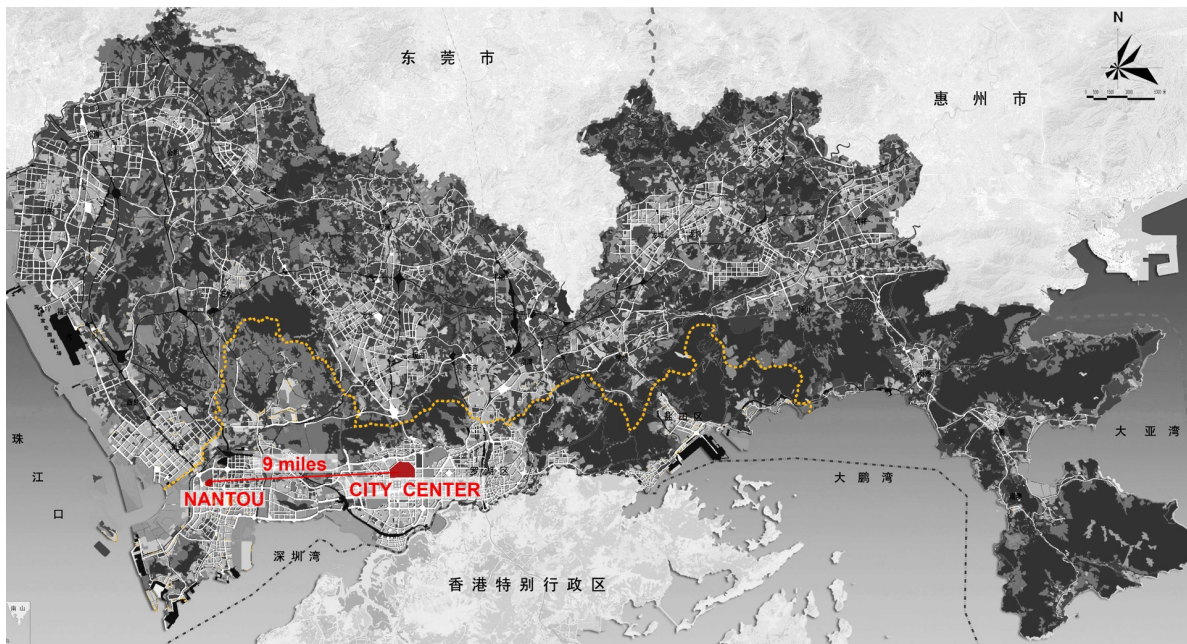


Figure 1-7. The geographic location of the Nantou Old Town/Village

(Reproduced by the author, original map from People's Government of Shenzhen, Shenzhen City Comprehensive Planning 2010-2020)

The conduct of research involves three phases of fieldwork in Shenzhen, before, during, and after the UABB. In the first phase (half a year before the UABB), I interviewed 25 occupants of the ViC, including six officially registered residents (ex-farmers and quasi-landlords of the ViC), two locally born who currently were Hong Kong citizens, and 17 migrants without official Shenzhen *hukou* registration. The sample also included a wide range of age generations and occupations, including property managers (most of who were local ex-peasants/landlords),

shopkeepers, white-collar workers, company or public institution employees, traditional artisans, and contractors. I designed interview questions to obtain their perceptions of the built environment within the ViC and their personal living and working experiences in Shenzhen. Meanwhile, I also worked for the curatorial team to prepare the 2017 UABB. Working at the curatorial office, I participated, observed, and documented negotiations among curators, globally invited architects, municipal and local officials, developers, village bureaucrats, and occupants.

In the second phase of the fieldwork, I returned to the ViC and worked as an exhibition project coordinator for a design team led by faculty-designers from two universities in the United States. The exhibition project called *House 17* was an architectural renovation of an old, abandoned house. Participating in this project allowed me to conduct participatory observations on the interactions among global architects, migrant construction workers and contractors, local officers, and local property managers involved in the process. The project was not the only example; many of the ongoing urban projects worldwide involved the international profession of architects encountering local socio-political forces. During the exhibition, I also documented a series of media events, including the opening ceremony, performances, symposia, and sponsoring business activities, which broadcast the ViC to its global audience. Meanwhile, I randomly interviewed people on intervention sites within the ViC to understand how they participated in the process, if at all. Some of the interviewees overlapped with the participants in the first phase.

In the third phase of fieldwork, I returned to Shenzhen after the UABB was over. I first returned to the site and interviewed 20 occupants (including 5 participants who overlapped with those who participated in the first phase). I designed interviews to understand occupants' evaluations of intervention projects concerning their living and working experiences. Also, I

observed incoming real-estate developers in the ViC. Interviews with these developers offered a different perspective on the operations of redeveloping ViCs. During this time, I did archival research in Shenzhen's newly opened archives. In celebrating the SEZ's 40th anniversary, Shenzhen's local archive museum was first open for public access. I came across a set of materials from the early 1980s, including official reports of study trips to Hong Kong, statistic books of village economies, the atlas of village planning. These sources allowed for new interpretations of 1) the relationship between Shenzhen and Hong Kong beyond their economic connections and 2) the relationship between villages and the city beyond their separation.

Sources obtained from archival research and stories gained through ethnographic research are complementary to each other. Whereas the archival resources tended to show narratives and plans from a top-down perspective, ethnographic observations and interviews in curatorial offices and the ViC provided grounded stories from generative interactions among various global and local actors. This combination allowed me to develop a more holistic understanding of Shenzhen urbanism.

Road Map

The dissertation comprises three parts, each part focusing on the role of a prominent actor in engaging with national frameworks and global forces shaping Shenzhen's urbanism. The first part focused on the role of urban planners, who always represent the state, in a shifting state regime, from socialist top-down planning to a market-oriented economy, allowing those rural villages to transform into small-scale manufacturing investment sites and hyperdense urban enclaves housing millions of migrant workers. Chapter 2, "**Ideology**," historicizes the Chinese planning ideology that reshaped the rural-urban relations by reviewing a set of central planning ideas and practices under historic Confucian ideologies and Communist ideologies. I show that

rural villages and urban neighborhoods evolved from an enduring spatial form of habitation designed based on Confucian principles, allowing villages to incorporate into the current urban fabric. However, a set of socialist planning ideas and policies implemented in the 1950s aimed to control city size and perpetuate villages for self-contained production units (equal to urban work units). The socialization preserved land resources and created grassroots organizations in rural villages, which empowered villagers to navigate urbanization in the 1980s.

Chapter 3, “**Strategy**,” traces Shenzhen SEZ’s industrialization and urbanization processes in the reform era. In particular, this chapter charts the shifting relationship between the municipal government and local villagers in the two stages of ViC-based capitalist production: the localized industrialization in the 1980s and the building boom of housing in the 1990s. It highlights the local villagers’ proactive role in the land economy and constant land “battles” between the local government and peasant-landlords of ViCs. It also shows that the government did not lose control over ViCs but took a strategic step back in allowing peasant-landlords to build cheap factories for foreign investors as well as housing units for lower-strata migrant workers. This outcome was in line with Deng Xiaoping’s broad economic development goal in establishing Shenzhen as a special economic zone. In the process, I identify a shift from a more cooperative to a more contentious relationship between the local government and peasant-landlords of ViCs.

The second part, consisting of Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, examines the role of architects who have emerged as increasingly important actors in achieving Shenzhen’s new goal of building modern and innovative cities. Chapter 4, “**Agency**,” examines how local architects expand their urban agency through curating large-scale urban projects or events, in this case, through the Shenzhen/Hong-Kong Bi-city Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture (UABB). By

tracking the negotiation processes among architect-curators and various local actors, I show that, by partnering with the local government, the local architect-curators have built up their capacity to overcome administrative barriers, reshape urban narratives, and direct real-estate market forces. Meanwhile, global architects have turned creative power into political and market power through their partnerships with local architects.

Chapter 5, “**Project**,” examines architects’ role as practitioners in a global context and focuses on the negotiation processes and power relations between international architects and local occupants. By participating in and closely observing an intervention project’s negotiation and implementation processes within the ViC, I show that, despite the claimed investment in community participation, architects’ pursuits of visual representations and symbolic values often took precedence over local contractors and construction workers’ working experiences. Whereas globalization allows architects to promote the value of the ViC as the manifestation of urban heterogeneity, lacking sufficient understanding of local culture and politics, the values and actions of these global actors may only speed up the homogenization processes.

The third part, Chapter 6, “**Identity**,” moves away from institutions and figures with top-down power and focuses on bottom-up spatial practices and spatial experiences by looking at people’s perception, movement, and construction of place identity on the ground. Engaging with recent discussions on citizenship, displacement, and trans-locality, it identifies the shifting social struggles around the ViC housing from the divide between rural and urban residents to the various gaps between local citizens and migrant workers. Based on ethnographic observations and interview data, this chapter shows different ways in which ViC occupants associate themselves to the place in the age of high geographic mobility and the transformed meaning of locality. I identify four prominent socio-spatial factors that help shape ViC occupants’ place

identities: 1) the walkable scale and defined boundaries, 2) the reserved traditional culture and available social capital, 3) the affordability and manageability of the living environment, and 4) the proximity to urban facilities and a possibility to stay in the city. It further analyzes ViC occupants' evaluations on the exhibition/intervention projects concerning the four aspects identified, revealing a gap between how architects projected ViC occupants' needs and the actual conditions in occupants' own words.

This alternative story of Shenzhen sheds light on a complex, evolving process in city-building, where bottom-up activities navigate, inform, and even change the local state's (municipality) broader top-down projects and policies. While we cannot imagine an entirely bottom-up approach in urban projects in the Chinese context, it is essential to acknowledge the bottom-up capabilities. Lessons from this study show that bottom-up creativity can inform and change top-down operations through negotiations; however, such places of possibilities are often marginalized and concealed. This dissertation adds to current debates in studies of globalization and urbanization by revealing local complexities.

Chapter 2 Ideology: Socializing Rural Villages for Cooperative Production



Figure 2-1. The “center” of the Luohu District in Shenzhen, 1980

(Photo by Leroy W. Demery, Jr.)

In 1980, right after China implemented the open-door policy, an American photographer Leroy W. Demery, Jr., recorded Shenzhen’s landscape and people’s life, through a bus tour traveling from Hong Kong to Shenzhen via the Luohu Port. As shown in Figure 2-1, the “busiest part” or “center” of the area identified by the photographer was a plaza with no motor vehicles (the bus on the left was their tour bus), where the only “transportation was by foot and

bicycle.”⁴⁵ The tallest structure seemed to be a three-story opera house located in an intersection space (like a square), where the propaganda poster stood (Figure 2-1). The poster read: “Sing for our great motherland” (*wèi wěidà zǔguó zòngqíng gēchàng*), which represented the typical style of socialist propaganda since the 1950s. Another photo further captured the quiet street life of a village-town near the Luohu Port; as the photographer recalled, “the loudest sounds were those made by bicycle bells” (Figure 2-2).⁴⁶ The two-story houses facing the street, with ground floors being used as shops, also reflected the long-lasting, typical design of a mixed-use house in Chinese townships and cities, in which the living space was walled-off and turned inward. In contrast, ground-floor spaces of production and sales were turned outward. Even today, these mixed-use houses and hybrid ways of living still exist but are concealed in “pocket” parcels in-between those hypermodern urban structures in Shenzhen. These hidden pocket places were also known as villages-in-the-city.



Figure 2-2. Street life in a village-town in Shenzhen, 1980

(Photo by Leroy W. Demery, Jr.)

⁴⁵ Leroy W. (Jr) Demery, “Visitors, Shenzhen, 1980,” Flickr, 2010, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lwdemery/3105424381/in/album-72157611154071370/>.

⁴⁶ Leroy W. (Jr) Demery, “Two-Wheel Transport, Shenzhen, 1980,” Flickr, 2010, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/lwdemery/3102211942/in/album-72157611154071370/>.

The familiar story of Shenzhen starts with how a small fishing village has turned into a metropolis. While this story was more symbolic than real, it does reflect a particular trajectory of urbanization in Shenzhen and many Chinese cities: the boom of manufacturing production that turned rural laborers into factory workers first took place in the many peri-urban (rural) villages in coastal cities. In the Chinese context, peri-urban villages were also “rural” villages. Despite their geographic location at the urban periphery, the dual administration system separated them from the city (often with walls) and categorized them as “rural” for an extended period in history. In contemporary Chinese cities, many of these villages still exist but are surrounded by super urban blocks and walled off as “city slums.” The phenomenon of “village in the city” ([ViC], *Cheng Zhong Cun*) in South China is one of them (Figure 2-3). Conventional wisdom attributes the emergence of ViCs to the unleashed market forces in real estate in the 1980s. The enduring effects of ViCs’ “rural” origins are often overlooked. In particular, China’s planning and design practices that tend to segregate the “rural” origins and conditions but not eliminate them are neglected. The emergence of ViCs in Shenzhen cannot be fully understood without investigating the effects of planning and design ideologies, from the long-last Confucianist space-design principles to the most recent socialist planning.



Figure 2-3. The main street within the Shuiwei Village in the central Futian District Shenzhen, 2016

(Photo by author).

Urbanization, beginning with industrializing rural villages on the urban periphery, was not a new story in the Chinese context; it resonated with Mao Zedong's strategy of "Encircling the Cities from the Countryside" when he led the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to establish the socialist regime. Through a series of land reform policies in the 1950s, most of China's rural areas were under government control. Even throughout the long history of feudalist China, despite the increasingly marginalized location of rural villages, the spatial organization principles endured and guided the design of ancient fortress cities and inner neighborhoods. Socialist planning in the 1950s further reorganized rural villages into agricultural production units, as equally important production sites to work units (*danwei*), which were compounds of housing, workplace, and social-service provision in urban areas. ViCs are variations or hybrid versions of rural villages and work units; they are contemporary compounds of living and production. But a ViC is neither rural nor urban; it sits amidst urban blocks while retaining rural organizational principles, blurring the spatial and conceptual boundaries between rural and urban.

ViCs represent the spatial effects of the persistent dual planning/governing system clashing with market forces after China's open-door policy in 1979. The global market or the shift of manufacturing industries to Asia and China's open-door policy together allowed Shenzhen to become a competitive site for international investments. Many studies have also highlighted the globalized system of production as the primary contributor to emerging urban forms in the Global South, including shantytowns in Latin America, *gecekondu* in Turkey, *bustees* in India, *kampung*s in Southeast Asia, and ViCs in South China.⁴⁷ While many of these "slums" located on the urban periphery emerged out of the control of local governments and planning regulations, this was seldom the case of the ViCs in South China. Nonetheless, the long-term effects of China's dual planning system and design practice on spatial forms have not been thoroughly studied.

Instead of viewing ViCs as products of globalized urbanization, this chapter takes a step back by suggesting that the formation of ViCs has its roots deeply in the Chinese planning and design culture. The Confucianist planning set up the fundamental spatial organization principles and dimensions that applied to both urban neighborhoods and rural villages, whereas socialist planning ideas between the 1950s and 1970s, influenced by modernist ideas in the West and socialist city-building principles from the Soviet Union, reorganized both urban neighborhoods and rural villages into production units. The intended perpetuation of villages as self-contained productive units, parallel to those work units in the city, laid a profound foundation for ViCs' existence and evolution. Through a retrospective study of planning ideas and neighborhood/village design in China, this chapter provides an alternative understanding of the

⁴⁷ Schmid et al., "Towards a New Vocabulary of Urbanisation Processes: A Comparative Approach"; Bruno De Meulder, Yanliu Lin, and Kelly Shannon, eds., *Village in the City* (Zürich: Park Books, 2014); Sassen, "Whose City Is It? Globalization and the Formation of New Claims."

neighborhood-village relationship in the Chinese context and hence the rural-urban relationship. In short, before the emergence of the housing market in China, gated work units (as urban neighborhoods) and walled-off peri-urban villages were essentially similar spatial units.

City-Building and Village/Neighborhood Design in Pre-modern China

Walled villages (*Cun Bao* 村堡) in South China, many of which developed into ViCs recently, were the prototypes of premodern Chinese cities and neighborhoods. Among Shenzhen's one thousand and eight hundred farming and fishing villages, many were built by settler-soldiers who marched from Central China (northern provincial areas where the ancient state power emerged) to South China (basically the Pearl Region Delta) for coastal defense.⁴⁸ Shenzhen's villages were originally settler/migrant villages even one thousand years ago, and their built forms resembled those fortress cities combining purposes of defense and dwelling. Shenzhen identified its earliest walled village as the Nantou Village, first built as a fortress in Jin Dynasty (331-420 AD).⁴⁹ In the Song Dynasty (1127-1276 AD), stationed troops and their descendants built a few villages.⁵⁰ The last but also largest migration in premodern China was in Qing Dynasty (1636-1840 AD) when peasants (instead of soldiers) from neighboring provincial areas moved to Shenzhen to cultivate the "wildland."⁵¹ That was when agricultural production became one of the main purposes (in addition to defense and settlement) for Shenzhen villages. The long history of the area as a defense zone guarding the south coasts made Shenzhen's

⁴⁸ "Shā Tóu Zhī Gēn 沙头之根 [The Root of Shatou Villages]" (Shenzhen, 2014); Peimao Cau, ed., *Shēnzhèn Shì Dì míng Zhì 深圳市地名志 [Shenzhen Geographical History]* (Guangzhou: Popular Science Press Guangzhou Branch, 1987); Limin Zhang and Rongyuan Zhu, "Diàochá, Tòushì, Chōnggòu (Investigation, Observation, Reconstruction)" (Shenzhen, 2006).

⁴⁹ Baoming Zhou and Yang Wu, *Shēnzhèn Nán Tóu Gǔchéng Lìshǐ Yǔ Wénwù 深圳南头古城历史与文物 [History and Artifacts of Nantou Ancient City, Shenzhen]* (Wuhan: Hubei People's Press, 2007).

⁵⁰ "Shā Tóu Zhī Gēn 沙头之根 [The Root of Shatou Villages]."

⁵¹ "Shā Tóu Zhī Gēn 沙头之根 [The Root of Shatou Villages]."

villages more regulated and uniform than organically evolved agricultural villages in central areas.

Now Shenzhen's villages have evolved into hyperdense ViCs, driven by the rapid urbanization over the past four decades and the large-scale rural-to-urban labor migration. However, the built forms of Shenzhen's ViCs are not merely the results of recent urbanization forces; they have origins rooted in the long history of building walled cities and villages with combined purposes of defense, settlement, and production in coastal areas.⁵² Through multiple central-to-coastal migrations of armies, the army-settlers built fortified towns and villages by adopting the basic principles of the spatial organization established in central areas. Preceding Shenzhen's urbanization, these walled migrant villages and fortified towns scattered across the region and set the basic city fabric.

Prototyping human settlement at different scales. Walled villages were scaled-up courtyard dwellings, precedents of fortress cities and urban gated communities in ancient China. The same principles of spatial organizations applied to all different scales of human inhabitation. These fundamental rules derived from the Confucian system of rituals (*Li Zhi*), in the combination of feng-shui principles, reflected in the spatial organization, were hierarchy, unitarity, and control, down to each room or space's restrictively regulated dimension, orientation, and opening.

The earliest record of city planning in Chinese history is known as *Kao Gong Ji*.⁵³ *Kao Gong Ji* described the planning principles of the capital city of Zhou Dynasty (510-314 BC) as such:

⁵² Honglei Liao, Huangyou He, and Qun Li, "Shenzhen Old Town," *Architectural Worlds*, no. 01 (2013): 18–20.

⁵³ See *Kao Gong Ji*, also known as *Record of Trades, Records of Examination of Craftsman, or Book of Diverse Crafts*, was part of *Li Zhi*, which was compiled and advocated by Confucius and his students as the fundamental rules to form a stable society. City planning principles in *Kao Gong Ji* were strictly regulated by the *Li Zhi*, a set of social norms to regulate an individual's

Only the emperor could build a city. The shape of the city should be square. Each side of the square city should be nine li (approximately 1,500 feet)⁵⁴ with three gates. Within the square walled-off city, there should be nine south-north avenues and nine east-west avenues. Each lane will allow nine horse-pulled carts to run side by side. In the middle of the square city was the imperial city. [From the imperial city looking south,] the left side should be ancestral halls, temples, and shrines, while the right side should be altars for harvests and the state. Courts should be in the south (the front) to the palace, and markets should be back against the palace in the north. (*The History of Chinese Cities*, 8)

(惟王建国,方九里,旁三门,国中九经九纬,经涂九轨,左祖右社,前朝后市。)

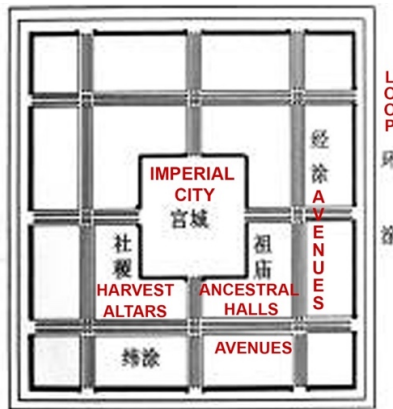


Figure 2-4. An ideal city model based on *Kao Gong Ji*

(Reproduced from *The History of Chinese Cities* [Zhongguo chengshi jianshe shi], Tong University's Teaching and Research Office, 8)

In the following two thousand years of city-building practices in feudalist China, the city model's essential elements, including the solid encircling walls, gridiron layout, north-south orientation, axial and symmetrical arrangement, and strictly regulated size, remained as the most fundamental principles (Figure 2-4).⁵⁵ The plan of Chang'an, the capital city of the Tang

relationship with other people, everything else in nature, and even ghosts and spirits. The quote in *Zhongguo chengshi jianshe shi* (*The history of Chinese cities*), by Tongji University's Teaching and Research Office, translated by the author.

⁵⁴ *Li* 里 was a basic unit of linear measure in ancient China. One *li* was 600 strides, approximately 1,500 feet. Nine *li* equals 2.56 miles.

⁵⁵ Xiaoxie Zheng, "The Integrity of the Pattern of Chinese Historic Cities Based on Ceremonial Rites and Regulations," *Urban and Rural Development* 1 (2004): 49–50.

Dynasty (618-907 AD), was a scaled-up model adopting these principles, with the imperial city sitting at the north and three guarded gates on each of the south, east, and west side (Figure 2-5). The squares located south of the imperial city were major residential units within the walled capital city and also the secondary level of urban governance. The primary urban residential unit was called *lifang*, a name signifying the size (one *li* of each side) and the shape (square). As a scale-down walled city, each *lifang* had only one gate on each side and comprised 16 neighborhoods (Figure 2-6). Within each neighborhood, there were 4-6 courtyard dwellings, as further scaled-down walled-off squares. One *lifang* comprised 100 dwellings.

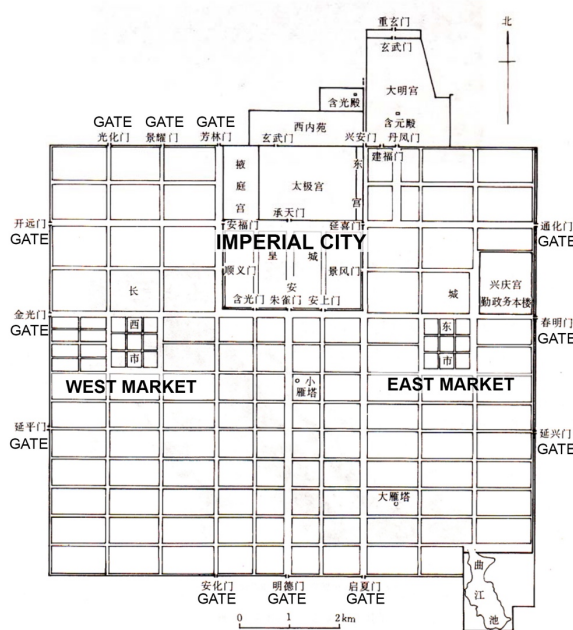


Figure 2-5. A recovered plan of Chang'an

(Map by Yeju He, *History of Ancient Chinese Urban Planning* [Beijing: China Architecture & Building Press, 1996])



Figure 2-6. A diagram of *lifang*'s layout in Chang'an

(Diagram by Caiqiang Wu, *Digital Reconstruction of Chang'an in Tang Dynasty* [Beijing: China Architecture & Building Press, 2006])

The encircling walls of *lifang* were removed in Song Dynasty (1127-1276 AD) to allow commercial activities on streets; the *lifang* system was converted into the *fangxiang* system (an open street system) (Figure 2-7). Within an area similar to a *lifang*, six streets (*xiang*, also known as *hutong*) running from north to south divided the area into six neighborhoods, comprising 6-12

courtyard dwellings of different sizes, as shown in the map. Shops and sales would gather at each entrance of the north-south street, within walking distance.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, courtyard dwellings remained walled-off, and their main entrance was not facing the city street where small businesses were located but the quieter north-south street. Although these courtyard dwellings were much smaller in scale, their spatial forms represented the same hierarchical, unitary, controlling principles. A typical Beijing courtyard house (*Siheyuan*) was such an example, with solid walls segregating inward living spaces from streets, including all rooms, corridors, and yards; within the courtyard house, each room and yard had their own positions and levels of privacy, based on the kinship structure within the family (for instance, the eldest family member's room was usually the central hall located deep at the north) (Figure 2-8). Similar types of inward-facing courtyard dwellings existed in South China, known as the three-room-two-yard (corridor) dwelling; the dwellings were scalable (Figure 2-9).⁵⁷ Although wealthier families could scale up the residence to ten to twenty rooms, a uniform set of measurement units and organizational principles existed, contributing to a unitary spatial scale in both cities and the countryside.

⁵⁶ Miao Xu and Zhen Yang, "Design History of China's Gated Cities and Neighbourhoods: Prototype and Evolution," *Urban Design International* 14, no. 2 (2009): 99–117, <https://doi.org/10.1057/udi.2009.12>.

⁵⁷ Yuanding Lu, Xiuzhi Ma, and Qisheng Deng, *Guāngdōng Mǐnjū [Local Dwelling in Guangdong]* (Beijing: China Architecture & Building Press, 1990).

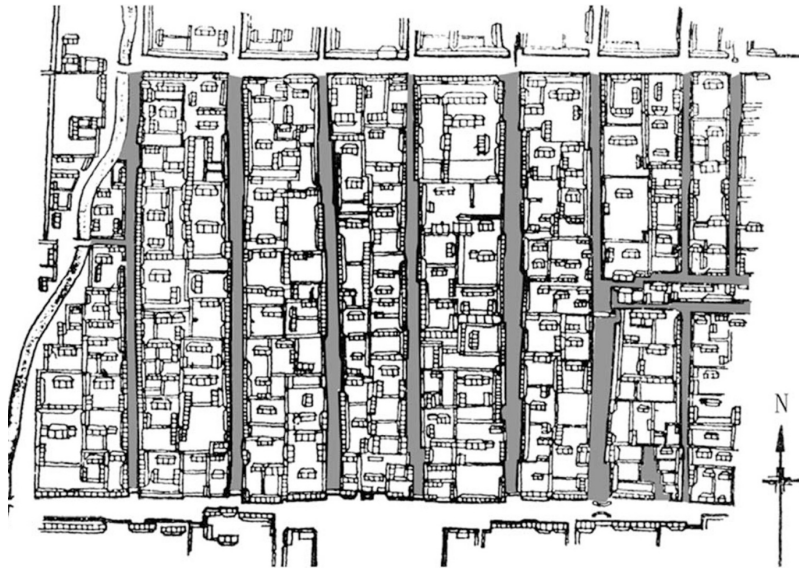


Figure 2-7. A recovered map of lixiang's layout in Song Dynasty

(Reproduced by Miao Xu and Zhen Yang, "Design History of China's Gated Cities and Neighbourhoods: Prototype and Evolution," *Urban Design International* 14, no. 2 (2009), Fig. 2)

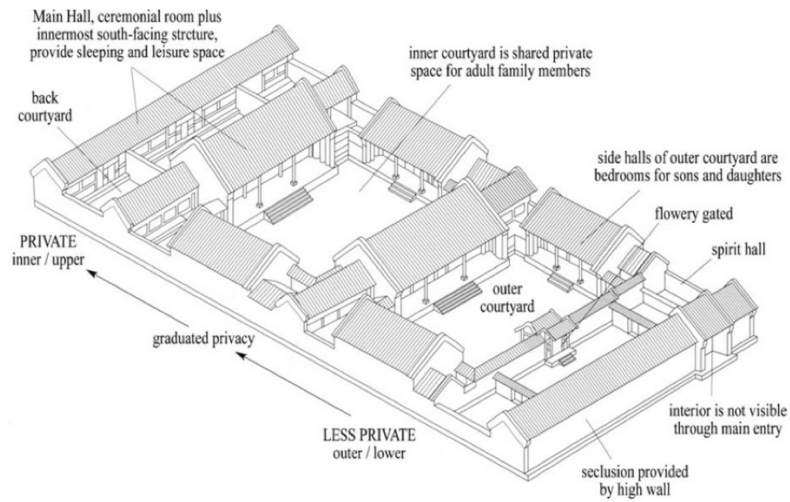


Figure 2-8. A model of a typical courtyard dwelling (Siheyuan) in Central China

(Reproduced by Miao Xu and Zhen Yang, "Design History of China's Gated Cities and Neighbourhoods: Prototype and Evolution," *Urban Design International* 14, no. 2 (2009), Fig. 12)

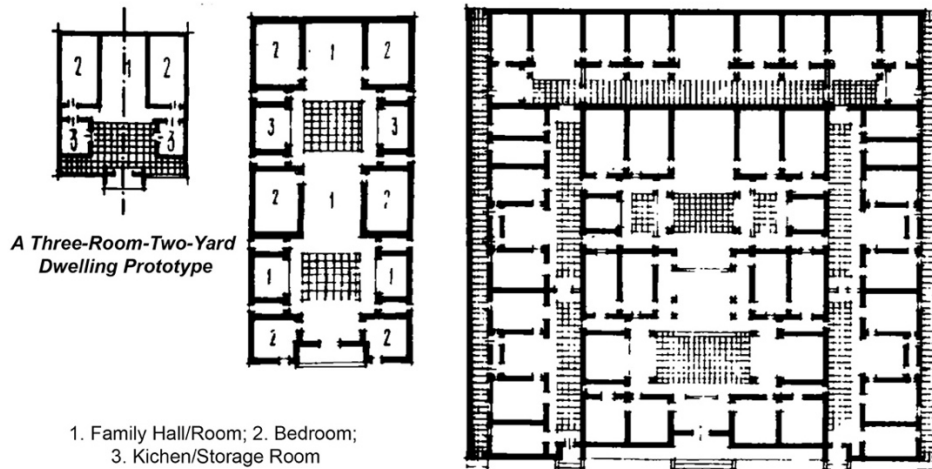


Figure 2-9. Dwelling prototype and variations in Guangdong Province

(Drawings from Yuanding Lu, Xiuzhi Ma, and Qisheng Deng, *Local Dwelling in Guangdong* [Beijing: China Architecture & Building Press], 1990.)

Whereas the open *fangxiang* (or *hutong*) system replaced the walled-off *lifang* in many historical cities, the rural counterpart of the walled-off *lifang* nonetheless still existed. In South China, those fortified towns and old villages built by descendants of armies or north-to-south peasant-migrants retained the fundamental organizational principles and spatial elements of the walled-off *lifang*. Shenzhen had long been a “wildland” area covered by a few fortified towns, migrant villages, and mountains until 1980; since then, the zone area had experienced unprecedented urban development, which engulfed those fortified towns and walled-off villages in urban structures. The Nantou ViC in Nanshan District, which is 9 miles west of the city center (the Citizen Square), was a fortified town first built in the Jin Dynasty (331-420 AD) for coast defense (Figure 2-10). The size of the fortified town was similar to one *lifang* (Figure 2-6), and its layout presented a combined system of the enclosed walls and gated street system of *lixiang* (Figure 2-7). An obvious difference was that courtyard dwellings were facing the street instead of facing south along the two main streets. Like those mixed-use houses (shown in Figure 2-2), occupants used these dwellings’ ground floors for artisanal shops or small sales.

Another old site of a walled neighborhood/village, Yuanxun Old Site, located in Sungang Village (4 miles east of the central Citizen Square), was built in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 AD) by ancestors of an army general called He Zhen (Figure 2-11).⁵⁸ This walled village's size was equivalent to a subdivided resident unit (approximately one-sixteenth) of a *lifang*. The arrangement of dwellings/rooms also resembled the arrangement of a walled city neighborhood or fortified town. Likewise, the old village site of the Shazui village in the Futian District, 2 miles southwest of the central Citizen Square, was comprising three rectangular-shaped units of dwellings organized in a matrix (Figure 2-12).⁵⁹ Such a gridiron layout of village and town dwellings had not changed much over time within the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone area. Just as the two-story townhouses (captured by Figure 2-2) in 1980, the size of village or town dwelling units, especially the width of main rooms, remained unchanged over time, despite that the floor number was increasing.

While many studies have seen Shenzhen's villages-in-the-city as products of the recent rural-to-urban labor immigration driven by the rapid urbanization, this retrospective investigation revealed that the enclosed walls, gridiron layouts, hierarchical streets, and unitary sizes of building units of ViCs resembled the forms of premodern walled cities and gated neighborhoods (*lifang*) in China. Even though the market reform and establishment of Shenzhen SEZ provoked a building boom in these villages, where villagers rebuilt their traditional houses to construct up to nine stories of rental housing apartments, the ground-level spatial arrangement remained unchanged (Figure 2-13). Villagers built each multi-story apartment on the same lot of the old courtyard dwelling or a new allocated lot of the same size. The scale of spaces remained

⁵⁸ Yibing Zhang, *Shenzhen Fengwu Zhi Chuantong Jianzhu Juan (The Annals of Shenzhen: The Architecture Volume)* (Shenzhen: Haitian Publishing House, 2016).

⁵⁹ “Shā Tóu Zhī Gēn 沙头之根 [The Root of Shatou Villages].”

unchanged within these villages. Nonetheless, what made the spatial experience unusual was the disproportional height of each building.

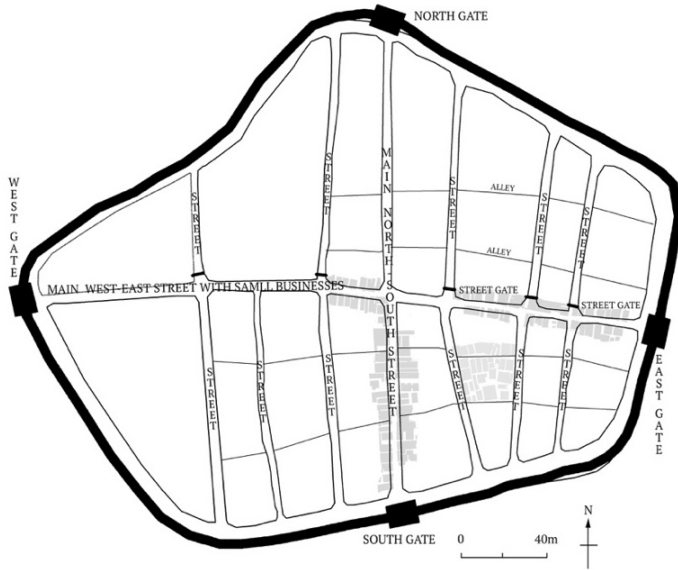


Figure 2-10. A diagrammatic site plan of the Nantou fortified city (now Nantou Town/Village) in Shenzhen

(Drawing by the author, materials from the Nantou Museum)

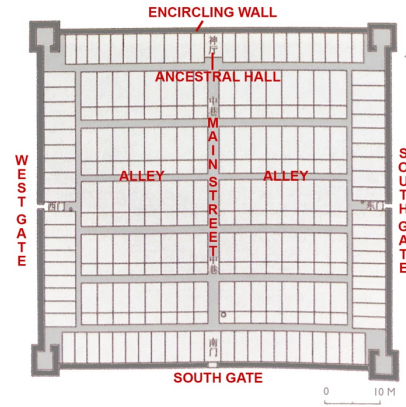


Figure 2-11. A diagrammatic plan of the Yuanxun walled village/neighborhood in Sungang Village in Shenzhen

(Diagram by Yibing Zhang, *The Annals of Shenzhen: The Architecture Volume* [Shenzhen: Haitian Publishing House, 2016], preface)

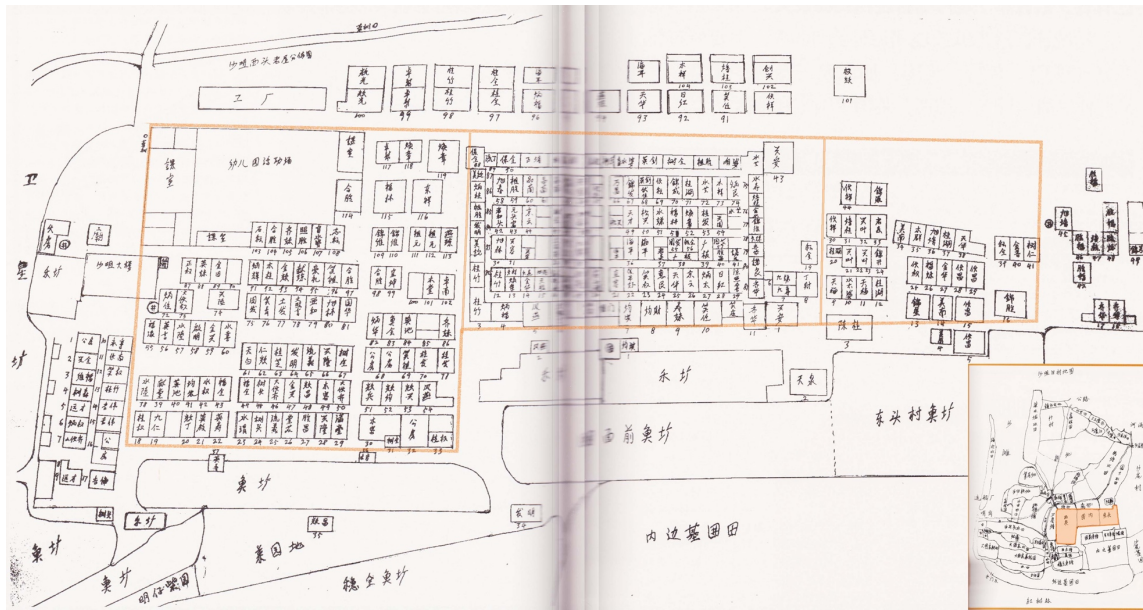


Figure 2-12. A hand-drawn layout of dwellings in the Shazui old village site, marked with its original boundaries

(Drawing by Ou Bingquan, *The Root of Shatou Villages* [Shenzhen, 2014], 111-113)



Figure 2-13. An aerial view of Shuiwei Village in the Futian District, Shenzhen 2016

(Photo by author)

Reinforced social principles and repressed economic activities. Beyond the replications of long-lasting spatial organization rules, villages reproduced and even reinforced nonequivalent and ranked social doctrines, which later integrated into the socialist agricultural production cooperatives in the 1950s. The mixture of guiding principles generated strong and united forces within villages as alternatives to the state-led market forces, contributing to the village-in-the-city formation and reshaping the urbanization processes (these will be discussed later). The well-known Chinese anthropologist and sociologist Fei Hsiao-Tung named such a

popularized social structure that developed from the Confucian rules of governance as *chaxu geju*, which an American sociologist, Gary G. Hamilton, once translated as “the differential mode of association,” in contrast to the Western society’s “organizational mode of association.”⁶⁰ In Fei’s analogy, he used “ripples radiating out from where a rock landed in a pond of water” to express the nonequivalent and ranked categories of social relationships in Chinese societies.⁶¹ Each individual was at the center of his or her own specific “ripples;” the closest “ripple” was family, and further ripples were relatives, neighbors, classmates, fellow townsmen, colleagues, and so on. One’s position in the ripple-like network determined their obligation to someone else. The social model of “the differential mode of association” had not disappeared with eradicating China’s feudalist system. Fei conducted his fieldwork between the 1930s and 1950s, where he observed the active and effective social structure based on ripple-like kinship networks in villages and towns.⁶² That led him to make the famous claim: Chinese society was fundamentally rural, where the majority’s economic life remained tied to land tenure.⁶³ That mode of economic production and social relation has not disappeared even today.

The villages in the city are spatial expressions of the clashes between that lingering land-tenure economic relations and emerging market principles. Western experiences revealed that the rise of the merchant class and their growing economic power over guilds made medieval towns’ transition to modern industrial cities possible.⁶⁴ In the same period, Chinese cities remained predominantly as administrative centers of the feudal system, where landlords and emperors

⁶⁰ Hsiao Tung Fei, Gary G. Hamilton, and Wang Zheng, *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1992).

⁶¹ Fei, Hamilton, and Zheng.

⁶² Hsiao Tung Fei, *Peasant Life in China, Nature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1962), <https://doi.org/10.1038/144267a0>.

⁶³ Fei, 1-2.

⁶⁴ Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins and Transformations, and Its Prospects* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961).

dwelled and controlled the agricultural production and trade. In the early nineteenth century, the industrial revolution in England launched by merchants quickly absorbed traditional family-based workshops into factory-based mass production. The extensive use of machinery in the replacement of human hands in production divided human laborers into specialized sectors. The pursuits of efficiency led to the massive construction of railways, ring roads, and separate zones.⁶⁵ The rising power of the merchants and later industrialists radically changed the spatial order, which used to be controlled by urban aristocracies in the medieval age; however, similar industrialization processes and urbanization had not substantially taken place in China until the recent four decades.

In the Chinese context, the development of artisanal workshops and small businesses had once resulted in the removal of the solid walls around the neighborhoods (*lifang*) and the formation of more open street systems (*lixiang*) as early as in the thirteenth century (in Song Dynasty, 1127-1276 AD). However, the nature of the city as an administrative center or defensive fortress, instead of a productive or commercial center, had not changed much in the following centuries. Although the merchant class increasingly became the prime agents of trade, they nonetheless never acquired substantial economic power to make radical changes to the feudal system.⁶⁶ Under the Confucianist ideology, monarchs and officials had long considered merchants as uncontrollable forces and threats to the monarchy and the hierarchical social principles; folk culture also ranked merchants' social status as the lowest among the nine-tier occupation system (*Shang Jiu Liu, or San Jiao Jiu Liu*).⁶⁷ The rings of city walls, controlled sizes of squares, and rigid positioning of shrines (on the left), altars for harvests (on the right), courts

⁶⁵ Engels, "The Condition of the Working Class in England."

⁶⁶ Christopher Mills Isett, *State, Peasant, and Merchant in Qing Manchuria, 1644-1862* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2007), 15.

⁶⁷ The nine-tier social status based on occupation in ancient China was commonly sequenced as such: emperors, sages, officials, doctors/diviners, monks/Taoist priests, warriors, peasants, artisans, and merchants.

(at the front), and markets (at the back) expressed the worship of agriculture and the depreciation of commerce. Although there existed pragmatic needs for economic development, the repression of the merchant class and commercial activities never ended under the Confucianist monarchy.

In addition, as Christopher Mills Isett, an economic historian, cautioned out, merchants were “incapable of propelling improvements in either agriculture or manufacturing” in eighteenth-century China.⁶⁸ At that time, the Qing-Dynasty China suffered from stagnant agricultural techniques and shrinking farm sizes, which left the merchant class highly reliant on peasants’ desire to exchange goods.⁶⁹ While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to speculate on why technological innovations and economic growth failed in agricultural production, it is crucial to note the fundamental social conditions in late nineteenth-century China. That was peasants remaining as the mass of productive forces whereas monarch-landlords remained the dominant class controlling the productive means and trade of agricultural products.

The land remained as the only secured property and most valuable resource in Chinese societies until today. Long tied to land tenure, peasants fought for land tenure through their multiple uprisings and reestablishments of feudal dynasties. Throughout the twentieth century, social revolutions led by intellectuals also made land-reform one of their main goals. In 1905, Sun Yat-Sen’s proposed the “equalization of land rights” (*píngjūn dì quán*), which adopted ideas from German and American economists and attempted to use the land value taxation system to relieve the burden of peasants who rent farmland from landlords. However, colonial invasions and civil wars disrupted the implementation of Sun’s ideas in mainland China. After 1949, Mao Zedong led the Land Reform Movement (*tǔgǎi*), which aimed to eliminate the class of “landlords” and redistribute land to peasants. The Land Reform Movement initiated a series of

⁶⁸ Isett, 16.

⁶⁹ Isett, 16.

movements and operations in the 1950s, resulting in the reorganization of peasants into collectives (agricultural production cooperatives) and villages' transformation into self-contained productive units (people's communes). By discouraging peasants from coming to the city, these movements and operations further reinforced peasants' ties to the land. With the intended perpetuation of villages, traditional ripple-like kinship networks also endured in the formed village collectives (these will be focused on later).⁷⁰ Peasants' fundamental social roles and their persistent dependence on land have set up preconditions for villages' survival in the rapid urbanization.

Sporadic Urbanization, 1840-1948

Despite some colonial and domestic attempts to build railways, factories, and specialized markets in Chinese cities in the nineteenth century, the quantity and scale of these projects were limited. Most Chinese cities had remained the same size within ring walls and relied on agricultural production from the countryside. The "Map of the Waterways on Guangdong Province" (*Guǎngdōng tōng shěng shuǐdào tú*) made by the state between 1812 and 1816 recorded the landscape of the entire Guangdong Province in great details, including cities, towns, villages, islands, mountains, and all kinds of channels that connected them (Figure 2-14). As Figure 2-14 shows, the port city Guangzhou (also *Canton*) in Guangdong Province, first built in Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD), remained walled off from surrounding villages in the nineteenth century. Right outside of the walled city were zones (where the city street system extended) exclusively reserved for temples and ancestral shrines (Figure 2-14). In another map made by an American British Customs official, Hosea Ballou Morse, in 1910, the ring walls seemed unchanged as well as the inner street system; however, in those zones outside of the walled city,

⁷⁰ Fei, *Peasant Life in China*.

there appeared “foreign factories” (marked as “2”) next to the “custom house” (marked as “1”) at the southwest corner (Figure 2-15). There was a tendency of urban expansion to the west, outside of the walled city; however, the urban expansion remained very limited over the nineteenth century.



Figure 2-14. Map of the Guangzhou City, 1812-1816

(Map by Arthur W. Hummel, “*Map of the Waterways in Guangdong Province*,” [*Guangdong Tong Sheng Shui Dao Tu*], The Congress Library from the Congress Library)

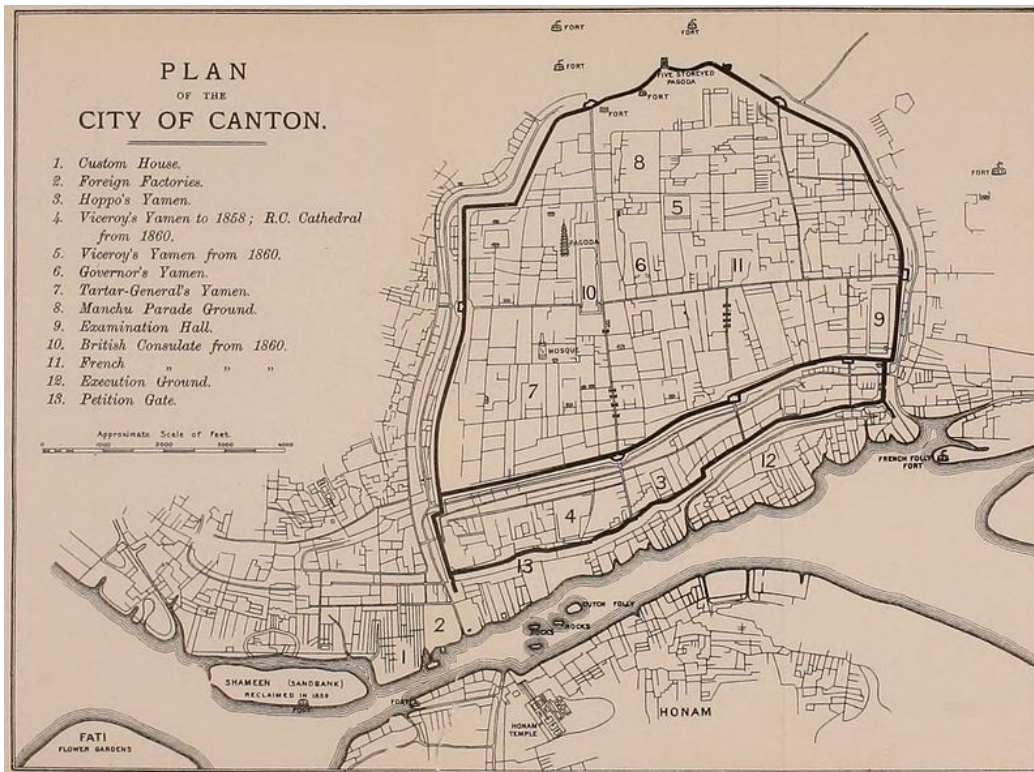


Figure 2-15. Map of the Canton city, 1910

(Map by Hosea Ballou Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire*. Volume 1: 118.)

The area of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone and Hong Kong used to be under the jurisdiction of *Xin'an* county (on the site of the current Nantou Village). As indicated in the same “Map of the Waterways on Guangdong Province,” the *Xin'an* fortress city was the highest level of government in the area in the nineteenth century, only subordinate to the capital city of Guangzhou (Figure 2-16). Outside of the fortress city, the area was almost barren, with a few towns or villages surrounding it; the city itself nonetheless was built based on traditional principles, including a moat, a ring of walls, four gates, shrines, altars for harvests, courts, and martial fields, positioned within the gridiron street systems (Figure 2-17). Throughout the nineteenth century, the capital city Guangzhou experienced a certain (though limited) level of urbanization through colonial and domestic attempts to build factories, which resulted in an urban expansion from the city outward to the countryside; by contrast, the *Xin'an* County

remained massively unurbanized in the Shenzhen area, when the Qing government ceded the Hong Kong area to England after losing the Opium War in 1841. The Xin'an fortress city's unurbanized conditions, being surrounded by the farmland, mountains, and villages, made it fit for the socialist imagination of a self-contained production unit in the 1950s. During the Land Reform Movement between 1949 and 1953, original landlords were either made proletarian-peasants or fled to Hong Kong, and the fortress city became a commune of agricultural production cooperatives. Now, it is one of Shenzhen's villages-in-the-city (Figure 2-18).



Figure 2-16. Map of the Xin'an City, 1812-1816

(Map by Arthur W. Hummel, "Map of the Waterways in Guangdong Province," [*Guangdong Tong Sheng Shui Dao Tu*], The Congress Library)

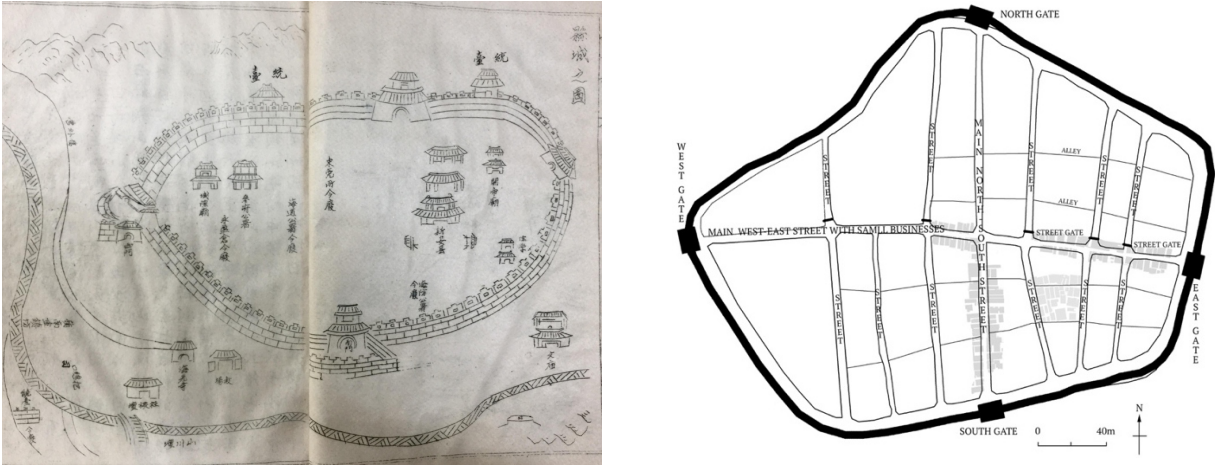


Figure 2-17. *Left*, the 1688 Map of the Xin'an City/County in The Annals of Xin'an County; *right*, a diagrammatic site plan of the Xin'an City (now Nantou Town/Village) in Shenzhen

(Reprinted by Zhongshan Library in Guangdong Province in 1962, 11-12; drawing by the author)



Figure 2-18. The current map of the Nantou Village, built on the site remnants of the Xin'an Fort City

(Reproduced by author, original map from Google Maps)

The Xin'an fortress city served as an example demonstrating that cities, towns, and villages could eventually become "villages-in-the-city." In premodern China, what differentiated these different types of settlement was the level of government, not a particular organization of

space or a certain way of life. First of all, the same set of organizational principles under the Confucian ideology strictly regulated the layout, orientation, and dimension of spatial units within each settlement place (including towns, neighborhoods, and dwellings); the number of duplicated lower-level units determined the scale of each unit. Secondly, as reflected in every inward-facing walled-off spatial units, the ripple-like kinship system extended from family relations to larger social relations. Thirdly, the repressed commercial activities and merchant class hindered the urbanization in the nineteenth century and allowed such spatial forms and social ties to persist. In the past, these spatial and social conditions were inscribed into Shenzhen's current cityscape, through "villages-in-the-city."

Urbanism Under Socialism, 1949-1978

The proletarianization of mass peasants and the communization of villages and towns in the 1950s redefined territories and boundaries between cities, towns, and villages. After the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Mao Zedong directed and implemented a set of planning ideas, with the ambition to remove the long-existing Confucian planning principles and to differentiate from Western urban experiences. In the narratives of Mao and his leftist supporters in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), cities designed in premodern China under Confucian ideologies were expressions of feudalism, whereas large cities in modern Western experiences were manifestations of capitalism and consumerism. These were the main "enemies" of the communist ideology. In Mao's speech "On the Ten Relationships" in 1956, he saw the city and the countryside as equivalent sites of production, one as the major site for industrial production while the other as the major site for agricultural production.⁷¹ Mao implemented a set of planning atlases and policies between the 1950s and 1970s to perpetuate

⁷¹ Zedong Mao, "On the Ten Major Relationships (Lun Shi Da Guan Xi)" (Beijing, 1956).

rural villages and hold the rural population as the proletarian labor in the countryside. The purposes were to prevent existing cities from sprawling and reserve the countryside for agricultural production. The socialized rural villages in the 1950s became favorable sites for implementing a three-way partnership among the local (municipal) government, village collectives, and foreign investors after the economic reform in the 1980s, predominantly coastal areas. Many of these perpetuated rural villages evolved into villages-in-the-city.

Socializing the countryside. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) established the socialist regime first in the countryside and earned support from the mass peasants during the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949). Mao's strategy was widely known as "encircling the cities from the countryside" (or *nóngcūn bāowéi chéngshì daolu*). While cities were largely under the control of the Chinese Nationalist Party (*Kuomintang*), the CCP initiated the revolution in the countryside and mobilized peasants as major supportive social forces. When CCP took control over rural areas, they began to nationalize privately owned land and redistribute land and properties to peasants through the Land Reform Movement. In the 1950s and 1960s, to eliminate the former landlord class, the state appropriated all private properties and then converted them into two types of ownership, the state ownership in urban areas and the collective ownership in non-urban areas. In villages, towns, and even old cities outside of the redefined urban areas, individual houses, homesteads, farmland, and all types of possessions became a collective asset and redistributed to peasants.

During the Land Reform Movement, each peasant family would get a certain amount of some farmland for agricultural production and homestead for living, based on the number of family members. In 1952, the Guangdong provincial government issued an ownership certificate to each peasant household, documenting the location, size, and boundaries of the allocated

farmland, homestead, and houses (Figure 2-19). As the family's size grew, the household could apply to the village committee for a larger area of farmland or additional homestead freely. Descriptions of extended properties would be added to the old certificate and sealed by the official stamp, as shown in the stub of the Huang family's certificate (Figure 2-19, *right*). As shown in a standard "Stub of Land and Property Ownership Certificate" (*tǔdì cáichǎn suǒyǒu zhèng cúnghēn*), basic household information was on the right, including the registration of each family member and a summary of the household's entire properties, while detailed information of allocated land and properties was on the left (Table 2-1, English translation of the left certificate in Figure 2-19, reading from right to left). Without a map, all information, including the location, use, area, and boundaries, was all hand-written in text. Notably, neighbors' properties in four directions defined the boundaries of each piece of land or property relatively. As Table 2-1 shows, the certificate determined Zhao family's lot as east to Zhao neighbor's property, south to Mo neighbor's property, west to (another) Zhao neighbor's property, and north to an alley. Such a way of defining property boundaries by naming out neighbors in four directions might be unconcise if village dwellings scattered organically; however, for South China's walled traditional villages, the gridiron layout and strictly arrayed square-shaped courtyard houses made such seemingly unconcise documentation applicable (Figure 2-11; Figure 2-12).

Table 2-1 A title deed issued to a peasant family in Shixia Village (now within the Shenzhen SEZ) in Bao'an County in 1952

(Translated by the author, materials from Shenzhen Archive Library, 2019)

STUB OF LAND AND PROPERTY OWNERSHIP CERTIFICATE															
PROPERTY				LAND				BASIC INFORMATION							
	Shixia Village	Shixia Village	Location				Shixia Village	Location				Guangdong Province Bao'an County (including the Shenzhen SEZ) Land and Property Ownership Certificate 1952.10.15			
	Yard	House	Type				Farmland	Type				District No.			
	1	1	Quantity				East Mountain	Site				Second District			
	11 roof trusses	15 roof trusses	Measurement				Dou/Sheng	Measurement				Town Name			
	?	0.05	Area (mu)				0.59	Area (mu)				Xinsha Town			
East to	East to	East to	Boundaries	East to	East to	East to	East to	Boundaries	East to	East to	East to	Village Name			
South to	South to	South to		South to	South to	South to	South to		Pan (farmer)	South to	South to	South to	Shixia Village		
West to	West to	West to		West to	West to	West to	West to		Jian (farmer)	West to	West to	West to	Head of the Household		
North to	North to	North to		North to	North to	North to	North to		Jian (farmer)	North to	North to	North to	Zhao xx		
									Pan (farmer)	East to	East to	East to	Family Members		
									Jian (farmer)	South to	South to	South to	Name	Number	
									Pan (farmer)	West to	West to	West to	Huang xx	Male	
									Jian (farmer)	North to	North to	North to	Guo xx	1	
			Other Belongings				Pan (farmer)	East to	East to	East to	Zhao xx	Female			
							Pan (farmer)	South to	South to	South to		3			
							Pan (farmer)	West to	West to	West to	Land (total)				
							Pan (farmer)	North to	North to	North to	Non-Arable Land	Arable Land			
							Pan (farmer)	East to	East to	East to	Property (total)				
							Pan (farmer)	South to	South to	South to	Yard	House			
							Pan (farmer)	West to	West to	West to					
							Pan (farmer)	North to	North to	North to					

Nevertheless, such a non-fixed way of documenting property boundaries made territorial boundaries negotiable within villages and allowed peasants to redefine their territory during the building boom in the 1980s. Despite the development of cartographic mapping technologies, these ownership certificates issued in the 1950s remain the only official legal evidence for former peasants in Shenzhen's villages-in-the-city to claim their farmland and properties. During Shenzhen's rapid urban development between 1980 and 2000, both the local government and local peasants had disregarded these ownership certificates. While the government expropriated peasants' farmland with no clear compensation plans, peasants then expanded their own territories by trespassing on public territories (such as alleys, streets, and even the old encircling walls mentioned previously) and neighbors' properties, especially the unattended neighboring properties belonging to those who fled to Hong Kong or overseas in the late 1950s.⁷² At that time, the local government was also deficient in revenue and kept a blind eye to these building activities as a trade-off between the loss of farmland and village houses' expansion.

Until 2004, when the Shenzhen government initiated an urban renewal plan, these certificates became only officially accepted legal evidence of former peasants' property ownership. On the one hand, peasants used these certificates to reclaim compensations from the local government for their appropriated farmland in the 1980s. On the other hand, the local government refused to approve those self-help houses outside of the "boundaries" described in certificates. That means, if the government or developers demolished the ViC for redevelopment, peasants would not get compensation for those unapproved properties. However, because the property "boundaries" documented in these certificates were more descriptive than fixed,

⁷² In the late 1950s and 1960s, the Shenzhen area witnessed "the big escape" (*Da Tao Gang* 大逃港). Because of the socialist land reform movement, natural disasters, and later Cultural Revolution, many landlords and their ascendants ran to Hong Kong by swimming through the Shenzhen River.

defining original boundaries on the ground became quite difficult. The Land Reform Movement in the 1950s was cruel to previous landlords. Still, at a certain level, the redistributed properties with official certificates provided peasants legal foundations to combat the land encroachment in their own ways during the rapid urbanization in the 1980s.

Regulating the countryside. The countryside in China is not out of governance. The countryside was the essential site for the newly established socialist regime to implement collectivism in the 1950s.

The state owns land in urban areas; in non-urban areas, the peasant collective owns suburban and rural land, including all forms of agricultural production sites, homesteads, and mountain areas (except sites for special state use. (The Constitution of China)

In the countryside, peasants own the land collectively. The basic unit of that peasant collective is the “agricultural production cooperative,” a product of the “People’s Commune” movement Mao initiated in 1958. Even today, in Shenzhen’s ViCs, the agricultural production cooperative (consisting of 20 households on average) remains the essential peasant organization that manages the collective-owned properties. The heads of agricultural production cooperatives usually constitute the committee of a ViC’s joint-stock company, formed in the 1990s in dealing with the local government and developers in real-estate development. However, when talking about their social and economic life, ViC’s peasant-landlords associate themselves more with a particular agricultural production cooperative than a village-based company.

The “agricultural production cooperative” was an outcome of the CCP integrating the socialist governing system into the traditional ripple-like kinship-based social structure within villages. Following the Land Reform Movement, Mao envisioned a leap to a communist society and initiated two movements in 1958, the “Great Leap Forward” movement focusing on steel

production in urban areas and the “People’s Commune” movement focusing on grain production in rural areas. In the People’s Commune movement, the “agricultural production cooperative” replaced the traditional “village” as the lowest level of rural government. Each agricultural production cooperative included 10-20 rural households, based on their geographic locations, which often overlapped with original clans’ spatial distributions. A transitional village then would consist of approximately ten agricultural production cooperatives on average, based on its original size. The heads of these cooperatives were often the most influential figures within each original clan. They might not be CCP members but became the critical link that bridged the mass peasants and the state. The dual affiliation of these heads ensured the negotiation and implementation processes of government policies.

Above the agricultural production cooperative was the commune, as the highest level of government in rural areas. Between 1958 and 1978, a commune replaced a traditional town as a central marketplace for small sales, including both agricultural and small industrial (electric) products among several villages. Within each commune, peasants would not get paid but get vouchers for everything, including food, household supplies, tools, and other agricultural products, based on the quota of labor allocated to each household regardless of productivity. During the time of people’s commune, peasants became highly regulated and controlled laborers. A peasant-landlord in the Nantou ViC recalled her communal peasant life in an agricultural production cooperative in the 1960s. At that time, she had to get up at around 3 AM to reap chives and then joined other peasants in queues walking for 3 to 4 miles to the large farm site (Figure 2-20). The highly regulated activities and equalized allocation of vouchers in agricultural production cooperatives ended up with peasants’ losses of motivation, followed by decreased

agricultural productivity. In 1983, the government abolished most people's communes and replaced them with townships to promote economic development.



Figure 2-20. Peasants organized by agricultural production cooperatives walking to farmland in Shenzhen in the 1970s

(Photo from Chinese Photographers Association)

However, the effects of people's communes and agricultural production cooperatives last. Those collective sales and enterprises in people's communes have evolved into the current township and village enterprises (TEVs), which have become essential market players in the collective sector, complementary to the large state-owned enterprises in urban areas.⁷³ Furthermore, people's communes' key component, the agricultural production cooperative, remained active and even more potent than village-level administrations in making decisions and implementing policies. In South China, the ViC joint-stock companies made up of several agricultural production cooperatives are unique versions of the TEVs. Like TEVs, these joint-stock companies in ViCs were built upon collective properties, operated and managed by local actors. However, a significant difference is that those who manage TEVs are usually local authorities appointed by upper-level state authorities. In contrast, those who manage ViC joint-

⁷³ Yuen Yuen Ang, *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap, Governance*, 1st ed., vol. 30 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), 95, <https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12295>.

stock companies are heads of agricultural production cooperatives, often local influential clan leaders trusted and elected by peasants. Also, the stockholders of the company can only be the same ViC's original peasant households. In other words, compared to TEVs, smaller-scale ViC joint-stock companies are given a higher level of autonomy and remain largely in the hand of the peasant collective. The dual association of agricultural production cooperatives, as the lowest-level of the socialist government and also a continuation of traditional clan-based organization, created the hybrid conditions of ViCs in South China.

Implementing egalitarian urbanism. Industrialized ViCs in the 1980s were variations of the self-contained compounds envisioned by Mao in the 1950s. Mao initially envisioned people's communes as rural equivalents to work-unit compounds (*dānwèi*) that combined housing, workplace, and social services in urban areas. In his speech *On the Ten Major Relationships* in 1956, Mao denounced the Soviet Union's model of building large cities for heavy industry development, which resulted in extreme exploitation of peasants, shortages in life supplies, and unstable markets.⁷⁴ Mao's vision of ideal cities embraced a balance between agricultural and industrial production, light and heavy industries.⁷⁵ Such ideal cities were also productive units that maintained a balance of agricultural supplies and heavy and right industries, dispersed evenly around the central urban area.⁷⁶ For Mao, essential elements in an ideal socialist nation should be equivalent self-contained compounds for communal life: in cities, these were work units, while in the countryside, these were people's communes.

Mao turned his ideas into a set of planning diagrams and implemented them first in Beijing. A layout diagram called "decentralized clusters" (*fěnsàn jítuán shì*) grouped villages

⁷⁴ Mao, "On the Ten Major Relationships (Lun Shi Da Guan Xi)."

⁷⁵ Mao.

⁷⁶ Guangqi Dong, *Beijing Guihua Zhanlue Sikao (Reflection on the Strategic Planning of Beijing)* (Beijing: Zhongguo Jianzhu Gongye Chubanshe (China Architecture & Building Press), 1998), 331.

into clusters dispersed around the central urban area (Figure 2-21). Dong Guangqi, an expert who participated in the revision of the master plans of Beijing since 1956 and former Vice President of the Beijing Urban Planning and Design Institute, documented the emergence of the “decentralized-clusters” diagram in the development of Beijing’s master plans in his book *Beijing Guihua Zhanlue Sikao (Reflection on the Strategic Planning of Beijing)*.⁷⁷ In 1953, Mao convened a group of planning experts and initiated Beijing’s master plans. In April of 1955, nine planning experts from the Soviet Union arrived in Beijing and worked with Chinese planners, including Zheng Zhanxiang and Liang Sicheng, who came back from the United States after completing their studies.⁷⁸ Under Mao’s direct supervision, these experts with international educational backgrounds constituted the City Planning Committee of Beijing. After two years of investigation and documentation, Mao’s think-tank finished the first version of Beijing’s Preliminary Master Plan in 1957.⁷⁹ The 1957 plan envisioned Beijing as a modernized industrial center, surrounded by forty satellite towns 8-10 miles away from the old city center, which functioned to relieve the population’s concentration in the central urban area.⁸⁰ The forty satellite towns were precedents of the “decentralized clusters” finalized in the master plan of 1958.

⁷⁷ Dong, 319-338.

⁷⁸ Dong, 329.

⁷⁹ Dong, 331.

⁸⁰ Dong, 331.

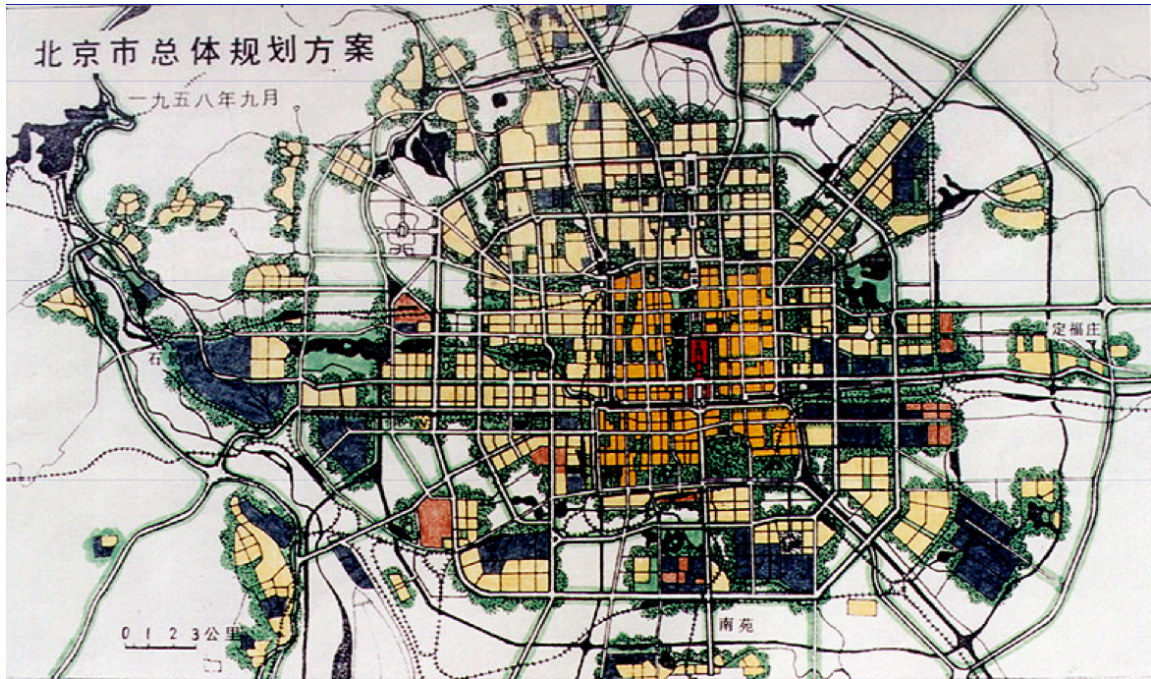


Figure 2-21. The 1958 Beijing Master Plan

(Photo from Beijing Municipal Institute of City Planning and Design)

The 1958 Beijing Master Plan finalized a city model, where industrial sites were evenly distributed and intermixed with agriculture and residential clusters.⁸¹ The explanatory text stated:

Our planning should meet the basic needs of the current social conditions and consider the future needs of developing the communist society, and reserve resources for our future generations. In the current situation, the goal is to speed up the industrialization of the capital city, the commune, the agricultural production, and at the same time, to gradually eliminate the differentiation between workers and farmers, between urban and rural, and between intellectual and physical labors. (Dong, 1998, 336)

It further criticized existing planning practices that isolated residential areas and schools from industrial zones as outdated. It argued that “though the concentration could be efficient and reasonable in some circumstances, the complete isolation of these different sectors is not good

⁸¹ Dong, 336.

for the elimination of the three differences (between industrial and agricultural production, city and countryside, and intellectual and physical labor forces).”⁸² The 1958 Beijing master plan proposed the form of “decentralized clusters,” which divided the entire urban area into tens of clusters combining workers’ communes and factories, separated by greenery and agricultural land. In the plan, greenery and agricultural production fields covered up to 40% of the central city and 60% suburban areas.⁸³ People’s communes were more rural versions of these clusters.

If the 1957 master plan maintained a balance between international experts’ input and Mao’s ideas of socialist cities, the revised 1958 master plan expressed Mao’s anxiety to transform China from an agrarian society to a communist egalitarian society. Mao associated the control of city size by eliminating the “three differences” between industrial and agricultural production, city and countryside, and intellectual and physical labor forces. In his plan, by mixing industrial and agricultural production and workers’ and peasants’ life into the “decentralized clusters,” instead of a large city, China would eventually realize egalitarian communal living and working. The form of “decentralized clusters” recalled the garden-city idea initiated by the British planner Ebenezer Howard at the beginning of the twentieth century. As Robert Fishman noted, the “garden city” was “a plan for moderate decentralization and cooperative socialism.”⁸⁴ The Agricultural Belt in Howard’s garden city plan was to contain the town’s sprawl into the countryside and allow everyone to enjoy ample open space in the countryside, which constituted his essential ideal of a cooperative commonwealth.⁸⁵ The massive farmland and rural villages scattering across it became naturally formed “Agricultural Belt” in Mao’s ideal. Therefore, to prevent the city or town from sprawling, Mao and his think-tank

⁸² Dong, 336.

⁸³ Dong, 336-338.

⁸⁴ Robert Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier* (New York, New York: Basic Books, 1977), 8, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1855161>.

⁸⁵ Fishman, 44-45.

planned to perpetuate these rural villages and farmland. Unlike Howard's "garden city," which aimed to provide each individual a balance of busy city life and open countryside joy, one essential goal of Mao's "decentralized clusters" was to separate rural and urban residents by organizing them into self-contained units (production cooperatives in villages and work units in cities), and therefore, control rural-to-urban migration.

The form of "decentralized clusters" repeatedly appeared in the master plans of selected Chinese cities, including Shenzhen's earlier versions of the master plan made in the 1980s. By the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), Deng Xiaoping's rise to power at the CCP initiated a new national agenda of economic development and domestic modernization, moving away from Mao's ideological campaigns. However, top-down master planning remained dominant until the late 1980s. The first 1982 Master Plan of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone was a variation of Mao's 1958 Beijing Master Plan, where the "decentralized clusters" only changed from rings to linear bands (Figure 2-22). The Plan first set the goal of building the Shenzhen SEZ into an industrialized border city and named the form "linear clusters."⁸⁶ Along with a planned railway starting from the central zone stretching to the Pearl River Estuary on the west were functional "bands" broken into discrete clusters of industrial zones (*red blocks*, Figure 2-22).

Like the 1958 Beijing Master Plan, these were clusters combining workers' communes, factories, and even villages, separated by greenery and agricultural fields. A noticeable difference was that Mao intended to unify all the clusters into homogenous mixed units in Beijing, while the 1982 Shenzhen SEZ Master Plan specialized in each cluster. For instance, some clusters were created especially for attracting overseas investments, such as the Overseas

⁸⁶ (Shenzhen, 1998, 89)

Chinese Town near Hong Kong; others were industrial parks reserved for state-owned enterprises located at the Pearl River Estuary. There were also theme parks, technological hubs, and college towns.



Figure 2-22. The 1982 Master Plan of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone

(Map from Shenzhen Archive Library)

The 1958 Beijing Master Plan and the planned “decentralized clusters” left fundamental effects on Beijing’s current cityscape. The mixed industrial and agricultural production sites were precedents of the 1980s’ versions of industrialized villages. During the rapid urban expansion, the rural settlements, factory sites, and workers’ communes reserved within those planned “decentralized clusters” evolved into Beijing’s version of “villages-in-the-city.”⁸⁷

Beyond Beijing, these early attempts to mobilize the mass peasants in domestic industrialization and perpetuate the countryside for combined industrial and agricultural production sites made the later cooperative between peasant collectives and foreign investors possible. After Mao attempted to socialize the countryside, villages in China could not be simply seen as rural settlements; they became potential sites of industrialization.

⁸⁷ Bruno De Meulder, Yanliu Lin, and Kelly Shannon, eds., *Village in the City* (Zürich: Park Books, 2014), 96-97.

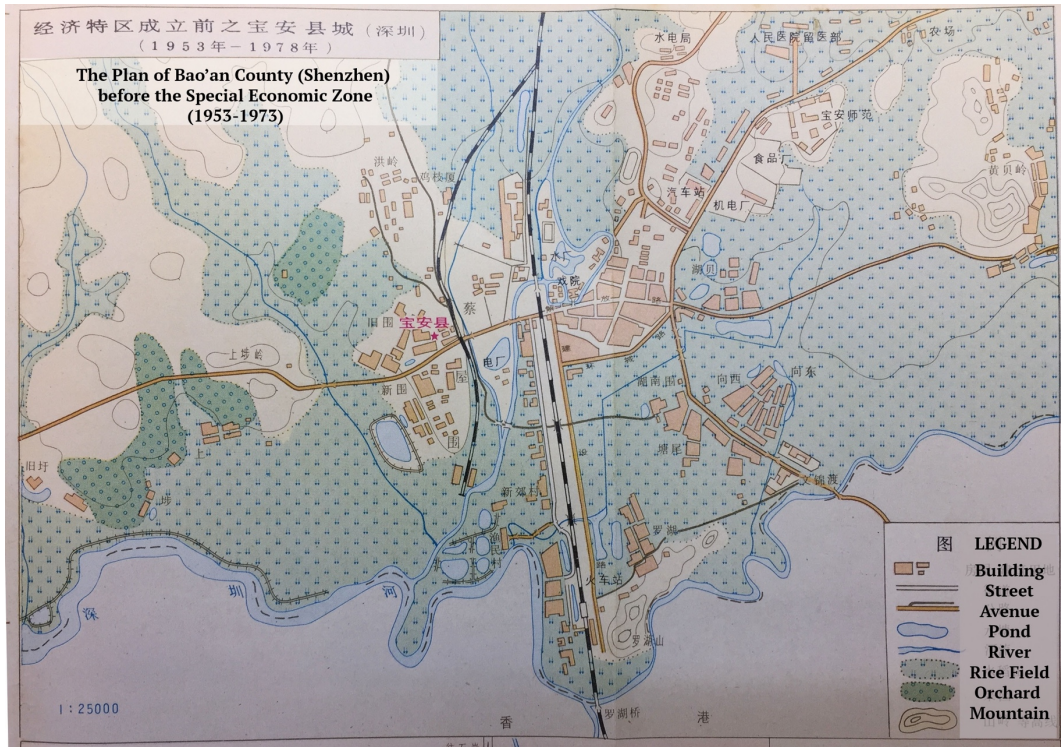


Figure 2-23. The plan of the central area of the Bao'an County (Shenzhen) before the establishment of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, 1953-1978

(Map from Peimao Cao, *Shenzhen Geographical History*, 1987)

Likewise, the 1982 Shenzhen SEZ Master Plan reserved the one thousand and eight hundred rural villages with those large “residential clusters” (*orange blocks*, Figure 2-22). These hidden villages became key sites of small-scale labor-intensive factories. Before 1979, Shenzhen, part of the Bao'an county, was almost entirely rural; even the county government was amid a group of villages (west to the railway) and surrounded by rice fields (Figure 2-23). Upon Shenzhen SEZ's establishment, the “fly-in” city-level officials relied heavily on local village heads to mobilize peasants and cooperate with the government and foreign investors in fulfilling the development goal. For both the local government and foreign investors (mostly from Hong Kong), instead of building new factories in the middle of the vast vacancy, the one thousand and eight hundred villages became better choices for developing labor-intense manufacturing industries (Figure 2-24). Once rearranged into compounds for peasants' communal work and life,

they were ready to provide low-cost workforces and cheap land. Therefore, instead of removing these villages and rebuild houses for factory workers, the local government and planners kept these villages (ViCs) within those “linear clusters.”



Figure 2-24. An aerial view of the Shennan Avenue under construction in 1982

(Photo from Chinese Photographers Association)

Reinforced rural-urban divide. Despite Mao’s intention to eliminate the difference between city and countryside, the attempts to control the size of towns and cities by perpetuating villages into self-contained units (equivalent to work units) did not narrow the difference between city and countryside. Instead, they only resulted in a further separation between urban residents and peasants. In urban areas, city planning primarily adopted the Soviet model, in which cities mainly served as sites for industrial production.⁸⁸ In particular, work-unit compounds (*danwei*) were Chinese variations of the Soviet “social-condense” units, designed based on collective principles and used to replace traditional families as the most basic social

⁸⁸ Xu and Yang, “Design History of China’s Gated Cities and Neighbourhoods: Prototype and Evolution”; Chen Zhao, Mingrui Shen, and Jingxiang Zhang, “The Soviet Union-Style of Urban Planning in China: Retrospection and Implications,” *Urban Planning International* 2, no. 207 (2013): 109–18.

organizations.⁸⁹ In the 1950s, Mao and his think-tank rearranged the urban spatial order into gated work-unit compounds, just as he reorganized the countryside into agricultural production cooperatives and people's communes. These work-unit compounds, including state-owned factory compounds, government institution compounds, and service institution compounds, varied in size but shared a standard set of design principles. The principles were inward-facing, self-contained, and walled off. Each work-unit compound included working zone, living zones, and ancillary service facilities such as activity centers, schools, hospitals, and parks (Figure 2-25).⁹⁰ Mao and his planner teams did not build these gated compounds all from scratches; remnants of the gated *lifang* neighborhoods built in premodern Chinese cities provided perfect sites for these compound constructions.

The social welfare system organized based on work units was exclusive. Urban residents' rights to use social services (such as health care, education, and housing) were highly associated with the kind of work-unit compounds where they belonged within the urban area. For instance, in Beijing, those in government or university compounds were usually living in allocated large courtyard houses (*siheyuan*) with better supplementary services than those living in dormitories in factory compounds. Furthermore, the urban social welfare system generally privileged urban residents by excluding non-urban residents not affiliated with any work-unit compounds. In 1958, when Mao initiated the People's Commune movement, the National People's Congress released and implemented a very restrictive household registration (*hukou*) system to prevent peasants from moving to urban areas, and at the same time, to regulate the mobility of urban residents between cities. The *hukou* registration categorized each resident into two general types

⁸⁹ Zhao, Shen, and Zhang, "The Soviet Union-Style of Urban Planning in China: Retrospection and Implications," 114.

⁹⁰ Yan Zhang, Yanwei Chai, and Qianjun Zhou, "The Spatiality and Spatial Changes of Danwei Compound in Chinese Cities: Case Study of Beijing No.2 Textile Factory," *Urban Planning International* 24, no. 5 (2009): 20–27.

of *hukou*, agrarian *hukou* for all non-urban residents and non-agrarian *hukou* for all urban residents. More detailed registration information included a permanent residence, temporary residence, birthplace, death place, moving-out place, moving-in place, and changes. A resident's birthplace determined his/her original *hukou* type, which further determined their property rights and access to social resources. While a child born in a peasant family would obtain a local agrarian *hukou* and be allocated with a portion of farmland and a homestead, a child born in a work-unit family would get a non-agrarian *hukou* and access educational and health-care resources provided by that work-unit compound.

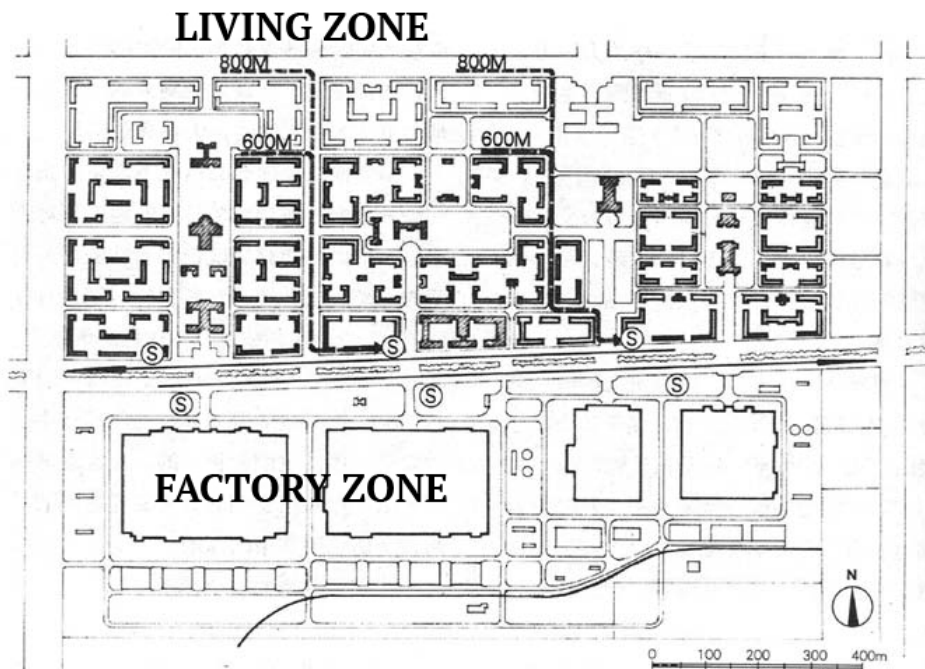


Figure 2-25. The layout of the gated work-unit compound of Beijing No.2 Textile Factory

(Drawing by Yan Zhang, Yanwei Chai, and Qianjun Zhou, 2009, Fig. 1)

To make changes to the original *hukou* was extremely difficult, even today. The majority of Shenzhen's 11 million migrant ViC tenants are those without the city's official non-agrarian *hukou*; even though they become temporary residents, they have only limited access to welfare programs, such as health care, education, and affordable housing. These migrant ViC tenants

used to be peasants with agrarian *hukou* in their born villages, which granted them collective land ownership, property rights, and accesses to the welfare system in their hometowns. However, when they came to coastal cities for jobs (usually in service-sectors or on construction sites with meager incomes), they were unprotected by those rights or welfare programs in the host city.

Therefore, the creation of mixed, self-contained compounds in both urban and rural areas did not eliminate the difference between city and countryside; instead, it reinforced the segregation between rural and urban residents. Mao envisioned an egalitarian terrain composed of equivalent units—people’s communes in the countryside and work-unit compounds in urban areas; however, his ideal model neglected the distinct working conditions and available resources for urban residents and peasants. Though the Land Reform in the early 1950s granted peasants the collective ownership of farmland and properties, the collectivization nevertheless led to the restrictive regulation of peasant laborers in the countryside, working long hours with little flexibility. Furthermore, the rigorous *hukou* registration controlled social mobility and prevented peasants from moving to cities or accessing any urban resources. Even though Mao later initiated the “Down to the Countryside Movement,” which sent approximately 20 million urban intellectual youths to rural areas working as doctors, teachers, and technicians in the late 1960s, the movement ended up intensifying urban-rural alienation in the 1970s, as these urban intellectual youths cried out desperately and violently for returning to cities. The various social movements, planning attempts, and policies in the 1950s transformed the countryside into a potential place of industrialization but reinforced the divide between urban and rural societies.

Conclusion: From Production Units to Villages-in-the-City

The formation of villages-in-the-city was not that strange, considering the long history of creating enclosed, inward-facing, and mixed compounds in urban and rural areas. From the traditional inward-facing courtyards, walled villages and neighborhoods (*lifang*), and fortress towns/cities, to the socialist gated self-contained production units (work-unit compounds or people's communes), there existed a fundamental pattern of spatial organization in Chinese cities, which even extended to the countryside despite the administrative divide. This fundamental pattern was that the controllable, inward-facing, walled-off, and mixed units dominated the spatial order. Even in the recent four decades, when large blocks of hypermodern structure replaced many of those walled units in Chinese cities, the villages as key industrialization sites partially reserved the traditional fabric. Shenzhen's ViCs are remnants of that the traditional fabric instead of products of recent urbanization.

Whereas Shenzhen's story often begins with Deng Xiaoping's decision to establish special economic zones in 1980, the effects of these earlier design and planning ideas and practices were overlooked. The contemporary form of villages-in-the-cities and their juxtaposition with urban structures were not mere results of unleashed urbanization forces in the 1980s; they were intentionally designed and reserved, as defensive fortresses in premodern China, self-contained agricultural production sites in socialist China, and potential industrial sites in reform-era China. ViCs cannot be simply seen as Chinese versions of informal settlements or migrant enclaves. In addition to the unleashed market forces, the hidden forces contributing to ViCs' hyperdense built environment and walled-off situations were such shared planning ideologies that aimed to create homogeneous and controllable units. Even in the 1980s, ViCs were not entirely out of the government or planning control.

Official descriptions of Shenzhen's ViCs first appeared in a report, *The Economic Research on Neighborhood, Villages, and Towns in Shenzhen 1989-1991*:

*In Luohu District and Shangbu District, many villages are now enclosed by newly built urban apartments and buildings. Inside the villages, farmers' houses are built up to five stories.*⁹¹

The report first suggested that the government allowed villages to exist within the Shenzhen SEZ and researched their economic statuses together with other urban neighborhoods. Furthermore, the report noted the building activities of local peasants, who built five-story houses to rent to peasant-workers that migrated from inner areas to the coastal cities. It was known as the first round of the building boom within these villages; a second and third round soon followed (will be discussed in the next chapter). The local government kept a blind eye to these building activities because the city could not house the millions of rural-to-urban migrant laborers without these growing village buildings.

Through a retrospective analysis of urban design and planning ideas in China, this chapter adds to the current discussions of the formation of ViCs by showing the connection between ViC forms and a shared spatial design of controllable, inward-facing, walled-off, and mixed units. In particular, Mao's multiple attempts to socialize villages as self-contained units equivalent to work-unit compounds in urban areas made villages potential industrialization sites. Simultaneously, the socialization of rural villages allowed the integration between the socialist administrative system and the clan-based social structure within rural villages, which formed the agricultural production cooperatives. Later these agricultural production cooperatives developed into strong village-based organizations leading peasants to partner with foreign investors in

⁹¹ Yan, Liao, and Wang, *Shenzhen Jiedao Cunzhen Jingji Yanjiu 1989-1991 (The Economic Research on Neighborhood, Villages, and Towns in Shenzhen 1989-1991)*, 8-9.

industrialization. Instead of viewing villages-in-the-city as products of the rapid urbanization that began in the 1980s, this chapter reveals the connection between ViCs and those spatial units which have been repeatedly imagined by the planning ideologies throughout history.

Chapter 3 Strategy: Planning for Development



Figure 3-1. Peasant representatives, village leaders, and Hong Kong investors working together on planning leather manufacturing factories in Shatoujiao Village in Shenzhen, 1979

(Photo by He Huangyou, "Look Back," 2019)⁹²

The hidden villages-in-the-city (*Cheng Zhong Cun* 城中村) provide foundational resources for Shenzhen's urban development. Villages-in-the-city (ViCs), often referred to as Chinese urban villages, are represented as migrant slum areas of Chinese cities. The dominant narrative of ViCs tends to parallel global slum theories by highlighting the self-built migrant

⁹² In 2019, a Shenzhen local photographer, He Huangyou, held an exhibition called "Looking Back," which displayed a series of photos documenting the building process of joint manufacturing factories in villages in 1979.

housing with dilapidated physical characteristics and substandard quality of life.⁹³ Invested-in by foreign companies and subsidized by the local government upon Shenzhen's establishment as a Special Economic Zone, village-based industries' prosperity was often overlooked in these existing accounts (Figure 3-1). The popular concept of slum theories, which derives from urban examples taken primarily from the Global South, Latin America, or places with a colonial past, often indicates that the normal regulatory authority is suspended, creating a state of exception in city-building.⁹⁴ Shenzhen's ViCs cannot be simply understood as duplications of globalized slums or migrant enclaves; they are essential sites of small-scale production where the local government retains some control level to fulfill Shenzhen's overall development. This chapter recharts the relationship between ViCs and Shenzhen's urban development by examining these interactive processes in a complex system.

Shenzhen and ViCs have increasingly appeared as exemplars of exceptional urbanism. Under the paradigm of neoliberalism, Shenzhen and its ViCs are spaces of exception, where market forces dominated in its housing production and land sales, exempt from government controls or regulations.⁹⁵ Recent attempts to seek new vocabularies for urbanization processes around the world often juxtapose Shenzhen and its component ViCs with emerging metropolises, such as Lagos, Istanbul, and Kolkata, as manifestations of "plotting urbanism," where land ownership regimes and market mechanisms dominate in shaping urban landscapes due to the lack of overarching planning.⁹⁶ In the framework of "urbanism of exception," ViCs appear as

⁹³ Ananya Roy, "Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35, no. 2 (2011): 223–38, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2011.01051.x>.

⁹⁴ Roy; Justin McGuirk, *Radical Cities: Across Latin America in Search of a New Architecture* (New York, NY: Verso, 2015); Murray, *The Urbanism of Exception: The Dynamics of Global City Building in the Twenty-First Century*.

⁹⁵ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Murray, *The Urbanism of Exception: The Dynamics of Global City Building in the Twenty-First Century*; Schmid et al., "Towards a New Vocabulary of Urbanisation Processes: A Comparative Approach."

⁹⁶ The study proposed four types of emerging urbanism: 1) the popular urbanism was shared by Lagos, Mexico City, Istanbul, and Kolkata, evolving from low-income peripheral neighborhoods featuring accumulative self-production and collective appropriation led by strong political organizations; 2) the plotting urbanism shared by Shenzhen, Lagos, Istanbul, and Kolkata,

miniature “spaces of exemption” within Shenzhen, where the city itself is a larger space of exception (the special economic zone).⁹⁷ In such spaces of exception, land-use regulations are lacking, and pro-growth strategies are dominating.

Some scholars consider Shenzhen and its ViCs as outcomes for state-led industrialization through a deliberate planning strategy, where the state remained the dominant agent and retained its control.⁹⁸ In a specific form of so-called state entrepreneurialism, the central state retains the power of making key policies, such as the *hukou* system⁹⁹ and dual land policies,¹⁰⁰ and appointing local officials. Local (municipal) governments, land rich but cash poor, establish market-based developmental institutions, such as land sales and housing commodities, and partner with private sectors to gain local revenues.¹⁰¹ In the 1980s and early 1990s, local governments subsidized manufacturing investments in township and village enterprises built on the cheaper land in rural villages. These rural villages later developed into ViCs. ViCs, from such perspectives, are not “spaces of exception” but products of local government corporatism.¹⁰²

featured the lack of overarching planning and the dominance of land ownership regimes and market mechanisms in shaping urban landscapes; 3) the multilayered patchwork urbanization emerged in the “suburban areas” in Paris, Los Angeles, Tokyo, and Hong Kong, as a result of the massive urban expansion and the superimposition of different patterns of urbanization over time; 4) the incorporation of urban differences primarily took place in developed urban areas in almost all eight cities, featuring the commodification and domestication of urban spaces through their specific social, cultural, material, and symbolic elements. In Schmid et al., “Towards a New Vocabulary of Urbanisation Processes: A Comparative Approach.”, “Towards a New Vocabulary of Urbanisation Processes: A Comparative Approach.”

⁹⁷ Murray, *The Urbanism of Exception: The Dynamics of Global City Building in the Twenty-First Century*, 268-269.

⁹⁸ Fulong Wu, *Planning for Growth: Urban and Regional Planning in China, Planning Perspectives*, vol. 31 (New York: Routledge, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2015.1100009>; Wu, “Emerging Chinese Cities: Implications for Global Urban Studies”; Wu, “State Dominance in Urban Redevelopment: Beyond Gentrification in Urban China”; He and Wang, “State-Led Creative/Cultural City Making and Its Contestations in East Asia: A Multi-Scalar Analysis of the Entrepreneurial State and the Creative Class.”

⁹⁹ *Hukou* is a household registration system implemented by the Chinese government since 1950. It was used to restrict the rural population from flocking to urban areas. There are two kinds of *hukou* in China: Agrarian *hukou* for rural residents and non-agrarian *hukou* for urban residents. Those who born with agrarian *hukou* are restricted from accessing social resources in the city, such as affordable housing, medical insurance, and education.

¹⁰⁰ The dual land ownership system backs up the *hukou* system in perpetuating the rural-urban divide. According to the Constitution of China, urban land belongs to the state; all suburban and rural land (except state-owned properties) belongs to the collective, including village homestead, reserved agricultural production sites, and mountain areas.

¹⁰¹ Wu, “State Dominance in Urban Redevelopment: Beyond Gentrification in Urban China”; Wu, “Emerging Chinese Cities: Implications for Global Urban Studies”; Ang, *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap*.

¹⁰² Wu, “Emerging Chinese Cities: Implications for Global Urban Studies.”

The two seemingly contradictory perspectives on Shenzhen and ViCs indicate the complexity of urbanization processes in a more authoritarian regime. In this complex system, many players and institutions have been involved and interacted with each other, including the local government (and the component planning and regulatory institutions) and the various market actors representing the state, such as state-owned enterprises and land development offices. Nevertheless, these accounts often overlook the “rural” effects of ViCs, particularly the village-based agriculture production cooperatives established in the 1950s. As the preceding chapter revealed, the agriculture production cooperatives fused lingering kinship- and clan-based organizations in rural societies and the lowest administration level in rural China. Due to the administrative divide between rural and urban areas, the hybrid agriculture production cooperatives have generated a higher autonomy level in rural villages than their counterpart work units in urban areas. Overlooking the unique “rural” effects risks oversimplifying China’s urban processes or assuming equivalencies between ViCs and informal settlements elsewhere.

While “rurality” may seem “past” in Western contexts, it cannot be more present in China and many developing countries. The majorities of these regions have long relied on agricultural occupations until the recent urbanization. Urban theories have long confined themselves to the concept of the city within geographic locations where people are “civilized”: meaning rational, modern, industrialized capitalist societies, while excluding those primitive, “other” conditions elsewhere as uncivilized societies. In a global context, the concept of city and the associated dynamic, modern, innovative, and rational qualities have signified greater geographic divides, resulting in the extension of the opposite category of the “primitive” to

delineating emerging terrains in the contemporary non-Western regions.¹⁰³ The global hierarchy of cities, ranked by their relative levels of development and modernity, can be easily internalized and absorbed into local politics, ultimately producing new hierarchies. ViCs, growing out of rural settlements, have long been associated with the “primitive” and “uncivilized” conditions in the dominant narrative.

Engaging with recent discussions on planetary urbanism and redefining the concept of the city, this chapter challenges the urban/rural or formal/informal relationship in the city-building process in Shenzhen by constructing an alternative narrative of ViCs about urban regulative and development forces. The chapter reviews key policies, planning atlases, and on-the-ground spatial practices over three decades (1980-2010) to highlight the interplay among the land regime, the state’s development strategy, and peasants’ responsive building practices. The analysis suggests a co-evolving cooperative and confronting relationship between the regulatory authority and the organized villagers, who share the same goal to increase gains from the land development. However, the cooperative relationship changed dramatically at the end of the 1990s due to a new national agenda of “socialist modernization.” Since then, official planning and public narratives have depicted ViCs and their associated rural characteristics as the opposite of the desired urban modernity. The changing relationships between ViCs and the city add more nuances to our understanding of fragmented cityscapes shaped by global urbanism, with complicated regulatory positions beyond simply existing in a state of exception.

¹⁰³ Jennifer Robinson, *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development*, *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); Jennifer Robinson, “Thinking Cities through Elsewhere: Comparative Tactics for a More Global Urban Studies,” *Progress in Human Geography* 40, no. 1 (2016): 3–29.

Defining Village-in-the-City

Many studies in the English language adopted the term “urban village” to refer to the village-in-the-city ([ViC], *Cheng Zhong Cun*) in China. This adoption confuses ViCs’ formation, function, and meaning. In the European context, urban villages are known as a new form of urban residence built on cities’ outskirts beginning in the early 1990s. By contrast, village-in-the-city in the Chinese context has a literal meaning—a village amid urban structures.¹⁰⁴ These are rural villages may have existed in those locations for hundreds or even thousands of years until they were enclosed by urban structures during rapid urbanization three decades ago. The Chinese term *Cheng Zhong Cun* first appeared in an article published in the Chinese journal *Sociology Studies* in 1993. The author, Zhou Daming, described an emerging urban phenomenon in the Pearl River Delta (PRD) area, where rural villages were wall-off and concealed by urban structures after the state appropriated the farmland for development.¹⁰⁵ He called these remnant rural settlements “*cheng zhong zhi cun*” (villages within the city).¹⁰⁶ The article further identified the social segregation between those who lived in ViCs (*cheng zhong zhi cun*) and urban residents, despite their residences’ spatial proximity.¹⁰⁷ However, in the 1990s, the peak period of urbanization in the PRD area, his article did not raise many concerns among the numerous development-oriented papers.

The following research identified key policies playing fundamental roles in forming rural-urban segregation and discrimination in emerging Chinese metropolises. For one, the *hukou* (household) registration system implemented by the Chinese government in 1950 registered all

¹⁰⁴ Him Chung, “Building an Image of Villages-in-the-City: A Clarification of China’s Distinct Urban Spaces,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 34, no. 2 (2010): 421–37, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2010.00979.x>.

¹⁰⁵ Daming Zhou, “Lùn Dūshi Biānyuán Nóngcūn Shèqū de Dūshi Huà (The Urbanization of the Rural Community on the Periphery of the Metropolis: A Study of Guangdong Urbanization),” *社会学研究 [Sociological Studies]* 6 (1993): 13–20.

¹⁰⁶ Zhou.

¹⁰⁷ Zhou.

residents into two categories, rural residents with agrarian *hukou* and urban residents with non-agrarian *hukou*. Due to the divide in *hukou* status, local farmers' and fishermen's productive activities, social networks, and political participation had been long confined to rural villages. During the rapid urbanization in the 1980s, even though the local government transferred their *hukou* to non-agrarian ones for farmland requisition, many local farmers ended up being displaced and walled-off in these original villages, as they lacked training in skills to find decent jobs in cities.¹⁰⁸ Meanwhile, the accompanying land policy legalized and distinguished the village collectives' ownership of rural land (including farmland and homestead) from the state ownership of urban land. Although the land reform in the 1980s attempted to abolish the collective ownership of rural land for urban development, villagers nonetheless found ways to resist the urban encroachment on their homesteads. The institutionalized rural-urban divide and later local governments' market-oriented operations led to land "battles" between villagers and local governments, resulting in rural-village fragments within urban areas.

However, ViCs in Shenzhen are different from migrant villages in many Chinese cities, such as Zhejiang villages and Xinjiang villages in Beijing.¹⁰⁹ Though many cities have experienced a similar urban encroachment pattern on rural villages, the trajectory of spatial transformation and power relations among key players are different. As their names indicated, migrants from a specific region or province (Zhejiang or Xinjiang) dominate the tenant population in Zhejiang villages or Xinjiang villages in the peripheral areas of Beijing.¹¹⁰ Migrant villages in Beijing featured small-scale family-based manufacturing workshops earned and

¹⁰⁸ Helen F. Siu, "Grounding Displacement: Uncivil Urban Spaces in Postreform South," *American Ethnologist* 34, no. 2 (2007): 329–50.

¹⁰⁹ Li Zhang, *Strangers in the City: Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Networks within China Floating Population*, *Anthropological Quarterly*, 1st ed., vol. 76 (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001), <https://doi.org/10.1086/376283>.

¹¹⁰ Zhang; Chung, "Building an Image of Villages-in-the-City: A Clarification of China's Distinct Urban Spaces."

managed by migrants. Similar to “sweatshops” in New York City in the early twentieth century, these migrant villages provided resources for migrant groups to accumulate wealth and social capital through trade despite the substandard conditions.

In her book *Strangers in the City: Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Networks within China Floating Population*, the author Zhang Li, an anthropologist, used a well-received notion of trans-locality to indicate the upward mobility of the floating population without local *hukou* registration.¹¹¹ These migrant populations were constantly reconstructing their social identities transcending geographic locations, and eventually, they became the agency to negotiate the borders between migrant enclaves and the city.¹¹² Zhang’s study challenged the dominant, discriminatory view of the floating population as “dangerous,” uncivilized, and unregulated laborers in cities by revealing that the floating populations were among the wealthier and more powerful groups.

In the famous Xian Village (*Xian Cun*) in Guangzhou, Cecilie Andersson’s ethnographic work unfolded a more complicated story of rural-to-urban migrants.¹¹³ The rural-to-urban migrants displaced in urban villages were often put in a much more vulnerable and marginalized position. Simultaneously, local former farmers who collectively owned the land took a more dominant role in negotiating with the local government and development forces. Her interview data further showed that rural migrants would seize every opportunity to access the limited social and material resources via the village, with little or no sense of security and belonging.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ The term “floating population”, indicating the living conditions of the migrant population—with their original agrarian *hukou*, they were officially prohibited obtaining property rights in the host urban villages and were also excluded from any access to formal urban services; as a result, they became villages’ short-term tenants, who always lived with high risk and mobility. See Zhang, *Strangers in the City*.

¹¹² Zhang, *Strangers in the City: Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Networks within China Floating Population*.

¹¹³ Cecilie Andersson, “Migrant Positioning: In Transforming Urban Ambience Urban Villages and the City, Guangzhou, China” (Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2012).

¹¹⁴ Cecilie Andersson, *Cecilie Andersson Migrant Positioning*, 2012.

Andersson's observation of rural migrants' trans-locality in Guangzhou differs from that of Zhang's in Beijing; Guangzhou's urban villages could hardly provide a social mobility path for rural migrants whose ambition was to eventually become urban citizens and stay in cities.¹¹⁵ Instead, the trans-locality for rural migrants only meant the capability to move from one urban village to another urban village.

Shenzhen's ViCs resemble Guangzhou's urban villages in terms of the culture of bottom-up organizations within rural villages. Still, Shenzhen's ViCs have particularities in terms of the local government's intervention and the area's geographic relationship with Hong Kong. In a newly established special economic zone (SEZ) with little money but rich land, local farmers' land and kinships to Hong Kong investors became valuable resources for the new city. Whereas individual displaced migrants' capability to reconstruct their social identities reshaped the spatial form of Beijing's periphery, the potential power of local villagers and the building activities they organized to combat or cooperate with the local government generated Shenzhen's cityscape. In Doug Saunders' *Arrival City*, he used Shenzhen's ViCs as exemplars of landing places for migrants to "stage their arrival in an organic, self-generated, bottom-up fashion," just like arrival-city slums around the world.¹¹⁶ Though ViCs resemble many self-built migrant enclaves in history and contemporary emerging contexts, the interactions between villagers and the local government add new complications to ViCs, exceeding some of the general displacement and marginality patterns.

¹¹⁵ Andersson, "Migrant Positioning: In Transforming Urban Ambience Urban Villages and the City, Guangzhou, China"; Cecilie Andersson, "Situating Translocality in Flux Landscapes: Migrants and Urban Villages in the City of Guangzhou," in *Rural Migrants in Urban China: Enclaves and Transient Urbanism*, 2013, 84–98, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203796597>.

¹¹⁶ Doug Saunders, *Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History Is Reshaping Our World* (Windmill, 2010), 58-63.

Granting Autonomy in Chinese Rural Villages

The socialization of individual peasants into production cooperatives integrated with the kinship-based (family-based) social structure in rural areas has generated new political forces within rural villages to combat urban encroachment in China. Some local scholars identified the rural culture in South China (including Guangzhou and Shenzhen) as a “tough” (*qiangshi*) culture.¹¹⁷ A Chinese sociologist, Li Peilin, once explained the emergence of ViCs as a behavioral change of farmers from “growing grains” to “growing buildings.”¹¹⁸ As early as the 1930s, the famous Chinese sociologist and anthropologist Fei Hsiao Tung had made an influential notion - “Chinese society has grown out of its ties to the land.”¹¹⁹ Drawn from Fei’s earlier observations on Chinese peasant societies, Li argued that China’s recent urbanization process was more a non-agriculturalization process when the emerging capitalist mode of production clashed with the long-lasting agricultural production in peasant societies.¹²⁰ In the process, the kinship-based social principles persisted along with the enduring agricultural mode of production.

Subsequent studies further revealed the transformation of the combined kinship-based social principles and agricultural production cooperatives into ViC-based market entities, which resonated with Li’s prediction that the hybrid urban-rural communities would co-exist with the city in the long term. Incorporating several agricultural production cooperatives into a joint-stock

¹¹⁷ Limin Zhang and Rongyuan Zhu, “Investigation, Observation, Reconstruction [调查 透视 重构]” (Shenzhen, 2006), 40-42.

¹¹⁸ Peilin Li, *Cun Luo de Zhong Jie : Yangcheng Cun de Gu Shi, She Hui Tu Xiang Cong Shu*, 1st ed. (Beijing: Shang wu yin shu guan, 2004); Yuyun Lan, *Dūshì Lǐ de Cūnzhuāng: Yīgè “Xīncūn Shè Gòngtóngtǐ” de Shìdì Yánjiū 都市里的村庄: 一个“新村社共同体”的实地研究 [The Village in the City: A Field Study of the “New Village Community”]* (Shanghai: Shenghuo•Dushu•Xinzhi Sanlian [SDX Joint Publishing Company]., 2005).

¹¹⁹ Hsiao Tung Fei, *Peasant Life in China, Nature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1962), <https://doi.org/10.1038/144267a0>; Hsiao Tung Fei, Gary G. Hamilton, and Wang Zheng, *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1992), p.7.

¹²⁰ Li, *Cun Luo de Zhong Jie : Yangcheng Cun de Gu Shi*; Lan, *Dūshì Lǐ de Cūnzhuāng: Yīgè “Xīncūn Shè Gòngtóngtǐ” de Shìdì Yánjiū 都市里的村庄: 一个“新村社共同体”的实地研究 [The Village in the City: A Field Study of the “New Village Community”]*.

company within the ViC, where original team leaders became the company's board, was a prominent example of such co-existence of village and market rules.¹²¹ Huang Quanle's morphological analysis of the Shipai Village in Guangzhou demonstrated the joint-stock company's capacity to manage collective properties and invest in constructing basic infrastructure facilities, including roads connecting to the city and schools.¹²² Huang's work revealed that the village-based joint-stock company took over the local government's functions in completing urban systems instead of impeding urban construction.

Shenzhen was almost entirely rural until 1980, when established as a special economic zone. Those long-existing farming and fishing villages within the zone had similar agricultural production traditions and clan-based social relations as Guangzhou. Ma Hang's work on Shenzhen's urban transformation revealed an adaptive corporate community evolving from the old village system.¹²³ His work engaged with two concepts that differentiated social relations in villages and cities, put forward by a German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies: the "little tradition" of social relations based on family ties (*Gemeinschaft*) and the "great tradition" of social relations developed in larger social organizations and units (*Gesellschaft*).¹²⁴ Ma found that the "little tradition" in South China's rural villages continued to play an effective role in managing local resources and would not completely disappear even with the emergence of the "great tradition."¹²⁵ In Ma's accounts, Shenzhen's ViCs offer concrete examples of places where

¹²¹ Quanle Huang, *Metropolis of Rurality: A Spatial History of Shipai in Guangzhou from the Perspectives of Typo—Morphology (1978—2008)* (Beijing: China Architecture & Building Press, 2010); Hang Ma, "'Villages' in Shenzhen: Persistence and Transformation of an Old Social System in an Emerging Mega City," *Transformation*, no. April 1974 (2006).

¹²² Huang, *Metropolis of Rurality: A Spatial History of Shipai in Guangzhou from the Perspectives of Typo—Morphology (1978—2008)*.

¹²³ Ma, "'Villages' in Shenzhen: Persistence and Transformation of an Old Social System in an Emerging Mega City."

¹²⁴ Ferdinand Tönnies, "Community and Society," in *The Urban Sociology Reader*, ed. Jan Lin and Christopher Mele, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, n.d.), 36.

¹²⁵ Ma, "'Villages' in Shenzhen: Persistence and Transformation of an Old Social System in an Emerging Mega City."

cultural fragments have been recycled and revived in new forms of society, challenging dichotomic views of tradition and modernity, rural and urban.

Some scholars even pushed this point further and argued that ViCs co-evolved with and redefined Shenzhen's urbanism.¹²⁶ According to a German political scientist, Jonathan Bach, the traditional social structure within ViCs maintained clan-like social relations connecting to Hong Kong and various overseas relatives, making the transnational networks of the border-city possible through village-based industries and businesses.¹²⁷ Furthermore, like Guangzhou, the formed joint-stock companies within Shenzhen's ViCs built road, water, and power infrastructure and provided private schools, security, and housing for dwellers, including rural-to-urban migrant workers.¹²⁸ Bach quotes one city official commenting that "Shenzhen's secret of success" was "building the city at no cost."¹²⁹ Similar to what happened in Guangzhou, the joint-stock companies in Shenzhen's ViCs also took over the local government's functions by organizing villagers to invest in their collective land in the 1980s and 1990s.

Nevertheless, these ViCs were labeled as "the cities' tumors" and referred to as "a visual embarrassment, a challenge to government control, an impediment to planning, a vestige of the feudal past" in official narratives.¹³⁰ The resurgence of top-down planning and governance in China has internalized a dichotomic view of tradition and modernity through an ongoing nationalist agenda of modernization that initiating many local government-led urban renewal projects that aimed to remove "old villages." Whereas local governments' role in initiating urban

¹²⁶ Jonathan Bach, "They Come in Peasants and Leave Citizens': Urban Villages and the Making of Shenzhen, China," *Cultural Anthropology* 25, no. 3 (2010): 421–58, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1360.2010.01066.x>; Mary Ann O'Donnell, Winnie Wong, and Bach, *Learning from Shenzhen : China's Post-Mao Experiment from Special Zone to Model City*, ed. Mary Ann O'Donnell, Wong Winnie, and Jonathan Bach, *Learning from Shenzhen : China's Post-Mao Experiment from Special Zone to Model City*, 1st ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

¹²⁷ Bach, "They Come in Peasants and Leave Citizens': Urban Villages and the Making of Shenzhen, China," 432.

¹²⁸ Bach, 433.

¹²⁹ Bach, 434.

¹³⁰ Bach, 425.

renewal projects has become more evident in recent narratives, how local governments deal with ViCs' internal autonomy has been missing in current literature.

As the Shenzhen official's comment indicated, ViCs' "autonomous" development was not unintentional or unnoticed by the local government. In other words, the fact that the government did not pay the cost did not mean the regulatory authority was absent. While these accounts emphasize the effects of an enduring rural-society structure that has evolved into a strong internal autonomy of ViC management, what remains unclear is the mechanism of state-village interactions.

State Dominance in Urban Redevelopment

Recent studies have identified the state's dominant role in initiating, leading, and implementing large-scale redevelopment projects to fulfill the nationalist agenda of modernization.¹³¹ The recognition of state dominance challenges those views that associate China's urban development with globalized neoliberal operations; the state withdraws from intervention, and policies retreat from regulating economic activities but fit them into the established market.¹³² Such findings also challenge those claims of ViCs as informal urban places with an absence of government's interventions or regulations.

In the Chinese context, "various actors are disguised as market agents" but actually "represent the state."¹³³ In the process of urban redevelopment, the local government would first use public finance to secure bank loans, after which subsidized developers took over the role to demolish and clear targeted land parcels; after the conversion of the land ownership (to state ownership), land development institutions would take the role as landlords to make final

¹³¹ Wu, "State Dominance in Urban Redevelopment: Beyond Gentrification in Urban China."

¹³² Neil Smith, "New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy," *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (2002): 427–50, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00249>.

¹³³ Wu, 654.

transactions with developers.¹³⁴ Therefore, in so-called market transactions, the government had penetrated almost every player, including financial banks, developers, and “landlords” (land development institutions).

Some studies have further recognized the ViC joint-stock companies’ negotiation power in the state-initiated urban redevelopment agenda. On the one hand, these joint-stock companies, primarily constituted by local villagers, organized meetings to raise villagers’ concerns and demands regarding compensation and relocation issues, then reported to the government during redevelopment procedures. On the other hand, the committee members of the ViC joint-stock companies, who overlap with village-level officials who also represent the state, tended to work with the local government to persuade villagers to accept their plans (often meaning that they would give up their collective land ownership to the state).¹³⁵ The double-role of these ViC joint-stock companies, alternating between representing local villagers’ benefits and representing the state, made the relationship between local villagers and the joint-stock companies unstable.¹³⁶ Nonetheless, these ViC joint-stock companies took up significant roles in easing the social and economic conflicts among the government, developers, and local villagers during urban redevelopment. Still, the partnerships between the government, developers, and ViC joint-stock companies in transforming and redeveloping ViCs were not always transparent. Immeasurable corruption emerged in such transactions.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Wu; Ng and Tang, “Land-Use Planning in ‘One Country, Two Systems’: Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Shenzhen.”

¹³⁵ Him Chung, “The Spatial Dimension of Negotiated Power Relations and Social Justice in the Redevelopment of Villages-in-the-City in China,” *Environment and Planning A* 45, no. 10 (2013): 2459–76, <https://doi.org/10.1068/a45416>.

¹³⁶ Chung.

¹³⁷In my interviews with villagers at Nantou, almost every local respondent complained about the corrupt relationship between the company and local street-level officials, resulting in the dispossession of the collective land from farmers. Local ex-farmers demonstrated their strong resistance in attitude and action confronting those activities. A local woman told the story about how a group of peasants, including herself, appealed all the way to the provincial court to get back the land and compensation for ex-farmers and put the former chairman of the company in prison. Details will be presented in sixth chapter.

While these accounts offer insight into the mechanism of state dominance and the emerging state-village partnerships during the redevelopment/modernization process, the role of the state and its component regulatory institutions in the initial urbanization process before large-scale urban redevelopment remained unclear. The insufficiency of documenting such top-down/bottom-up interactions risks overemphasizing the ViCs' informality and slum-like physical characteristics while overlooking the hidden state-village partnerships. Furthermore, neglecting the government and planning involvement serves to reinforce the "illegal" image of ViCs and hence legitimates the conceptual separation between ViCs and the city.

The next section charts the state-village interactions in the 1980s and 1990s by tracing changes in key policies, planning documents, regulations, and villagers' responsive building activities. Beyond the dichotomic view that emphasizes either the state dominance or the bottom-up creativity in spatial production, this chapter calls for a more complex paradigm to chart the relationship between the planning system and the bottom-up building process of ViCs. Instead of assuming the absence of regulatory authority (including the local government and its component planning institutions), this chapter highlights the co-existence of partnerships and battles between top-down institutions and bottom-up organizations to fulfill a shared goal of development.

Experimenting with Village-Based Industries, 1982-1991

Deng Xiaoping's rise to power at the Chinese Communist Party by the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) signaled a shift in national agenda to prioritize economic development and domestic modernization in China. In contrast to Mao's investments in ideological campaigns, Deng adopted pragmatic strategies to fight the country's massive insufficiency and poverty. His famous "cat" analogy that "it is a good cat to catch a mouse, regardless of its colors" manifested his determination to develop market economies under a

socialist regime. In 1980, he first set up four special economic zones (SEZ) to open China's market to the world, including Zhuhai, Shantou, Xiamen, and Shenzhen. All of these were important coastal areas with long histories of overseas trade.

Zoning was initially a planning instrument adopted by modernist planners to arrange urban functions, including housing, work, recreation, and traffic, into a rational spatial order.¹³⁸ More recently, the concept of “zone” in the urban planning field implies a state of exception, where private business interests tend to operate independently of law.¹³⁹ Nonetheless, the term “zone” in the Chinese context differs from both the conventional concept of “zone” in urban planning (zoning as regulations) and its new meaning as a state of exception. Although the central government granted SEZs a certain level of autonomy in economic operations and exemptions from the national law, these SEZs were not out of the central governance or control. On the contrary, the term “zone” (*qu*) in Chinese history often meant a designated area with a differentiated purpose (military, political, or ideological) and with definite boundaries.¹⁴⁰ In the case of SEZs created by Deng, they were neither zones of particular urban functions (residential, industrial, or administrative) nor places of exception. Deng created the SEZs for a specific purpose; that was to use these designated areas to initiate an ideological shift in the national agenda.

Villages as main sites for the “three-imported-and-one-subsidized” industries. The central government established these zone-cities to experiment with capitalism and export economies, with very little financial support. Shenzhen SEZ was particularly poor at its establishment. Unlike three other zones containing developed urban areas, Shenzhen SEZ was a

¹³⁸ CIAM, “Charter of Athens,” in *Programs and Manifestos on 20th-Century Architecture*, ed. Ulrich Conrads and Michael Bullock, 1933, 137–45.

¹³⁹ Martin J. Murray, *The Urbanism of Exception: The Dynamics of Global City Building in the Twenty-First Century*, 1st ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 208.

¹⁴⁰ See Craciun, “Ideology: Shenzhen,” comments by Ma Qingyun, 87.

shoreline area of Shenzhen Bay, partitioned from Bao'an County. Despite its geographic proximity to Hong Kong (across the Shenzhen River), the landscape of Shenzhen SEZ at that time was rural, mainly composed of remnants of ancient barrack-cities and villages surrounded by farmland and mountains (Figure 2-23).¹⁴¹ However, the one thousand and eight hundred farming and fishing villages scattering across the zone area and their historical connections to the neighbor-city Hong Kong became essential resources for the newly set-up city. The cheap land and labor in these rural villages attracted investors from Hong Kong and some from Macao, Taiwan, and Japan (Figure 3-1). Also, there existed a continuation or adoption of the 1950s' imaginations. That was to take advantage of the social and production resources, such as the fixed rural laborers, organized production cooperatives, and reserved land, to build low-cost factories and develop cooperative economies.

In the 1980s, Shenzhen SEZ's initial industrialization process started in rural villages, with the support of a local policy called "three-imported-and-one-subsidized" (*San Lai Yi Bu*). In this policy, the local (municipal) government promised to subsidize foreign companies' trade via tax exemption if they used village-based factories to process imported materials, produce imported samples, and assemble imported components (three-imports).¹⁴² Simultaneously, village leaders, usually the heads of agricultural production cooperatives, mobilized villager-members to invest in building factories and necessary infrastructure, including paved roads and yards, electricity, water facilities, and telecommunications.¹⁴³ In addition to villagers' investments, the local (municipal) government often provided initial funds to support the cooperative village economies by allowing the village cooperatives to borrow loans from

¹⁴¹ Cau, *Shēnzhèn Shì Dì míng Zhì* 深圳市地名志 [Shenzhen Geographical History].

¹⁴² Wocai Yan, Yuehui Liao, and Yu Wang, eds., *Shenzhen Jiedao Cunzhen Jingji Yanjiu 1989-1991* (The Economic Research on Neighborhood, Villages, and Towns in Shenzhen 1989-1991) (Shenzhen: XinShiJi Chubanshe (The New Century Publication), 1991), 7.

¹⁴³ Yan, Liao, and Wang, 7.

National Agricultural Banks.¹⁴⁴ The third form of financial resource for establishing village cooperative economies was land rents by leasing collective land to foreign or domestic companies.¹⁴⁵ The local (municipal) government encouraged village cooperatives to put the use right of collective land on lease. Shenzhen, or more precisely, Shenzhen's villages were places where these unprecedented operations, such as separating use rights from land ownership and putting them on sale, started.

The cooperatives that jointly managed villagers' collective assets later evolved into village joint-stock companies, which became unique economic entities alternative to state-owned and private enterprises in South China.¹⁴⁶ As shareholders of the company, villagers would get dividends from land rents and management fees paid by foreign companies periodically.¹⁴⁷ The joint-stock company would also put extra income into investment again on behalf of the village collective. According to an official report, *The Statistic Data of Shenzhen 1984*, there were three different modes of village industries in Shenzhen: village-owned factories (50%), village-foreigner cooperatives (30%), and foreign companies (20%).¹⁴⁸ This report also predicted a tendency that village-foreigner cooperatives and foreign companies would continue to increase.¹⁴⁹ According to *Southern Metropolis Daily*, a newspaper based in Guangzhou, industrial production had replaced entirely agricultural production within the Shenzhen SEZ by 1985.¹⁵⁰ Today, such industrialized villages are not rare in the peripheral areas of many Chinese

¹⁴⁴ Yan, Liao, and Wang, 17.

¹⁴⁵ Yan, Liao, and Wang, 17.

¹⁴⁶ Yaping Wang, Yanglin Wang, and Jiansheng Wu, "Urbanization and Informal Development in China: Urban Villages in Shenzhen," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 33, no. 4 (2009): 957–74; Bach, "'They Come in Peasants and Leave Citizens': Urban Villages and the Making of Shenzhen, China," 2010.

¹⁴⁷ Yan, Liao, and Wang, 27.

¹⁴⁸ "Shenzhen Shi Tongji Ziliao 1984 (The Statistic Data of Shenzhen 1984)" (Shenzhen, 1984), 15.

¹⁴⁹ "Shenzhen Shi Tongji Ziliao 1984 (The Statistic Data of Shenzhen 1984)."

¹⁵⁰ *Southern Metropolis Daily*, *Weilai Meiyou Chengzhongcun - Yizuo Xianfeng Chengshi de Chaiqian Zaofu Shenhua 未来没有城中村—一座先锋城市的拆迁造富神话 [There Is No Urban Village in the Future: The Myth of Demolition and Enrichment in a Pioneer City]*, ed. Wending Chen, 1st ed. (Beijing: China Democracy and Legal Publishing House, 2011).

cities. Township village enterprises (TVEs) are such hybrid economic entities, in contrast to “state-owned enterprises under the charge of higher-level governments” and “enterprises owned by private individuals.”¹⁵¹ ViC joint-stock companies in Shenzhen can be seen as unique versions of the TVEs that dominate economic development in China’s vast countryside.

In addition to financial guidance, the local (municipal) government also intervened in the planning and designing of industrial development within peri-urban villages. As shown in *The Planning Atlas of Villages and Towns in Baoan County (Shenzhen)*, experts provided separate guidelines for constructing public facilities and factory buildings for land development in villages.¹⁵² In 1983, a group of scholars and planning experts at the Zhongshan University mapped out existing conditions of rural villages and further provided suggestions for building factories and improving the necessary infrastructure for industrial development.¹⁵³ On the map, the darker red cubes were suggested sites for factory buildings on vacant land, while the lighter red cubes were buildings for communal activities (Figure 3-2, Figure 3-3).¹⁵⁴ The added residential units, including homesteads and workers’ dormitories, were marked by those grey cubes. Also, red dots suggested facility locations, including hospitals, banks, bus stops, oil stations, water towers, and memorials. Those red and black dashed lines marked necessary infrastructure, including water and sewage pipes and high-voltage cables. The plan included planning elements surrounding the village, including passing-by railways, roads, brick kilns, and grain-drying yards, to name a few. The village planning provided detailed and case-by-case

¹⁵¹ Yuen Yuen Ang, *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap, Governance*, 1st ed., vol. 30 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), 80.

¹⁵² Huacai Chen et al., eds., *Baoan Xian Cunzhen Guihua Ditu Ce (The Planning Atlas of Villages and Towns in Baoan County, Shenzhen)* (Shenzhen, 1986).

¹⁵³ Chen et al.

¹⁵⁴ Chen et al.

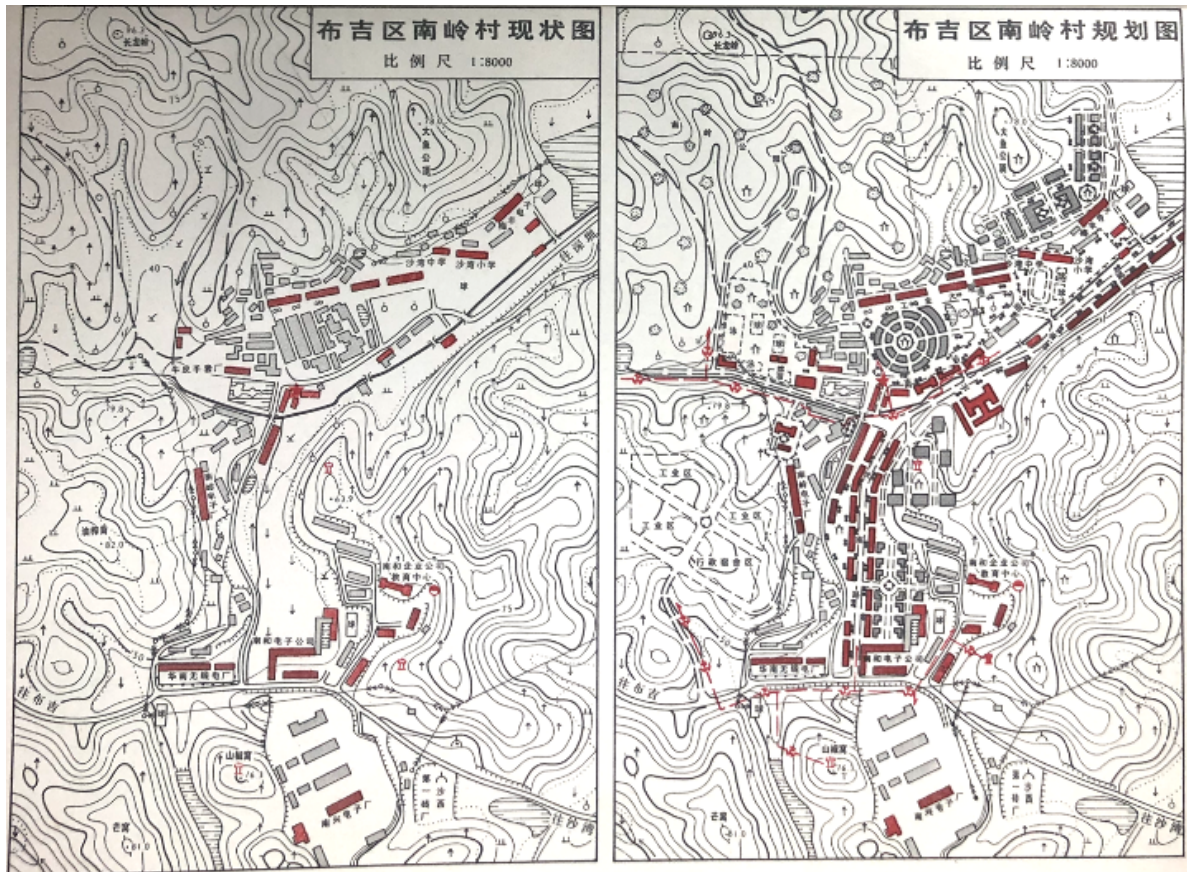


Figure 3-3. The existing condition (*left*) and planning (*right*) of the Nanling Village in Buji District in 1986

(Drawing from *The Planning Atlas of Villages and Towns in Baoan County, Shenzhen*, 34)

Government constructing new villages to reclaim rural land. For those villages located in more central areas within the Shenzhen SEZ, the local (municipal) government had attempted to remove them for modern structures and relocate peasants in newly planned villages. Through this process, the local (municipal) government intended to eliminate collective land ownership within the Shenzhen SEZ by converting rural (village) land into urban land. Simultaneously, an interim policy, “Interim Regulations of Rural Communities’ Construction Land in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone” (*Shenzhen Shi Jingji Tequ Nongcun Sheyuan Jianshe Yongdi de Zanxing Guiding*), was released in 1982, aiming to relocate original rural

communities to newly constructed villages.¹⁵⁵ The policy required that the construction of new villages align with the goals of the master plan and meet the requirements of national construction regulations and building codes for the uniform design of new villages.¹⁵⁶ Compared to naturally growing villages with traditional dwelling types and spacious yards, the creation of new villages strictly regulated the size of lots allocated to each household. For instance, every rural household would get a piece of land of 150 square meters (1,615 square feet), including the construction area not exceeding 80 square meters (861 square feet), regardless of the size of their original properties (Figure 3-4).¹⁵⁷ Each production cooperative within the new village would receive some industrial land based on the peasant population, 15 square meters (161 square feet) per peasant. Despite the reconstruction of villages, the scale and spatial configuration remained unchanged. More importantly, the basic unit of social organization, the production cooperative, remained effective in rural communities.



Figure 3-4. A new village built in the Luohu District in 1979

(Photo from Chinese Photographers Association)

¹⁵⁵ Zhang and Zhu, “Diàochá, Tòushì, Chònggòu (Investigation, Observation, Reconstruction).”

¹⁵⁶ The People’s Government Office of Shenzhen, “Shenzhen Shi Jingji Tequ Nongcun Sheyuan Jianshe Yongdi de Zanxing Guiding (Interim Provisions of Rural Communities’ Construction Land in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone),” Pub. L. No. 185 (1982).

¹⁵⁷ The People’s Government Office of Shenzhen.

More importantly, the policy stated that the government would not initially acquire the original village land and thus would not pay land acquisition fees to or compensate rural communities.¹⁵⁸ However, once the government decided to appropriate the land, it prevented villagers from using the land. The Shenzhen government barely implemented interim policy because of the vagueness. On the ground level, the interim policy only posed a threat to villagers who had relied on the land for livelihood for centuries and caused their fear of losing the collective land and properties. The policy ended up provoking a storm of “occupying land” and “growing buildings” among villagers within the original village sites. In the Nantou Village case, which used to be a fort city and was ruralized in the 1950s (see more in the preceding chapter), villagers also occupied the historic city walls to build houses.

The socialist master plan of 1982 and its component interim policies lacked a realistic vision for urbanizing the Shenzhen SEZ, failing to integrate rural communities into the urban sphere (Figure 2-22). However, it was inaccurate to assume that the government left these rural communities to entire autonomous governance. The (agricultural) production cooperatives, as mentioned previously, were very significant rural components of the state apparatus. They integrated the traditional clan-based social structure into the socialist administrative system. In many older villages, these production cooperatives were formed based on rural households’ geographic locations, which often overlapped with original clans’ spatial distributions. The heads of these cooperatives, often the most influential figures within each clan and with Party affiliations, were powerful than government officials at the community level to make decisions and implement policies. These production cooperatives became the basic units of the later village-based joint-stock companies, managing villagers’ collective assets.

¹⁵⁸ The People’s Government Office of Shenzhen.

Whereas many ViC studies view the joint-stock companies as bottom-up organizations, they neglect that a certain level of state intervention penetrates through joint-stock companies. Although villagers remain shareholders of these village-owned joint-stock companies, political affiliations made these joint-stock companies share significant similarities with state-owned enterprises regarding their partnerships with the government. Legacies of the 1950s, including a fixed rural labor pool, established production cooperatives, and reserved agricultural and residential land, became mobilizable resources to build low-cost factories and hence were among the main forces of the initial industrialization.

From 1984 to 1986, the local (municipal) government had constantly sent official groups to Hong Kong to study its land management systems, real-estate economies, finances, and businesses.¹⁵⁹ In addition to the geographic proximity and similarities in the land ownership system between Hong Kong and mainland China, the government being the sole landowner of urban land allowed Shenzhen to immediately absorb Hong Kong's experience. In 1986, a second version of the master plan of the Shenzhen SEZ was a result of the study trips. It shifted the goal from building an industrial border city to creating a modern and innovative zone-city featuring export-oriented economies and adopted zoning regulations.¹⁶⁰

Compared to the 1982 version, the plan subdivided super-large land plots into more diverse land uses, including multiple types of industrial land, residential land with different densities, land for public architecture, land for education and research, land for city facilities, and various park and recreational uses (Figure 3-5). Those blocks covered with green were reserved recreational parks, including golf courses and public parks. Again, the plan did not explicitly

¹⁵⁹ Zhang, "From Hong Kong's Capitalist Fundamentals to Singapore's Authoritarian Governance: The Policy Mobility of Neo-Liberalising Shenzhen, China"; The Policy Research Office of the CCP Shenzhen Committee, ed., *Jiejian Sikao: Xianggang Kaocha Baogao Xuanbian (Reference and Reflection: Hong Kong Study Report Selection)* (Shenzhen, 1988).

¹⁶⁰ Shenzhen Planning Bureau and China Academy of Urban Planning and Design, "The General Planning of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (Texts)" (1986), 5.

display villages and farmland areas. If we superimpose the map of existing ViCs (red dots) with the 1986 master plan, we will find that these villages were either concealed in the yellow-ish residential zones or covered by the massive green land (Figure 3-6). The dispersion of “planned” residential zones superimposed with the original sites of rural villages.

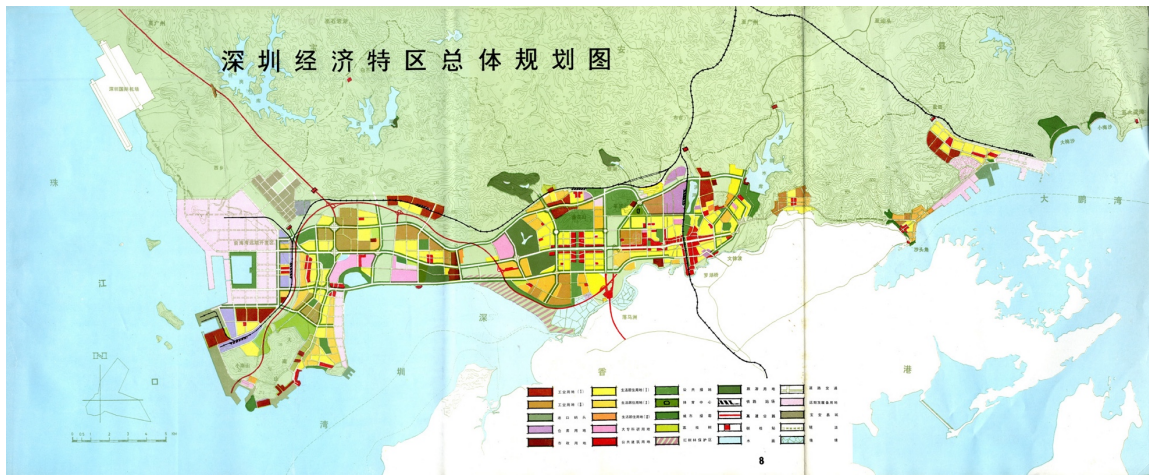


Figure 3-5. The Master Plan of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone 1986
(Plan from *The General Planning of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone*, 8)

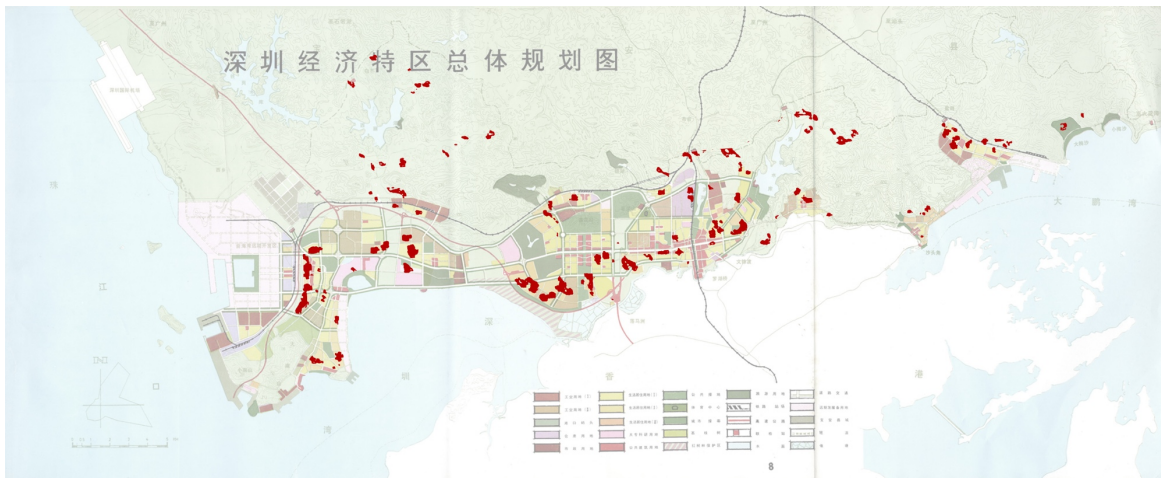


Figure 3-6. The 2005 map of ViC distribution superimposed with the 1986 Master Plan
(Reproduced by the author, based on the distribution map of ViCs by Urban Planning & Design Institute of Shenzhen)

Meanwhile, the government continued to revise the 1982 interim provisions on rural land reserved for construction. The revised provision re-announced the plan to build new village-communities, followed by a hasty move delineating control lines (defining boundaries) for new

construction sites near the existing villages.¹⁶¹ It further clarified that all rural land (on both the old and new sites) belonged to the state, while any villager or village collective only retained the right to the use of the land.¹⁶² Such a claim without clear compensation plans only irritated villagers and motivated them to occupy more land to build more houses, as moves of resistance. The revised provisions aimed to contain the increasing building activities within villages. As stated in the provisions, each household can only maintain or occupy one piece of homestead (*Zhai Ji Di*), and the construction area should not exceed 80 square meters (861 square feet), and the floors could not exceed three stories.

Departing from the interim provisions in 1982, implementing the 1986 provision expanded the village construction area adversely. Interviews with local former villagers suggest that most villagers constructed new houses on the new allocated sites and occupied them for years while leaving their previous houses as they were on the old site. However, as the government never paid anything to acquire the land, villagers returned to the old sites in the 1990s and reconstructed the houses to lease out. The inconsistency helps explain why villagers often obtained more than one housing property in the ViCs and why ViCs often extend across major streets in Shenzhen.

It was not because a road constructed later divided a village, but rather a new village was constructed and simply added to the original one. Also, this regulation explains the surprising spatial pattern of many ViCs in Shenzhen, where buildings with similar dimensions stand in grids (10 meters long and 8 meters wide), as the map of Shuiwei Village shows (Figure 3-7, *right*; Figure 3-8, *right*). The size of “cubes” was similar to those traditional “three-room-two-

¹⁶¹ The People’s Government Office of Shenzhen, “Guanyu Jinyibu Jiaqiang Shenzhen Tequ Nongcun Guihua Gongzuo de Tongzhi (A Notice on Strengthening the Rural Planning in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone),” Pub. L. No. 441 (1986); Zhang and Zhu, “Diàochá, Tòushì, Chònggòu (Investigation, Observation, Reconstruction).”

¹⁶² The People’s Government Office of Shenzhen, Guanyu jinyibu jiaqiang Shenzhen tequ nongcun guihua gongzuo de tongzhi (A notice on strengthening the rural planning in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone).

corridor” dwellings, which were 12 meters deep and 9 meters wide, including two corridors (small yards) in-between (Figure 3-7, *left*; Figure 3-8, *left*). The building manner further explains why the basic spatial fabric of newly constructed villages in Shenzhen looks similar to those of the old rural villages (Figure 3-7). After relocating local villagers, the old village land was freed up and used for factory buildings (which were subsequently replaced by office buildings and commercial blocks).

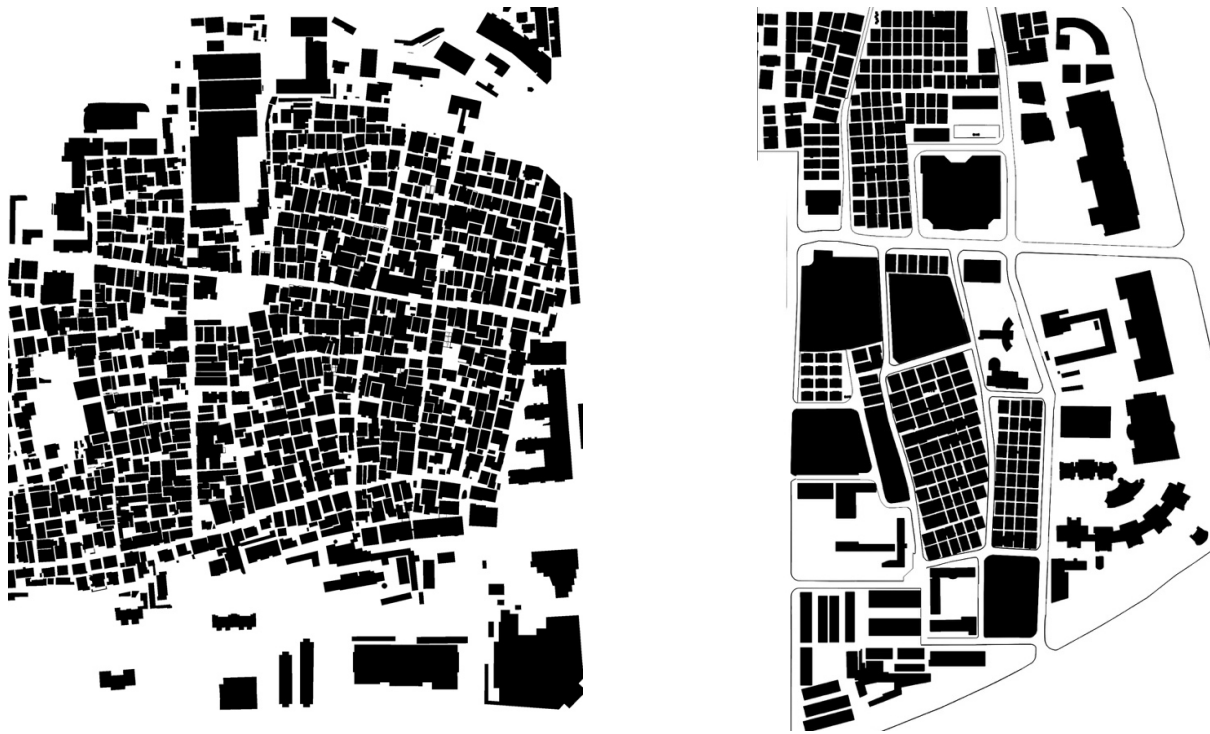


Figure 3-7. *Left*, the spatial pattern of the Nantou Village; *right*, the spatial pattern of the Shuiwei Village

(Drawings by author, the original digital map from Shenzhen Planning Bureau)

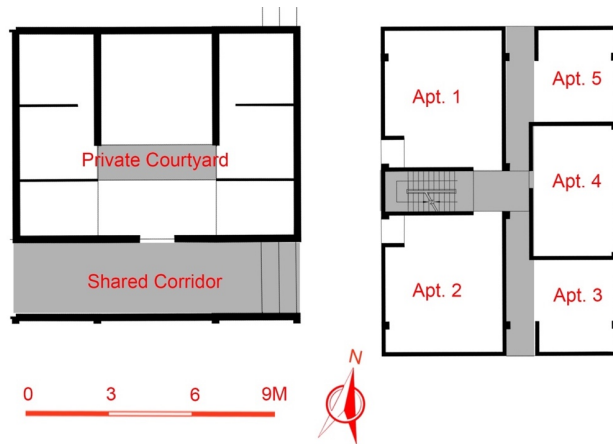


Figure 3-8. *Left*, floor plan of a traditional “three-room-two-corridor” domestic dwelling in the Nantou Village; *right*, floor plan of a newly built “rural” dwelling on the 80-square-meter homestead in the Shuiwei Village

(Drawings by author)

This political strategy was very vital for acquiring the collective rural land for industrial use without paying for its costs. The government rebuilt some ViCs in Shenzhen in the 1980s. In some cases, the organically evolved rural settlements were rearranged into more orderly and densely organized “new villages” to save more land for building factories (Figure 3-7, *right*). Some villages which were already dense retained their natural, organic spatial patterns, such as the Nantou Village (Figure 3-7, *left*). However, rural land, including new and old homesteads (*Zhai Ji Di*), remained collectively owned regardless of the official policy directives in local villagers’ perception. The land “war” between the local (municipal) government and villagers continued until the present, even though villagers were all legally transferred into urban residents within the Shenzhen SEZ.

Mao had envisioned garden cities as industrialized countryside without urban expansion. However, this was not Deng’s imagination of experimenting with capitalism. Massive village-based factories served as the cornerstone of the export economy. Still, the profits of selling land to developers became the primary source of the Shenzhen SEZ’s revenue. Regardless of ViCs’

urban functions as industrial bases and later as affordable housing sites to rural migrants, they became redevelopment targets.

Experimenting with the land market. Upon the establishment of the Shenzhen SEZ, a cross-border land development mode emerged, in which the local (municipal) government (as the landlord) offered free land and investors from Hong Kong took charge of construction and management; in return, the local (municipal) government earned 85% of the profits while the investor took the rest 15%.¹⁶³ In 1981, Shenzhen's municipal government established a real-estate enterprise, named "The Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Development Corporation," with 200 million RMB of authorized share capital, including a 30 million loan from the national bank.¹⁶⁴ Granted rights to develop land within the Shenzhen SEZ by the central government, this state-owned corporation, representing the local (municipal) government, began to collaborate with Hong Kong investors in constructing high-rise office-buildings and commodity-houses near the Luohu Port (Figure 3-9).¹⁶⁵ Establishing real-estate corporations through government-investor partnerships was the first step to reform the land (and house) allocation system in urban areas in China. Representing the local (municipal) government, the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Development Corporation took charge of experimenting with different ways of marketing land, from free allocation to bidding and later public auction.

¹⁶³ Zhongyang Guangbo Dianshitai (CCTV), *Shenzhen Gushi (The Story of Shenzhen)*.

¹⁶⁴ Zhongheng Liang and Zhonglin ZHANG, eds., *Shenzhen Tequ Jianshe de Diaocha Yu Yanjiu (The Investigation and Research on the Construction of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone)* (Shenzhen: Haitian Publishing House, 1989), 17-19.

¹⁶⁵ Liang and ZHANG, 19.



Figure 3-9. Urban structures built around the Caiwuwei Village in 1985

(Photo by He Huangyou)

To further legalize the land development operation and build a socialist land market, the zone-city revised its laws to separate the land use right from land ownership. Whereas ownership of urban land remained state-owned, the use rights of urban land became private and tradable properties in the market for a particular period. In 1987, a tentative public auction of the land use right took place in Shenzhen, which sold a fifty-year use right of a land parcel of 8,588 square-meter.¹⁶⁶ This auction was a test and a signal for changes in the land regime in China. A significant revision in the national Constitution followed in 1988, which separated urban land use and management rights from property ownership. Use rights of state-owned land legally became transferrable and tradable commodities in China.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Exhibited at the Shenzhen Urban Planning Archive Exhibition in 2019.

¹⁶⁷ State Council, “Interim Regulations of the People’s Republic of China Concerning the Assignment and Transfer of the Right to the Use of the State-Owned Land in the Urban Areas,” Pub. L. No. 56 of the State Council (1990). According to the law, the maximum years for the transfer of land use rights are: 70 years for residential land, 50 years for industrial land, 40 years for education, science and technology, culture, health, sports, 40 years for business, tourism, and entertainment, and 50 years for comprehensive or other land.

Like Hong Kong, the government, acting as a landlord, could lease land to users on long-term leases while retaining the ownership of urban land in the state's hand. Nevertheless, in distinction to Hong Kong, mainland China's local (municipal) government was also the primary land user or often acted as a partner in development projects through numerous state-owned enterprises.¹⁶⁸ The state might pay thousands of RMB to local farmers for converting one acre of farmland into state-owned urban land, but the state could sell the use right of urban land at the same scale to developers for millions.¹⁶⁹

The soaring price of land use rights in public transactions made local villagers realize the rural land's market value within the zone-city. Instead of being "landlords" who waited for developers to come, local villagers via joint-stock companies often sought to take a more proactive role in the land development by partnering with developers. These village-based joint-stock companies became competitors of the local (municipal) government, who used to be the sole landlord and developers' partner. As prompt reactions, the local (municipal) government continued to release interim regulations, intending to restrict villager's use and occupation of the rural land. On the one hand, the government continued to release regulations to prohibit building activities within villages exceeding their standards by stressing the state ownership of rural land (including homesteads).¹⁷⁰ Villages only had the use right, just like many other land users.

Simultaneously, villagers continued to occupy as much land as possible and constructed as many houses as possible, neglecting the regulations. In the 1980s, village clusters in the "Old Shenzhen Area" (*Shenzhen Xu*) near Luohu Port first experienced the building boom of village

¹⁶⁸ Ng and Tang, "Land-Use Planning in 'One Country, Two Systems': Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Shenzhen."

¹⁶⁹ Southern Metropolis Daily, *Weilai Meiyou Chengzhongcun - Yizuo Xianfeng Chengshi de Chaiqian Zaofu Shenhua* 未来没有城中村——一座先锋城市的拆迁造富神话 [There Is No Urban Village in the Future: The Myth of Demolition and Enrichment in a Pioneer City].

¹⁷⁰ The People's Government Office of Shenzhen, "Guanyu Yangge Zhizhi Chao Biaozhun Jianzao Sifang He Zhanyong Tudi Deng Weifa Weizhang Xianxiang de Tongzhi (A Notice on Prohibiting Building Private Houses and Occupying Land That Violate Regulations)" (1988).

housing (Figure 3-10).¹⁷¹ The “Old Shenzhen Area” had been one of the earliest gateways that connected the commercial trading between mainland China and Hong Kong since the operation of Kowloon-Canton Railway in 1910.¹⁷² During the reform era, this area was also one of most attractive sites where Hong Kong investors chose to locate their factories. By collaborating with these investors, local villagers gained their initial capital to build more houses. The “Old Shenzhen Area,” now the “East-Gate” Business Area, is one of most prosperous business districts in Shenzhen SEZ. The mixed roles taken on by the local (municipal) government in mainland China complicated the relationship between regulative authority and speculative operations on land development and thus shaped urban form. The regulative authority was not missing during ViC’s growth but instead worked as a threat that compelled villagers to occupy more land to claim their collective ownership. Meanwhile, lacking the financial capacity to relocate all villagers, the government failed to implement most of the regulations on the ground.



Figure 3-10. The densified built environment within villages in the “Old Shenzhen Area” (*Shenzhen Xu*) in the 1980s
(Photo by He Huangyou, “Shenzhen Old Town,” *Architectural Worlds*, no. 01 (2013), Fig. 1)

¹⁷¹ Liao, He, and Li, “Shenzhen Old Town.”

¹⁷² Liao, He, and Li.

In the same year, “The Housing System Reform Plan for the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone” (*Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Zhufang Zhidu Gaige Fangan*) legalized urban houses as commodities for sale.¹⁷³ Whereas work units remained the major source of public housing, allocated to those who worked in public institutions or the state-owned companies, they were not available for those who worked outside of this “state-owned” system. It meant that China’s public housing system excluded those working for village-based joint-stock factories or foreign-invested companies; they had to rent or buy commodity houses. The *hukou* restrictions excluded those low-income rural-to-urban migrant workers from applying for public housing. Simultaneously, they could not afford to rent or purchase any commodity houses, making those self-built cheap rental houses in nearby villages their only option. Therefore, this commodification of houses and restriction of public housing provision in the late 1980s contributed to the formation of the rental housing market in ViCs.

Meanwhile, the legalization of putting the use right of urban land and houses in the market facilitated the development of the massive farmland surrounding rural villages. In 1989, the Shenzhen SEZ became the first city to implement the national requisition of rural land from village collectives. The released provisions on land requisition stated that the state would acquire all developable rural land within the Shenzhen SEZ; in compensation, the government would allocate the village collective an urban land parcel close to (but much smaller) the old village site.¹⁷⁴ The village collective would only have the land use right (rather than ownership) of the allocated urban land parcel. They could develop real estate to compensate for their loss of farmland and old homesteads.

¹⁷³ The People’s Government Office of Shenzhen, “Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Zhufang Zhidu Gaige Fangan (The Housing System Reform Plan for the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone),” Pub. L. No. 767 (1988).

¹⁷⁴ The People’s Government Office of Shenzhen, “Guanyu Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Zhengdi Gongzuo de Ruogan Guiding (Several Regulations on Land Acquisition in Shenzhen Sepcical Economic Zone)” (1989).

Between 1982 and 1993, the local (municipal) government requisitioned these collectively owned land pieces, including paddies, Lychee farms, woodland, and local graveyards surrounding the villages (Figure 3-11). As shown in a district map made in 1986, the appropriation began in the east, closer to the city's administrative center (Figure 3-12). Two industrial parks, a local gardening company, and a foreign livestock enterprise (named *Chia Tai Conti*, jointly invested by corporations from Thailand and the U.S.) occupied farmland east to the village (Figure 3-12).¹⁷⁵ The entire area has now been developed into commercial and residential blocks, including the parcel allocated to the village collective as compensation and many acquired by state institutions and local and foreign enterprises.



Figure 3-11. The farmland and woodland area that used to be owned by the collective (commune) of the Nantou Village
(Reproduced by the author, based on local villagers' descriptions, the original map from Google Maps)

¹⁷⁵ Yeyi Huai, ed., *Shēnzhèn Jiāotōng Zhǐnán* [Shenzhen Traffic Guide] (Shenzhen: Haitian Publishing House, 1986).

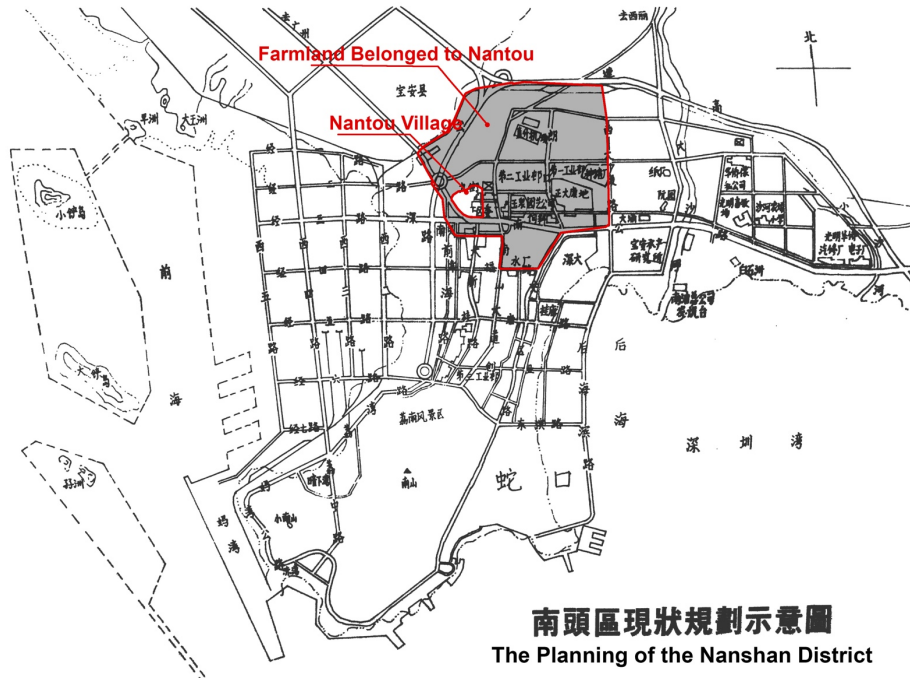


Figure 3-12. The planning (land division) of the Nanshan (Nantou) District in 1986

(Reproduced by the author, original map from *the Shenzhen Traffic Guide*, 1986)

Again, it was a development strategy for the local (municipal) government to allow the village collective to construct office or commercial buildings and basic facilities on the newly allocated land parcel through self-financing. Through this tradeoff, the local (municipal) government converted the collective ownership of the massive rural land to state-ownership and also paid little compensation for the land requisition. Also, villagers' collective investments in construction and basic infrastructure saved the local (municipal) government from paying for construction fees, not to mention villagers' self-built houses that became main sources of affordable housing for Shenzhen's millions of rural-to-urban migrant workers. While real estate development and building construction attracted an increasing number of peasants from the hinterland to work in the Shenzhen SEZ, those rural villages near construction sites became the arrival places for these rural-to-urban migrant workers.

Nevertheless, the requisition of farmland caused tremendous anxieties for local villagers. With this requisition, construction activities in rural villages reached a peak. On the one hand, government regulations continued to prohibit villagers from building any structures without official endorsement; on the other, villagers who already lost the farmland but were not yet assimilated into the urban system kept pushing back against land ownership conversion. That was because the compensation for farmland requisition was not transparent, and some never reached individual villagers due to instances of corruption that occurred at each level of the bureaucracy. As a result, state-owned development corporations were busy occupying farmland and constructing high-rise buildings, whereas local villagers were busy expanding their houses to occupy as much space as possible on both their old homesteads and the new land parcels allocated to them. Such occupying and rebuilding activities created the phenomena of handshake buildings in many ViCs.

During this first peak time, villagers rebuilt houses within both the old and new villages up to four or five stories. Meanwhile, the government took a step back by suspending the implementation of plans to remove unauthorized houses within villages due to the lack of financial capacity to relocate and assimilate local villagers and migrant workers into the urban system. From 1982 to 1989, the city-building process in Shenzhen was more strategic than planned. All available forces and usable resources were mobilized and even encouraged to accumulate capital and increase revenue. However, instead of improving living, social, or environmental qualities, the government's priority was facilitating economic development by making policies to foster the land market. Such policy preferences tended to dispossess both local villagers' and migrant workers' right to live in the city. Nevertheless, local villagers were not compliant with the situation, led by the agricultural production cooperatives; they proactively

reacted to the strategic programs by investing in their land with foreign investors and building up houses to claim their property rights.

Planning for Development, 1992-2003

In 1989, the Tiananmen Square Protest in China and a series of revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe, which resulted in the dismantling of the Soviet Union and led to economic sanctions from Western countries and withdrawals of foreign investments. Stagnancy in urban production caused severe dissension within the CCP. The party's new leadership, Chairman Jiang Zemin and Prime Minister Li Peng intended to resume the socialist planned economies by ending reform and open-door policies. Meanwhile, Deng Xiaoping insisted that opening the market was the only pathway for the nation to escape poverty. To re-energize the economy and convince investors, Deng revisited the economic zones in 1992, known as the South Trip (*Nanxun*).

Deng's trip and speech marked a new era of Shenzhen's capitalist urban development. For those reformer-officials in Shenzhen, Deng's South Trip confirmed consistent support from the most influential figure in the Chinese Communist Party. In Deng's famous speech in 1992, he reemphasized that "(economic) development was the only right way for China (*fazhan caishi ying daoli*)," and that economic reform should be "a fearless journey." Deng's speech confirmed both local officials and investors, signaling that the central government would continue to support their experiments and offer special economic treatment for them. After Deng's tour, the local (municipal) government announced its goal to build Shenzhen into a global city in the next twenty years.¹⁷⁶ The national state council supported this goal and authorized two counties, the

¹⁷⁶ Urban Planning and Design Institute of Shenzhen, ed., *Collection of Publications by Staff Members 1990-1998* (Shenzhen, 1998), 90.

Baoan county in the north and the Longgang in the east, to be incorporated into Shenzhen's development plan as back-up areas for its expansion.¹⁷⁷

Urbanizing rural villages. With the ambition to expand the Shenzhen SEZ into a global city in twenty years, the government also took a more aggressive step to “urbanize” all rural communities within the zone in 1992.¹⁷⁸ In an attempt to integrate rural villages into the urban system, all villagers, including farmers, fishermen, and oystermen, with agrarian *hukou*, were converted into urban residents with non-agrarian *hukou*. Simultaneously, the local (municipal) government officially rearranged the essential village organizations, the agricultural production cooperatives, into joint-stock companies to adapt to non-agricultural production. Also, the local (municipal) government transformed the village administrative system from village committee to neighborhood committee. On the surface, neighborhood (village) committees were responsible for community affairs and services, while joint-stock companies managed collective assets and businesses. In reality, the joint-stock companies took control over everything, including constructing water, electricity, transportation infrastructure, providing environmental and sanitary facilities, and social security.

Despite the local (municipal) government's attempts to eliminate the rural-urban divide in administration, there lacked institutional support to prepare local villagers to integrate themselves into the urban society. Instead of getting jobs in the city, local villagers' most important income resource was still rent and dividends from the joint-stock companies. As a result, their social networks remained confined to the close clans or villages. In other words, even though the local (municipal) government of Shenzhen declared its first place in completing

¹⁷⁷ Urban Planning and Design Institute of Shenzhen, 90.

¹⁷⁸ The People's Government Office of Shenzhen, “Guanyu Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Nongcun Chengshihua de Zanxing Guiding (Interim Provisions on Urbanizing Rural Villages in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone)” (1992).

urbanization (meaning eliminating rural villages), it did not work in social and cultural aspects. The completion perhaps only meant that rural villages and local villagers became invisible in the process of policymaking.

Meanwhile, the newly unleashed real-estate development forces and accompanying construction activities continued to attract peasants from the hinterland to jobs in the Shenzhen SEZ. In 1990, the statistics showed that the population of migrants (residents with a temporary residence permit, not local *hukou*) in Shenzhen SEZ exceeded 1.33 million, which doubled the population of those with local *hukou* (0.69 million), not to mention the many unregistered migrant laborers.¹⁷⁹ The majority of migrants lived in the old or newly constructed villages, as the public housing system remained only available to those who worked for state institutions or state-owned corporations. The increasing influx of rural migrant workers and their urgent need to find living spaces only incentivized local reformer villagers to build a rental housing market outside of the formal market. Besides adding more stories to their current houses in new villages, local reformer villagers also returned to their old villages to reconstruct their older houses for lease. In response, to ban local villagers from self-building activities, the government released the Shenzhen SEZ Housing Leasing Regulations, which prohibited houses without officially issued title deeds from leasing.¹⁸⁰ However, the government could not provide affordable housing for the much-needed laborers in the city and had to give up implementing the ban.

Between 1993 and 1994, with the migrant population doubling its size to 2.4 million, the occupying and building activities in both old and new villages also reached another peak.

Villagers demolished most original houses with two to three stories and rebuilt houses up to five

¹⁷⁹ Shenzhen Statistics Bureau, "Shenzhen Tongji Nianjian 1990 (Shenzhen Statistical Yearbook 1990)" (Shenzhen, 1990).

¹⁸⁰ Standing Committee of the Shenzhen Municipal People's Congress, "Regulations of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone on Lease of Houses" (1992).

or six stories high, and some were seven to eight stories. Simultaneously, the local (municipal) government released more regulations to contain the situation by reclaiming that village land ownership belonged to the state. In contrast, villagers and joint-stock companies were only granted use rights. However, these regulations again only served to encourage even more building activities by villagers. For instance, regarding real-estate property rights, the government took a step back by agreeing to issue official proof to those real-estate properties built or occupied by village joint-stock companies for industrial or commercial use.¹⁸¹ For privately built village houses, local villagers did not stop rebuilding them for leasing out, though the government regulations reclaimed that one local household could only register one property.¹⁸² In the end, the municipal planning institution completely stopped issuing any approvals to private construction activities in villages.

The pace of planning guidelines and regulations had never matched the development speed since the economic reform unleashed land market forces. In the official narrative, the Shenzhen SEZ claimed to be the first city in China that completed urbanization by integrating rural communities into the urban system in 1992. However, the land battle between the government and local villagers never ended and even intensified. In perceptual, cultural, and even economic aspects, rural villages and communities have remained separated from the urban system even today. Or it was more a question of whether the complete elimination of rural villages was the expression of the completion of urbanization in Shenzhen. These rural villages had evolved from agriculture-based villages, hybrid industrial-residential villages, into low-income rental housing neighborhoods. They had already been constitutive parts of the city, just

¹⁸¹ The People's Government Office of Shenzhen, "Guanyu Chuli Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Fangdi Chanquan Yiliu Wenti de Ruogan Guiding (Several Provisions on Handling the Remaining Problems of House Property Rights in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone)" (1993).

¹⁸² The People's Government Office of Shenzhen.

not the conventional idea of a city. It is not the ViCs that hinder the city's development and progression to the global rank but the conceptual separation between ViCs and the city that confines our understanding of the global city.

Planning as an instrument for land revenue. Shenzhen urbanism put urban planning in an ambiguous position. Instead of providing guidelines to balance social, environmental, and economic development, urban planning became a tool to maximize the economic profits of land development. Despite that the planning system in Shenzhen was imported as a model from Hong Kong to regulate the land market, the implementation of the hierarchical planning system in Shenzhen was quite different due to the government's more complicated role in the system.

Since the Shenzhen SEZ's general planning in 1986, Shenzhen has adopted a multi-tier hierarchical planning system. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, China's planning culture used to control spatial forms, including the ancient city-design principles and more recent socialist planning ideas. However, in the market economy, where subdivided land parcels were sold to different developers, top-down planning and form design were inefficient and impotent. Learning from Hong Kong's three-tier hierarchical planning system,¹⁸³ Shenzhen also changed its two-tier system (general economic planning and detailed form design) into a three-level controlling system, including the highest level controlling the general structure, the second level controlling the district development, and the third level containing spatial forms.¹⁸⁴ Compared to top-down socialist planning, the new hierarchical planning system was concerned less with

¹⁸³ Ng and Tang, "Land-Use Planning in 'One Country, Two Systems': Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Shenzhen," 16-17. The three-tier hierarchy of planning in Hong Kong works as such: The highest level is a territorial development strategy containing strategic long-term development options guiding the general directions of spatial growth for the territory. The second level was sub-regional plans which translate the territorial development goals into more specific planning objectives. The third tier is local plans, which include the statutory outline zoning plans and development permission area plans; and the departmental outline development and layout plans. A certain level of public involvement happens at making the statutory outline zoning plans in Hong Kong.

¹⁸⁴ Rong Chen, "Chengshi Guihua Kongzhi Cengci Lun (A Theory of Controlling Levels in Urban Planning)," in *Collection of Publications by Staff Members 1990-1998*, ed. Urban Planning and Design Institute of Sehz (Shenzhen, 1997), 108-13.

controlling spatial-form but more with providing indicators and regulations to guide and manage land development.¹⁸⁵ The conflict emerged. In Shenzhen, the planning and design institution responsible for making plans and regulations became separated from or subordinated to the Municipal Planning and Land Bureau and its local components that controlled the land resource and its management and were actual “landlords” representing the state. In other words, plans and regulations had to resign to or at least align with “landlords” transactions.

The three-level controlling system further evolved into a five-tier hierarchy of planning techniques, combining Hong Kong’s structure with the old socialist planning system elements. The highest level was city development strategies (similar to Hong Kong’s first-level planning) and general city planning (inherited from the socialist master planning). The second level was sub-regional plans, which specified territorial development goals (similar to Hong Kong’s second-level planning). The third level was district plans, giving more power to the district-level government (especially the Planning and Land Bureau) to outline land use and manage urban construction. The fourth level was local statutory plans, including zoning plans and development plans (like Hong Kong’s third-level planning). The local statutory plans in Shenzhen further established a stronger controlling purpose through a list of indicators, including land use, floor area ratio, building density, red line controlling, green space ratio, and so on. The fifth level was detailed blueprints, which offer operative design guidelines to land parcels (included in Hong Kong’s third-level planning).

However, in contrast to providing more comprehensive guidance to city-building, Shenzhen’s hierarchical planning system ended up producing disjointed plans made at different levels.¹⁸⁶ Unlike Hong Kong, where the government played the central role as the manager and

¹⁸⁵ Chen.

¹⁸⁶ Urban Planning and Design Institute of Shenzhen, *Collection of Publications by Staff Members 1990-1998*, 91.

regulator, Shenzhen's municipal government played multiple roles in land development, as the primary user of land through state-owned real-estate enterprises or as a partner in development projects.¹⁸⁷ When the district-level authorities gained more development and planning power through the five-tier planning system, they became more interested in pursuing revenue through development than exercising planning control. The Shenzhen Planning & Design Institute, the top institute in making plans, was often commissioned by the district-level Planning and Land (Natural Resource) Bureaus (which controlled the land resource and its management) to prioritize development projects.¹⁸⁸ As a result, district-level government institutions often implemented lower-level plans before completing higher-level plans or guidelines due to the city's overall pro-growth strategy.

Local statutory plans, including zoning plans and lists of controlling indicators, proved to better serve the land market. The Nanshan District's district plan in Shenzhen was finished in 1995, one year before the completion of 1996 city planning. On top of the district plan made in 1986, the 1995 plan divided the Nanshan District into three sub-districts, which were subdivided into nineteen functional zones by main roads (Figure 3-12, Figure 3-13).¹⁸⁹ Planners assigned each zone occupying an area of 5-10 square kilometers with specialized population size and function, such as high-tech industries with subsidiary residence or tourist zones with services. The nineteen zones were further subdivided into sixty-nine land parcels, provided with detailed development and construction indicators.¹⁹⁰ District-level government institutions could then allocate or sell each land parcel to land users by lease transfer, bidding, and auction. Despite the zoning rules and construction indicators, land users and their relationships with the local

¹⁸⁷ Ng and Tang, "Land-Use Planning in 'One Country, Two Systems': Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Shenzhen," 14.

¹⁸⁸ Urban Planning and Design Institute of Shenzhen, *Collect. Publ. by Staff Members 1990-1998*.

¹⁸⁹ Urban Planning and Design Institute of Shenzhen, 157.

¹⁹⁰ Urban Planning and Design Institute of Shenzhen, 159.

authorities maintained a strong decision power over building density and design within each land parcel. The subdivision of land onto small parcels made land transactions easier and allowed the same-size ViCs to fit into the urban land division and connect to the transit system. That means that the existence of ViCs would not affect the overall urban planning.

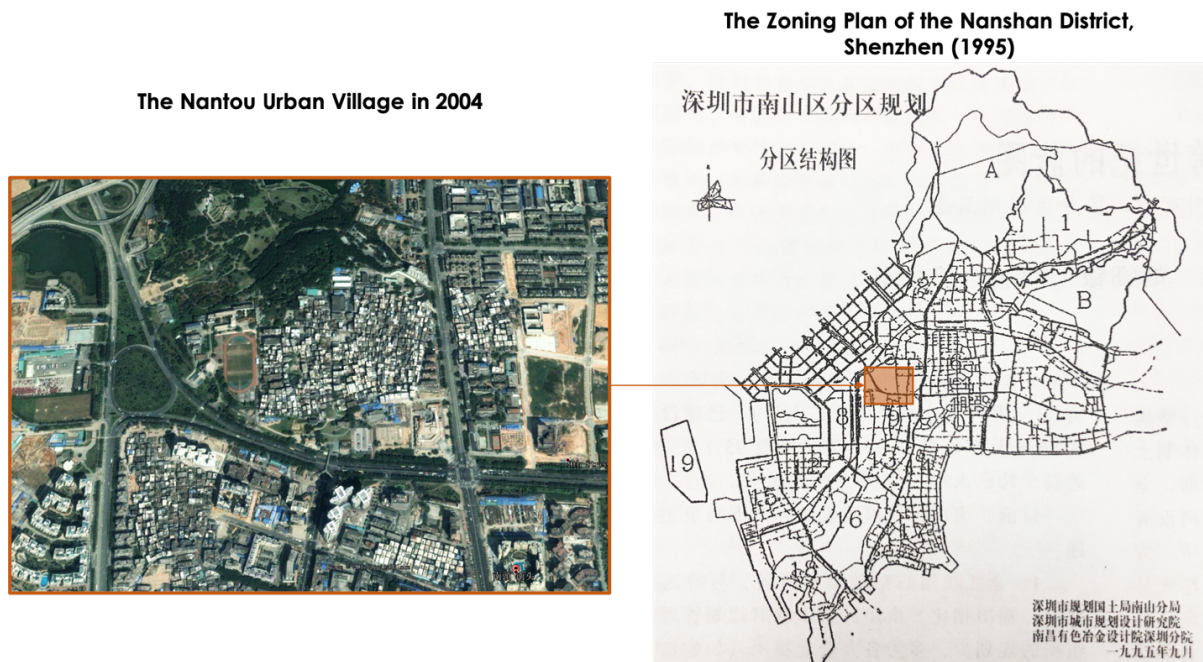


Figure 3-13. *Left*, a satellite map of the Nantou Village in 2004; *right*, a district plan of the Nanshan District made by the Nanshan Branch of the Shenzhen Planning and Land Resources Bureau in 1995

(Reproduced by the author, original maps from Google Maps [*left*] and Shenzhen Municipal Planning Bureau and Shenzhen City Government [*right*])

More importantly, the land subdivision was also an important tactic to absorb existing ViCs into the land development market. Each ViC was approximately the size of a subdivided land parcel in the district plan, demarcated by planned roads or avenues (Figure 3-13). On the map, ViCs were just like other divided land parcels developed and occupied by governmental institutions, high-tech industrial parks, and residential and commercial blocks. On the one hand, the local (municipal) government could continue to take advantage of ViCs' investments in public facilities, infrastructure, and low-income rental housing provision. At the same time, it

paved the way for future urban renewal, when the land parcel occupied by ViCs could be easily acquired and absorbed into larger redevelopment plans.

Planning for a modern metropolis. Expanding Shenzhen's planning area was a signal to transform Shenzhen SEZ from "a factory" in Hong Kong's "backyard" to a modern metropolis. In 1996, the Guangdong Province initiated its regional goal of the Pearl-River-Delta urban agglomeration, resembling the preceding one of the Yangtze River Delta. Shenzhen was a crucial part of the urban agglomeration. In 1997, a new version of city development and general planning extended Shenzhen's metropolitan area from 327.5 square kilometers (the original zone area) to 2,020 square kilometers by incorporating two counties (Figure 3-15).¹⁹¹ The plan changed the city goal from building Shenzhen as an industrialized and export-based special economic zone to a "Big Shenzhen" city, functioning as the national development base of high-tech industries and the regional center of finance, information, business, transit, and tourism.¹⁹²

In reality, the urban transition took place years before the plan was completed and began in the ViCs when the government evicted labor-intensive manufacturing industries. The industrialization of Shenzhen began in rural villages through the "three-imported-and-one-subsidized" (*San Lai Yi Bu*) policy, where village factories processed imported materials, produced imported samples, and assembled imported components for exportation.¹⁹³

Simultaneously, the municipal government supported villagers by giving bank loans and

¹⁹¹ Shenzhen Municipal Planning Bureau and Shenzhen City Government, "Shenzhen Shi Chengshi Zongti Guihua (1996-2010) (Shenzhen City Comprehensive Planning 1996-2010) (Atlas)" (1997).

¹⁹² Urban Planning and Design Institute of Shenzhen, *Collect. Publ. by Staff Members 1990-1998*; Shenzhen Municipal Planning Bureau and Shenzhen City Government, "Shenzhen Shi Chengshi Zongti Guihua (1996-2010) (Shenzhen City Comprehensive Planning 1996-2010) (Text)" (1997).

¹⁹³ Wocai Yan, Yuehui Liao, and Yu Wang, eds., *Shenzhen Jiedao Cunzhen Jingji Yanjiu 1989-1991 (The Economic Research on Neighborhood, Villages, and Towns in Shenzhen 1989-1991)* (Shenzhen: XinShiJi Chubanshe (The New Century Publication), 1991), 7.

subsidized these trades through tax exemption (as mentioned in the preceding chapter).¹⁹⁴ In 1994, faced with severe environmental consequences (mainly water pollution), the government stopped approving three-imported-and-one-subsidized projects and began to move existing factories to more inland areas, including the two counties, Baoan and Longgang.¹⁹⁵ To control the rural population from entering the Shenzhen SEZ, the government set up inspection stations and wire fences on both sides that created this “corridor” space between the two rural counties and the Shenzhen SEZ (Figure 3-14). Known as the “second borderline” (*èrxìàn chāhuā dì*), in addition to the first borderline between the SEZ and Hong Kong, the fenced “corridor” area was once outside of the governance of either the SEZ or the two counties.

The eviction of “three-imported-and-one-subsidized” industries affected ViCs significantly. First of all, most of the village joint-stock companies’ revenue and villagers’ incomes were from these factories’ dividends. Secondly, many local former villagers were also workers in these factories, who lost their jobs. Thirdly, many rural migrants who worked in these factories also followed these factories to Baoan and Longgang counties, which further left ViCs rental houses empty and many small businesses dying. By the end of 1994, 40% of village-based factories within the zone were left empty.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Wocai Yan, Yuehui Liao, and Yu Wang, eds., *Shenzhen Jiedao Cunzhen Jingji Yanjiu 1989-1991 (The Economic Research on Neighborhood, Villages, and Towns in Shenzhen 1989-1991)* (Shenzhen: XinShiJi Chubanshe (The New Century Publication), 1991), 7.

¹⁹⁵ Zhongyang Guangbo Dianshitai (CCTV), *Shenzhen Gushi (The Story of Shenzhen)*.

¹⁹⁶ Zhang and Zhu, “Investigation, Observation, Reconstruction [调查 透视 重构],” Volume.4, 29-31.



Figure 3-14. The “second borderline” between the Shenzhen SEZ and inner areas (*èrxian chāhuā dì*)

(Photo from Chinese Photographers Association)

In the meanwhile, ViCs began to form in more inland areas where these labor-intensive manufacturing factories moved. The superimposition of the ViC distribution mapped in 2005 on top of the 1996 master plan of Shenzhen City suggests that the planned residential and industrial zones in the extended areas were where ViCs sat (Figure 3-15, Figure 3-16). Again, ViCs were not left outside of the planning but instead concealed in those planned residential and industrial clusters. From the Shenzhen SEZ, its extended areas, to the rest of China, the strategy to industrialize rural villages for urban development became a planning paradigm. It is not that the regulatory authority was suspended but that planning regulations were made to encourage exceptional practices and serve development goals.

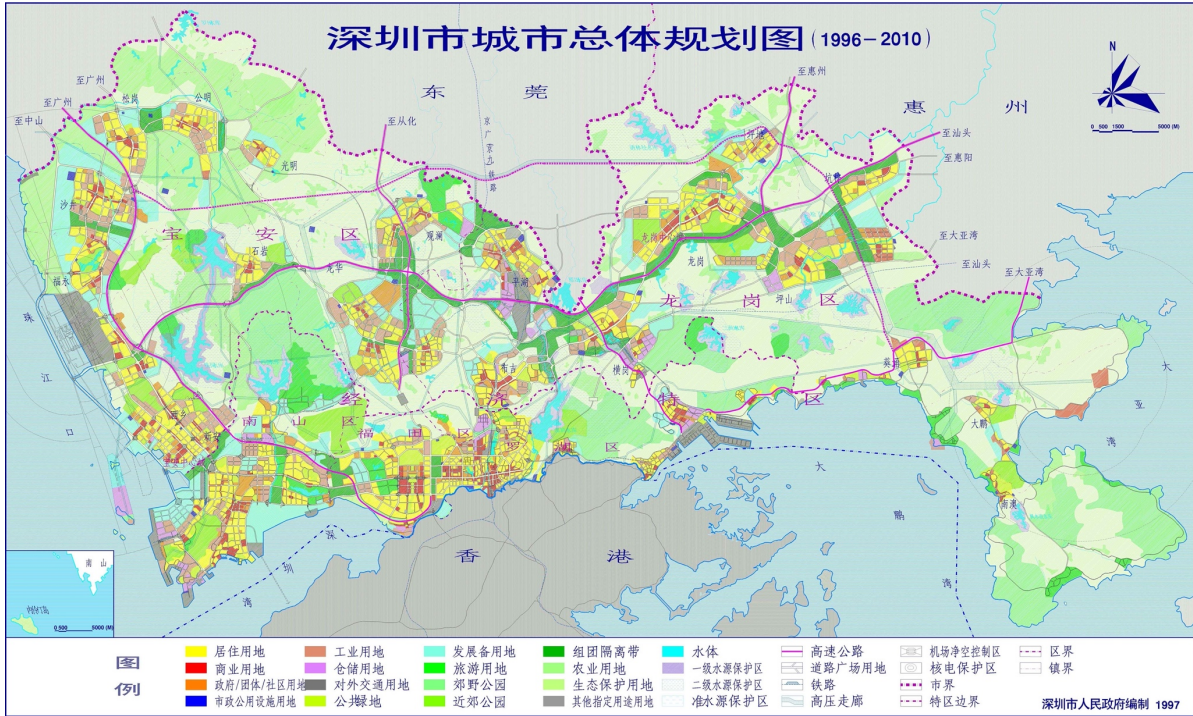


Figure 3-15. The Comprehensive Plan of Shenzhen City (1996 -2010)

(Map by Shenzhen Municipal Planning Bureau, 1996)

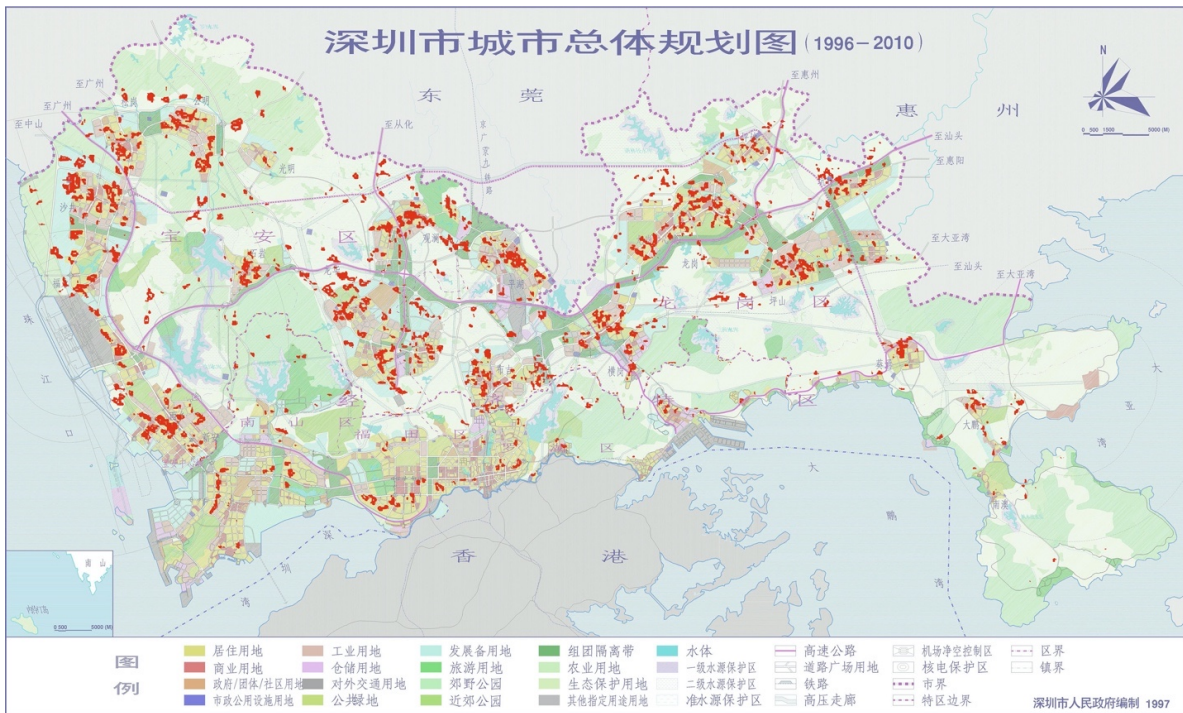


Figure 3-16. The 2005 map of ViCs superimposed with the 1996 Master Plan

(Reproduced by the author, original data from The Urban Planning & Design Institute of Shenzhen)

Making ViCs illegal. While more ViCs emerged in the more inland areas, few ViCs survived within the original zone area. The eviction of three-imported-and-one-subsidized industries soon led to more restrictive regulations on ViCs and village-based assets. First of all, regulations affecting existing village joint-stock companies came out in 1994, which prevented the marriage of market capital and village assets.¹⁹⁷ The regulation clarified that properties of joint-stock companies were collective assets, where the collective share had to constitute more than 51% of the company stock; in comparison, privately raised funds had to be limited to 30%.¹⁹⁸ Also, any individually owned stocks could not be transferred but only inherited by the next generation. The regulation prevented village joint-stock companies from entering the market and reserved the local (municipal) government's rights as the only legal entity to develop ViCs.

Meanwhile, the Planning of Shenzhen City (1996-2010) initiated an urban renewal plan within the original zone, which officially defined the land development shift from an extensive mode to an intensive mode.¹⁹⁹ Both old and new village sites became the main targets of urban renewal planning for intensive development. Instead of demolishing these villages, the planning text illustrated the purpose of urban renewal as the fulfillment of social and environmental benefits. It called for more financial support from the government to improve social facilities and upgrade urban functions surrounding and within these older villages, and more importantly, to contain profit-oriented real-estate operations.²⁰⁰ For new villages, the text proposed to lower the living density and to limit private construction activities to ensure village houses were designed and built uniformly with urban standards.²⁰¹ While these city-level planning ideas invested in

¹⁹⁷ The People's Government Office of Shenzhen, "Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Gufen Hezuo Gongsi Tiaoli (Regulations on Joint-Stock Cooperative Companies in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone)" (1994).

¹⁹⁸ The People's Government Office of Shenzhen.

¹⁹⁹ Shenzhen Municipal Planning Bureau and Shenzhen City Government, "Shenzhen Shi Chengshi Zongti Guihua (1996-2010) (Shenzhen City Master Planning 1996-2010) (Text)" (1997), 5.

²⁰⁰ Shenzhen Municipal Planning Bureau and Shenzhen City Government, 26.

²⁰¹ Shenzhen Municipal Planning Bureau and Shenzhen City Government, 27.

improving environmental and living qualities within ViCs, on-ground operations nonetheless only triggered more conflicts between the local (municipal) government and village communities led by joint-stock companies. The beautification plans lacked consideration of the means to provide jobs for ViCs dwellers who lost jobs and income sources.

In 1999, a public notice on “Decision on Investigating and Handling Illegal Buildings” officially labeled ViCs’ buildings that were constructed or transferred as “inconsistent with urban planning guidelines or the standards provided by the municipal government” as illegal.²⁰² In 2001, “Rules of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone on Dealing Historical Illegal Private Houses” prohibited “illegally” built private village houses from being traded in the housing market.²⁰³ The rules confirmed the legal status of houses built by local villagers before March 1999 as private property, but not including the land (or homestead) on which these houses stood. Local villagers were required to pay land lease fees and punitive fines for those buildings with a construction area exceeding 480 square meters or a building floor number of more than four floors.

Meanwhile, the official media and narrative labeled ViCs as “dirty, messy, and low” (Zang, Luan, Cha). Since then, the term ViC became conceptually associated with these unpleasant descriptions in Shenzhen. On the other hand, the “illegalization” process in public discourse did not stop local villagers from building activities but only enraged them and inspired them to reconstruct their houses up to more than nine stories, some even with elevators. The more the government intended to contain or prohibit building private houses within ViCs, the more intense the occupancy and building activities turned out to be.

²⁰² Standing Committee of the Shenzhen Municipal People’s Congress, “The Decision of the Standing Committee of Shenzhen Municipal People’s Congress on Investigating and Handling Illegal Buildings” (1999).

²⁰³ Standing Committee of the Shenzhen Municipal People’s Congress, “Rules of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone on Dealing Historical Illegal Private Houses,” Pub. L. No. 33 (2001).

The reason was that the relationship between the government and village communities is more symbiotic than hostile, despite these long-lasting land battles. Those regulations and rules were never enforced in ViCs and were constantly revised to sustain a balance between regulations and incentives. The ambiguity in law enforcement was not unintentional. A considerable amount of the local (municipal) governments' revenue came from those village-based factories, not to mention that ViCs afforded housing for most of Shenzhen's cheap laborers. After the government relocated labor-intensive manufacturing industries to more peripheral villages outside of the special economic zone, regulations became much more rigorous within the zone. That supported the argument that ViCs were not built without planning regulations. Rather, due to the disconnections among different levels of plans and more pragmatic local authorities, the government just prioritized profits from commodifying the collective land over social benefits and the quality of life within the ViC.

More importantly, the local (municipal) government (as the legal landlord) and local villagers (as the quasi-landlords) shared the profits. However, rural-to-urban migrant workers, as the major dwellers (tenants), had to tolerate the overcrowded and substandard living environments in the ViCs. Both local villagers and rural-to-urban migrant workers were former farmers or agricultural proletariats in the Mao era; however, they experienced different forms of inequalities in the city. While local villagers became "quasi-landlords" or millionaires, rural-to-urban migrants remained the poorest and most marginalized groups. ViCs both expressed and acted as the platform for emerging social orders and struggles in China's transitional period.

Urban Crisis and the Redevelopment of Villages-in-the-City, 2004-2010

Shenzhen's municipal government initiated an urban reconstruction project at the end of the twentieth century, seeking to transform Shenzhen from a "world factory" of manufacturing

production to a city for high-tech innovations. Shenzhen's urban reconstruction plan was an attempt to address the urban crisis faced by Shenzhen. After two decades of rapid development, Shenzhen faced increased pollution issues and scarce land resources. Most of the city's rivers were polluted because of untamed manufacturing production. Meanwhile, the over-consumption of land resources threatened the city's finances, which relied heavily on the sale of land-use rights to investors. By 2005, 50% of the city's total territory had been occupied with buildings, reaching urban development limits.²⁰⁴ Therefore, the local (municipal) government and urban planners turned to underdeveloped inner-urban spaces, namely hundreds of villages, which covered 16.7% of the entire area within the Shenzhen SEZ, up to 5,500 hectares of land. Before the official urban renewal plan, evictions of small-scale industries within ViCs to rural villages located outside of the Shenzhen SEZ had already begun. Shenzhen's broad urban renewal plan of 2004 initiated a series of redevelopment strategies.

Shenzhen's urban reconstruction plan also became an institutional tool to eliminate villagers' collective property rights and allow the state to become the sole landowner. The soaring land price of ViC-occupied land parcels was a big incentive for the local (municipal) government to legalize the process of converting collective land ownership within ViCs to state ownership to allow market transactions. From 2004 to 2009, the Shenzhen municipal government implemented a top-down tabula-rasa approach, featuring the demolition of entire villages and replacing them with modern projects. In 2004, the municipal government first released an interim master plan.²⁰⁵ The plan legalized the municipal government's status as the landowner, and at the same time, encouraged developers to participate as a partner by offering

²⁰⁴ Zhongyang Guangbo Dianshitai (CCTV), *Shenzhen Gushi (The Story of Shenzhen)*.

²⁰⁵ Shenzhen City Government, "Shenzhen Shi Cheng-Zhong-Cun (Jiu Cun) Gaizao Zanxing Guiding (Interim Provisions of the Redevelopment Plan of Shenzhen Villages-in-the-City)" (2004).

subsidies based on reconstruction floor area ratio (FAR).²⁰⁶ For instance, if the ViC reconstruction FAR was below 2.5, the government, as the landowner, would exempt developers' entire land lease; for reconstruction FAR between 2.5 and 4.4, the government would only charge the land lease at 20% of the standard market price.²⁰⁷ The plan further claimed that the local (municipal) government would use the land lease fees to improve infrastructure and public facilities around original ViC sites.²⁰⁸

The official "Reconstruction Master Plan of Villages-in-the-City in Shenzhen 2005-2010" released in 2005 intended to implement the same strategy for all Shenzhen's ViCs by legalizing the land ownership conversion processes and the cooperation between the government and various market agents.²⁰⁹ In 2007, the national property law mandated registration of title deeds for property right confirmation, which endorsed Shenzhen's renewal plan.²¹⁰ On the one hand, the law clarified the compensation rules for collective and private properties after state acquisition; on the other hand, it reinforced the government's power in taking possession of collective land occupied by houses without official title deeds. In the implementation, the government would appoint state-owned enterprises, such as the Gemdale (*Jindi*) Corporation, infamously known as the most prominent developer of the ViC redevelopment projects in Shenzhen, to negotiate with villagers about compensation and relocation.²¹¹ That was when

²⁰⁶ The floor area ratio is the floor area of the building or buildings on a zoning lot, divided by the area of that zoning lot. The FAR often described as a volume control. <https://www.planning.org/pas/reports/report111.htm>

²⁰⁷ Shenzhen City Government, Shenzhen shi cheng-zhong-cun (jiu cun) gaizao zanxing guiding (Interim provisions of the redevelopment plan of Shenzhen villages-in-the-city).

²⁰⁸ Shenzhen City Government.

²⁰⁹ Shenzhen Village-in-the-City Reconstruction Office, "Guanyu Shenzhen Shi Cheng-Zhong-Cun (Jiucun) Gaizao Zongti Guihua Gangyao (2005-2010) (The Reconstruction Master Plan of Villages-in-the-City in Shenzhen 2005-2010)," Pub. L. No. 11 (2005).

²¹⁰ National People's Congress, "Property Law of the People's Republic of China," Pub. L. No. 62 of the President of the People's Republic of China (2007).

²¹¹ Southern Metropolis Daily, *Weilai Meiyou Chengzhongcun - Yizuo Xianfeng Chengshi de Chaiqian Zaofu Shenhua* 未来没有城中村—一座先锋城市的拆迁造富神话 [There Is No Urban Village in the Future: The Myth of Demolition and Enrichment in a Pioneer City]; Chung, "The Spatial Dimension of Negotiated Power Relations and Social Justice in the Redevelopment of Villages-in-the-City in China."

stories of villagers becoming millionaires overnight appeared as headlines in newspapers and social media.²¹² Simultaneously, the other side of the story, in which developers hired armed security guards to beat villagers who refused to leave, also raised public concerns harming local authorities' credibility. The growing cost of the top-down tabula rasa approach and increasing conflicts between developers and villagers held up the ambitious renewal plan of redeveloping 184 ViCs within the SSEZ.

To facilitate the urban renewal process and overcome these obstacles, the municipal government employed a modified renewal approach in 2009 by skipping the step of converting the collective land ownership to state ownership. The government encouraged other market agents, such as village joint-stock companies with villagers being shareholders and under the village committees' management, to take the lead in ViC redevelopment projects. The newly released "Shenzhen Urban Renewal Measures" proposed a "one-to-one" agreement-based redeveloping mode in 25 selected ViCs, which allowed village committees to reach out to developers directly in land-use right transactions, avoiding the government procedures of converting land ownership, inviting developers, and auctioning (or bidding) land.²¹³ Shenzhen was not the first one to adopt this more market-oriented approach. Guangzhou had preceded

²¹² Southern Metropolis Daily, *Weilai Meiyou Chengzhongcun - Yizuo Xianfeng Chengshi de Chaiqian Zaofu Shenhua 未来没有城中村——一座先锋城市的拆迁造富神话* [There Is No Urban Village in the Future: The Myth of Demolition and Enrichment in a Pioneer City]; Chung, "The Spatial Dimension of Negotiated Power Relations and Social Justice in the Redevelopment of Villages-in-the-City in China"; Him Chung, "The Planning of 'villages-in-the-City' in Shenzhen, China: The Significance of the New State-Led Approach," *International Planning Studies* 14, no. 3 (2009): 253–73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563470903450606>; Pu Hao, Richard Sliuzas, and Stan Geertman, "The Development and Redevelopment of Urban Villages in Shenzhen," *Habitat International* 35, no. 2 (2011): 214–24, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2010.09.001>; Pu Hao et al., "Spatial Analyses of the Urban Village Development Process in Shenzhen, China," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, no. 6 (2013): 2177–97, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2012.01109.x>.

²¹³ Standing Committee of the Shenzhen Municipal People's Congress, "Shenzhen Shi Chengshi Gengxin Banfa (Shenzhen Urban Renewal Measures)," Pub. L. No. 211 (2009).

experimenting with a three-way (village-developer-government) partnership and had seen speedy progress in redeveloping Guangzhou's most famous Liede Village in 2007.²¹⁴

However, a less-top-down approach did not mean the absence of government intervention; rather, the government played more complicated roles in the process, in addition to the dominant land supplier. In the case of *Liede* in Guangzhou, only part of the village land (the renewal site), including the resettlement area and additional newly built residential/commercial towers, went back to the village collective; for this part, the government would gain one-off and continual taxes from those new commercial and retail developments.²¹⁵ The other part of the land (approximately one quarter) was held by the government and converted to state ownership; the government continued its role as both the land supplier and market regulator in setting up standards for auction.²¹⁶ Likewise, in redeveloping Shenzhen's Tianxia Village, the village's joint-stock company became both the land supplier and its own developer; without any external developers, the joint-stock company raised funds from villagers and became the partner of the government in relocating villagers and reallocating property rights.²¹⁷

Except for a few successful cases, most ViCs did not have the financial capacity and negotiating power to realize self-redevelopment. Although the "one-to-one" agreement-based approach gave more decision-making power to village collectives, negotiations among villagers, developers, and the government were not easy, especially in terms of the issue of compensation and relocation. By learning from previous cases, more and more villagers became aware of their property rights and proactive in fighting for their benefits. The director of the Shenzhen

²¹⁴ Ling Hin Li et al., "Redevelopment of Urban Village in China - A Step towards an Effective Urban Policy? A Case Study of Liede Village in Guangzhou," *Habitat International* 43 (2014): 299–308, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2014.03.009>.

²¹⁵ Li et al.

²¹⁶ Li et al.

²¹⁷ Southern Metropolis Daily, *Weilai Meiyou Chengzhongcun - Yizuo Xianfeng Chengshi de Chaiqian Zaofu Shenhua 未来没有城中村—一座先锋城市的拆迁造富神话 [There Is No Urban Village in the Future: The Myth of Demolition and Enrichment in a Pioneer City]*.

Municipal Planning and Land Resources Commission anticipated that, by demolishing 25 ViCs, these renewal sites would provide housing units of 2 million square meters and office buildings of 0.2 million square meters for the city.²¹⁸ Nevertheless, this neglected part in his calculation was that the 25 ViCs were not empty but occupied by the hundreds of thousands of rental units accommodating hundreds of thousands of migrant workers and young entrepreneurs in the city.

With the demolition of ViCs within the original zone-city, the large number of low-income laborers (particularly those in the construction and service sectors after the manufacturing industries' eviction) were also forced to either move to villages in more peripheral areas or go back home. The layout planning of construction land in *The Comprehensive Plan of Shenzhen City (2010-2020)* presented a similar pattern of land use in the northern area (outside of the original Special Economic Zone, outlined by the red dotted line) (Figure 3-17). In this layout, planners moved the majority of industrial zones (colored brown) to the northern (inland) area and located them on top of those rural village sites; within the original Special Economic Zone (SEZ), planners converted most land into residential use (colored yellow), with only a few reserved industrial sites.²¹⁹ It can be anticipated that those rural villages outside of the original SEZ would soon become ViCs, providing cheap land for manufacturing production and affordable housing for evicted migrant workers; with new high-tech industrial development, upgraded ViCs within the SEZ soon became housing for the emerging middle class.

²¹⁸ Southern Metropolis Daily.

²¹⁹ People's Government of Shenzhen, "Shenzhen Shi Chengshi Zongti Guihua (2010-2020) (Shenzhen City Comprehensive Planning 2010-2020) (Text)" (2010).

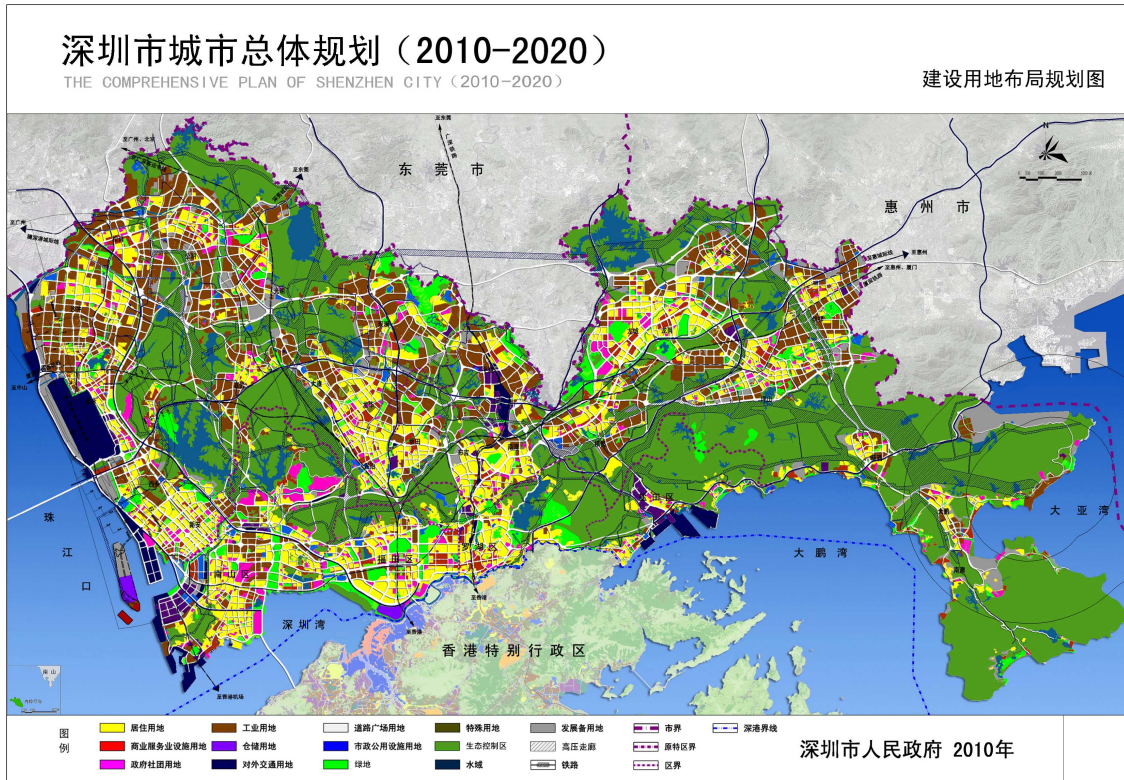


Figure 3-17. The layout of the construction land in the Comprehensive Plan of Shenzhen City (2010-2020)

(Map from Shenzhen Municipal Planning and Natural Resource Bureau, 2010)

The formation of ViCs in the 1980s was a more spatial result of village-state interactions, where villagers and planners (as the local (municipal) government actor) worked together in response to newly unleashed market forces without any clear ideas of how to use rural resources for development. The 2010 Comprehensive Plan demonstrated a clear intention of planners in adopting the ViC pattern. That was to locate industrial sites in and around rural villages to make the best use of the collective rural land resources, villagers' self-organized manner in building infrastructure and attracting investment, and the housing affordability for migrant workers.

Conclusion

Shenzhen and its ViCs suggest intricate urbanization and modernization processes in contrast to that the state simply loses control of emerging urban spaces at the periphery. Many studies tend to use the term “enclave urbanism” or “zone urbanism” to denote global tendencies

of suspending normal regulatory authority and creating the state of exception to construct fragmented spaces across the world and within various cities. In the Shenzhen case, the so-called informality of ViCs is less due to the absence of the regulatory authority or planning but instead more because of the strategic ways of using regulation and planning to guide and mobilize resources for speculation and development. Yuen Yuen Ang, a political scientist, identified an “improvisational” style of governance at the ground level in her well-received book *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap*; in a political manner that she named “directed improvisation,” the central government invited and welcomed local (municipal) government actors’ experimental (improvisational) policies and operations in response to the larger central planning.²²⁰ This chapter echoes Ang’s finding and identifies the strategic planning guidelines and operations at the ground level that allowed rural villages to evolve into independent economic entities (ViCs) and provide essential foundational resources for urban development.

The chapter investigates the responsive building activities within rural villages within the Shenzhen SEZ against the local (municipal) government’s master plans and land regulations (in the broader context of the central state’s policy changes) between 1979 and 2010. Instead of emphasizing either state dominance or bottom-up creativity, I show that the municipal government and the component urban planning institutions did not give up or lose control over ViCs. Instead of enforcing the regulations, they took a strategic step back by mobilizing peasant-landlords to collectively invest in their rural properties. In reaction, the rural-village communities proactively built basic infrastructure, factory buildings, and rental houses for migrant workers. These building activities allowed them to secure income flows from company dividends and rents after losing their farmland. Through the ViCs’ evolution from rural villages to mixed

²²⁰ Ang, *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap*.

residential and manufacturing production sites and migrant enclaves, the local (municipal) government, planning institutions, and villagers had remained more as partners than antagonists in the economic aspect because they shared in economic gains from the land development.

However, regarding the social and cultural aspects of this process, villagers and their ways of living became increasingly marginalized and segregated in the city. The same applied to migrant workers who gradually became the primary occupants of ViCs. In the new century, official planning and public narratives have rendered ViCs and their associated rural characteristics as “the past,” “uncivilized,” and “backward,” as opposed to the goal of building Shenzhen as “a modern socialist model city with Chinese characteristics” stated in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan.²²¹ In response to the central government’s shifting focus on social modernization (in addition to economic growth), local authorities were anxious to create a modern and innovative city image to demonstrate their political achievements. In addition to the dominant approach entailing the demolition of ViCs and the conversion of land ownership, an alternative approach featuring small-scale architectural intervention and cultural representation emerged. The following chapter will investigate Shenzhen’s urban renewal processes focusing on the emerging role of international architects and designers.

²²¹ People’s Government of Shenzhen, Shenzhen shi chengshi zongti guihua (2010-2020) (Shenzhen City Comprehensive Planning 2010-2020) (Text), 3.

Chapter 4 Agency: Exhibiting Villages-in-the-City for Modern City-Building

Creativity and imagination always need to be relocated and renewed across the city...ViC (village-in-the-city) is the last frontier of Shenzhen's urban renewal campaign and also the bottom line of balanced urban development. As an economic powerhouse, Shenzhen is currently undergoing the "Post-Urban-Village" era and going through a second urbanization. The ever-increasing spatial density of the city raises concerns about the survival and future of the ViCs, and UABB (Shenzhen\Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture) is born to enter the discourse. (Chief Curators of 2017 UABB [Shenzhen], 2017)

In 2017, the seventh Shenzhen/Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture (UABB) (Shenzhen venue) located its exhibitions in five villages-in-the-city (ViCs) in Shenzhen. The curatorial team, including two experienced architects, Meng Yan and Liu Xiaodu, from a Shenzhen-based firm, URBANUS, and a high-profile curator with international experiences, Hou Hanru, called for new art and architectural creativity and imagination to intervene in the urban renewal projects of ViCs.²²² By naming the 2017 UABB, *Cities: Grow in Difference*, the curators indicated their activist intention to raise public concerns about urban

²²² Hanru Hou, Xiaodu Liu, and Yan Meng, *Cities, Grow in Difference*, ed. The UABB Committee (Shenzhen, 2017), 50-51.

diversity and provide alternative approaches to the dominant demolition-replacement urban renewal operations in China (Figure 4-1, Figure 4-2, Figure 4-3).



Figure 4-1. An aerial view of the UABB-intervened Nantou Village, 2017

(Photo from URBANUS, "Village/City: Coexistence and Regeneration in Nantou, Shenzhen," 2018, Fig. 1)



Figure 4-2. UABB's exhibition project, "Understanding Chinese Reality," by Boa Mistura, 2017

(Photo from UABB, February 2, 2018.
[http://2017.szhkbiennale.org.cn/Exhibits/.](http://2017.szhkbiennale.org.cn/Exhibits/))



Figure 4-3. UABB's exhibition project, "WEGO," by MVRDV, 2017

(Photo from UABB, February 2, 2018.
[http://2017.szhkbiennale.org.cn/Exhibits/.](http://2017.szhkbiennale.org.cn/Exhibits/))

UABB's engagement with Shenzhen's ViC redevelopment projects was an example of a global tendency where architects and urban designers call for a return to social significance by

expanding their agency on urban processes. Recent revisits to Lefebvre's (1968) "the right to the city" have reinvigorated the concepts of "participatory design" and "social architecture," born in social movements and radicalism in the 1960s.²²³ At that time, activist architects emerged and criticized architecture's retreat from making significant social changes. In the economic system that produced a tremendous amount of social wealth and extremely impoverished individuals at the same time, activist architects advocated for architecture to move beyond aesthetic pursuits or engineering principles and to become a participatory process empowering ordinary people to discover their individual demands and co-create environments that meet their demands.²²⁴ In the wake of "social architecture," architecture exhibitions also added new functions to advocate for public participation and engage with urban revolutionary projects.²²⁵ Over the past 50 years, these concepts and activist practices seem to have merged into the mainstream in many Western societies. However, the increasingly connected economic system under globalization has raised new concerns over architecture becoming instruments of capitalist speculation or bureaucratic machines in developing areas. Large-scale architecture exhibitions, which often convene international architects at a special urban place, have become vital platforms where architecture's social engagement is discussed and performed.

However, the social consequences of UABB and many urban-scale architecture exhibitions across the world tend to show the opposite. From Europe to China, biennial exhibitions have become increasingly incorporated under large-scale urban reconstruction

²²³ David Harvey, "The Right of the City," *New Left Review*, no. 53 (2008): 23–40; Lee Pugalís and Bob Giddings, "A Renewed Right to Urban Life: A Twenty-First Century Engagement with Lefebvre's Initial 'Cry,'" *Architectural Theory Review* 16, no. 3 (2011): 278–95, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13264826.2011.623785>; Lee Stickells, "The Right to the City: Rethinking Architecture's Social Significance," *Architectural Theory Review* 16, no. 3 (2011): 213–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13264826.2011.628633>; C. Richard Hatch, ed., *The Scope of Social Architecture* (New York, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company Inc., 1984).

²²⁴ Hatch, 7–10.

²²⁵ Barry Bergdoll, "Out of Site/In Plain View: On the Origins and Actuality of the Architecture Exhibition," in *Exhibiting Architecture: A Paradox?*, ed. Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen (New York, New York: Yale School of Architecture, 2015), 13–22.

projects. Urban-scale biennial or triennial exhibitions (hereafter biennales) have seen increasing involvement of local states and developers. Yet, in alternative to mega-events such as Olympic Games, World Cups, and World Expos, these biennales have seen more bottom-up attempts and community-level participation. The economic, social, and environmental effects of these urban-scale exhibition-events need to be reexamined. In China, from the Shanghai Biennale, the Chengdu Biennale, Beijing International Art Biennale, the Guangzhou Triennial, to the Shenzhen\Hong-Kong Bi-city Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture (UABB), biennales have emerged as interfaces between the global market, rising creative forces, and local communities.

The 2017 UABB's considerable interventions in villages-in-the-city in Shenzhen were impossible without the expanding partnerships among curators (mainly architects and urban designers, hereafter architect-curators), the local state, and real-estate developers. The expanding partnerships allowed architect-curators to expand their agency in making urban changes beyond creativity and imagination. Nonetheless, how architect-curators partner with the local state and real-estate developers and how that partnership changes architect-curators' positions remain not fully understood yet. UABB in Shenzhen and its changing impacts on ViCs over time serve as valuable examples to reveal such relationships.

Shenzhen's Urban Renewal Under the "Socialist Modernization" Campaign

In 2005, urban planners and architects initiated the first edition of UABB as one of the government-supported cultural events to celebrate the 25th anniversary of establishing the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (SZE). These celebrating activities, including Chinese folk concerts, galas, and some professional award ceremonies, highlighted similar themes: SZE's progress and development in various aspects. Beyond that celebrating purpose, another keyword that emerged among these cultural activities was Shenzhen's new mission as a forerunner in

building a modern socialist city. The first edition of the Shenzhen Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture (UABB's precedent before Hong Kong's participation), named *City, Open Door!*, was an architectural response to this new mission. It adopted the Venice Biennale format and featured a ceremony that awarded domestic and international pioneering architectural projects.²²⁶ In addition, the Biennale organized an independent exhibition and recruited research teams from high-profile professional and academic institutions to discuss architectural solutions to Shenzhen's ViC issues, though the local government once considered ViCs as "tumors" and embarrassments to the city's image at that time.²²⁷

The Biennale and other cultural events were, first and foremost, parts of the municipal government's larger project of urban reconstruction initiated at the beginning of the new century, which seek to transform Shenzhen from a "world factory" of manufacturing production to a city of cultural and technological innovation possibilities. As discussed in the preceding chapter, Shenzhen's urban reconstruction project's first goal was to turn to underdeveloped inner-urban areas to solve the city's development plight (pollution and land scarcity). The 5,500 hectares of land occupied by one thousand and eight hundred ViCs were the main targets. In 2004, the local government released an interim reconstruction master plan of ViCs, aiming to adopt an overall top-down approach to remove all Shenzhen's ViCs and convert all collective-owned land to state-owned land. In the implementation, intense conflicts between government-appointed developers and local villages (such as developers hiring armed security guards to beat villagers who refused to leave) emerged, which raised public concerns and harmed local authorities'

²²⁶ Yung Ho Chang, *Chengshi, Kaimen! : 2005 Shoujie Shenzhen Chengshi, Jianzhu Shuangnianzhan (City, Open Door!: 2005 the First Edition of the Shenzhen Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture)*, ed. Yung Ho Chang, 1st ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chunbanshe (Shanghai People Publishing House), 2007).

²²⁷ Chang; Juan Du, "Shenzhen 2005: Crisis Amidst Celebration," *Volume 54* (2019).

credibility.²²⁸ The Biennale's first engagement with ViCs in 2005 was at this critical moment when the local government's reconstruction master plan encountered public resistances.

The second purpose of Shenzhen's urban reconstruction plan was to respond to the central government's socialist modernization project. The final step of Deng Xiaoping's three-step development strategy to fulfill "socialist modernization" by the mid-twenty-first century. At the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 1987, Deng Xiaoping finalized his three-step development strategy: the first step was to get rid of starvation, fulfilled by the end of the 1980s; the second step was to improve people's life quality to a "basically well-off" (*xiaokang*) standard by the end of the 1990s, and double the nation's overall gross domestic product (GDP) of the year of 1980, fulfilled in 1995; the final goal was to fulfill socialist modernization by the middle of the twenty-first century when the GDP could catch up with moderately developed countries.²²⁹ In line with this overall development plan, the central government laid its stress on social modernization (in addition to economic growth) as its new mission in the twenty-first century. This was an important signal for local officials, whose political capital relied heavily on the extent to which they could fulfill the central government's goals. This intention was evident in the *Comprehensive Plan of Shenzhen City (2010-2020)*, which highlighted a new goal of building Shenzhen as "a modern socialist model city with

²²⁸ Southern Metropolis Daily, *Weilai Meiyou Chengzhongcun - Yizuo Xianfeng Chengshi de Chaiqian Zaofu Shenhua 未来没有城中村—一座先锋城市的拆迁造富神话* [There Is No ViC in the Future: The Myth of Demolition and Enrichment in a Pioneer City], ed. Wending Chen, 1st ed. (Beijing: China Democracy and Legal Publishing House, 2011); Him Chung, "The Spatial Dimension of Negotiated Power Relations and Social Justice in the Redevelopment of Villages-in-the-City in China," *Environment and Planning A* 45, no. 10 (2013): 2459–76, <https://doi.org/10.1068/a45416>; Him Chung, "The Planning of 'villages-in-the-City' in Shenzhen, China: The Significance of the New State-Led Approach," *International Planning Studies* 14, no. 3 (2009): 253–73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563470903450606>; Pu Hao, Richard Sliuzas, and Stan Geertman, "The Development and Redevelopment of ViCs in Shenzhen," *Habitat International* 35, no. 2 (2011): 214–24, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2010.09.001>; Pu Hao et al., "Spatial Analyses of the ViC Development Process in Shenzhen, China," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, no. 6 (2013): 2177–97, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2012.01109.x>.

²²⁹ "Introduction to the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of China," August 9, 2012. http://guoqing.china.com.cn/2012-08/29/content_26371177.htm.

Chinese characteristics.”²³⁰ The plan claimed Shenzhen’s lead in fulfilling Deng’s final development goal, to realize socialist modernization.

Nonetheless, the measure of social modernization was not as direct as the measure of economic growth evident in the number of gross domestic production (GDP). As important signifiers of modernity, modern urban and architectural forms entered as visual evidence of local authorities’ achievements in modernization. By contrast, overcrowded ViCs and the old manufacturing sites within them became symbols of the uncivilized, backwardness, and “the past,” instead of the progressive goal of “socialist modernization.”²³¹ In other words, for local authorities, ViCs became the most protruding obstacles to achieve the planning goal of building “a modern socialist model city.” In addition to economic considerations, the local government also aimed to remove all inner-zone ViCs and replace them with modern apartments or high-rise office buildings for symbolic reasons. That was to use modern images of the built environment to represent the modern life of residents. When the top-down urban renewal approach went ugly and encountered many resistances, the Shenzhen Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture emerged as an alternative approach to display the modern aspects of the city or discover the cultural meanings of urban places. That may be the initial goal of local authorities in supporting the Biennale; however, curators’ (architects) ambition went beyond that symbolic function, especially for UABB’s long-term engagement with Shenzhen’s ViCs.

UABB’s long-term engagement with Shenzhen’s ViCs demonstrates architects’ changing roles (taking up curators’ role, hereafter architect-curators) in participating in urban renewal processes. Beyond displaying unrevealed materials or innovative ideas within a specific field,

²³⁰ People’s Government of Shenzhen, “Shenzhen Shi Chengshi Zongti Guihua (2010-2020) (Shenzhen City Comprehensive Planning 2010-2020) (Atlas)” (2010), 3.

²³¹ Jonathan Bach, “‘They Come in Peasants and Leave Citizens’: ViCs and the Making of Shenzhen, China,” *Cultural Anthropology* 25, no. 3 (2010): 421–58, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1360.2010.01066.x>.

such urban-scale exhibition events tend to make immediate environmental and social changes over time. In the context of Shenzhen, UABB started with displaying a few architectural ideas of upgrading ViCs in 2005 and eventually made the ViC its main subject and venue, where international architects and artists gathered to create on-the-ground interventions in 2017. UABB's growing engagement with the contested ViCs would not be possible without architect-curators' expanding partnerships with local authorities in the Chinese context. Nonetheless, how biennial exhibitions allow architect-curators to expand their traditional creative and imaginative power and how partnerships with the local government change architect-curators' roles in making urban changes remain not fully understood yet. UABB in Shenzhen and its growing impacts on ViCs serve as valuable examples to explore these tendencies.

Globalization and Biennialization

UABB was born in the recent biennial-exhibition boom around the world. Over the past three decades, cross-continent biennial or triennial exhibitions have prospered together with a new round of more globalized urbanization and migration. Architecture biennales are among the emerging interfaces through which international capital, technologies, and values intensively flowing into local places. Architecture biennales emerged as alternative forms to traditional architecture exhibitions. Traditional architecture exhibitions, which evolved from modernist art exhibitions, tend to display architecture as symbolic objects (such as drawings or models of new architectural types) in well-crafted “white cubes” in prestigious museums, exclusively for professionals and an interested well-educated audience.²³² As alternatives, biennial exhibitions reoccur periodically (biennially triennially, or every five years) and disperse outdoor venues

²³² Bergdoll, “Out of Site/In Plain View: On the Origins and Actuality of the Architecture Exhibition”; Wallis Miller, “Exhibitions, Objects, and the Emergence of Modernism in Germany,” in *Exhibiting Architecture: A Paradox?*, ed. Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen (New York, New York: Yale School of Architecture, 2015), 35–46.

across the city. The original purposes of biennial exhibitions were to offer immediate and flexible responses to the emergence of contemporary arts and accommodate peripheral artists.²³³ In globalization, the duplication of biennial format worldwide has built up the infrastructure for “biennialization,” when curators or directors at prestigious art institutions, well-known artists and architects, and high-profile critics travel across the globe to create exhibitions.²³⁴ The biennialization has given rise to the figure of curators.

Contemporary architecture biennales have adopted these new formats and allowed architects to take up the role of curators. Besides displaying architectural drawings and models to inform professionals, architecture biennales have changed real-life environments and created immersive experiences for visitors. Instead of situating exhibitions in museums, international architecture biennales seek special urban places, such as old industrial sites, empty warehouses, or dilapidated public places across post-industrial cities. The world’s first independent architecture biennale, the 1980 Venice Biennale of Architecture, convened a group of postmodernist architects and theorists in an old arsenal (Corderie dell’Arsenale) and curated “The Presence of the Past.”²³⁵ It featured an installed full-scale “cardboard” street to provide contrary (to real-life) environmental experiences for visitors and promote the value of post-modern architecture.²³⁶ The exhibition’s final products were not new architectural prototypes, but numerous photographs, video footage, exhibition catalogs, public narratives, academic debates, and publications, disseminating curators’ messages worldwide. Likewise, the Berlin Biennale, initiated by a group of artists, began in a nineteenth-century margarine factory. The

²³³ Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal, and Solveig Øvstebø, “Biennialogy,” in *The Biennial Reader*, ed. (Bergen, Norway: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010): 12–27.

²³⁴ O’Neil, “The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse”; Tang, “Of Biennials and Biennialists: Venice, Documenta, Münster”; Frascina, “Berlin, Paris, Liverpool: ‘Biennialization’ and Left Critique in 2012.”

²³⁵ Léa-Catherine Szacka, “Exhibiting Ideologies: Architecture at the Venice Biennale 1968-1980,” in *Exhibiting Architecture : A Paradox?*, ed. Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen (New York, New York: Yale School of Architecture, 2015), 159–68.

²³⁶ Szacka.

2009 Istanbul Biennale located its exhibition sites in an old tobacco warehouse. The 2005 UABB started in an abandoned industrial/residential park, *The Oversea Chinese Town* (OCT), built by the municipal government in the early 1980s to attract foreign-born Chinese investors. A shared pattern emerged among these cases. That was architect-curators convening a group of international architects and artists intervening in those once overlooked places and using their creativity, imagination, and influence to regenerate these places into tourist attractions.

In this process, a more complex network among curators, sponsors, dealers, narrators, and participants has emerged, beyond the traditional curator-exhibitor-public mechanism. The interplay between architects-curators and various urban actors remains insufficient in the existing discourse of biennialization, which often focuses on the exhibition event itself, such as who the architect-curators were, what design ideas and projects appeared at the exhibition, or the eye-catching exhibitors. The negotiation and implementation processes and the social and environmental implications of this new cooperative form need to be examined. UABB is a good place to start. It is an architecture biennale that has been taking place in the same city, Shenzhen, for fifteen years. The biennialization process has been tightly interwoven with Shenzhen's urban renewal processes, in which architect-curators have closely participated in urban projects and interacted with the local government (and developers) in making critical changes to urban places.

Reconstructing the Figure of Curators: As Historians, Activists, and/or Brokers

Existing literature has revealed biennale curators' rising power in interpreting, projecting, and promoting a particular set of values and implementing them in local places. The merged figure of architect-curators has further expanded that capability by integrating architecture biennales into broader urban reconstruction projects. Three prominent roles taken on by architect-curators are identified, as historians, design activists, and brokers.

Architect-curators as historians. One of the most-often recognized roles of curators is as historians, who present a narrative by putting together materials and artifacts in a particular way. Nonetheless, in addition to texts and narratives, exhibitions allow curators to use a wider range of technologies to convey their messages and shape public perceptions. Drawing on Foucault's conceptualization of power and knowledge, Tony Bennett once theorized exhibitions or spectacles in museums as "the exhibitionary complex," where he noted that the special arrangement of exhibit spaces functioned to regulate viewers' behaviors and bodily movements and contributed to shaping public perceptions.²³⁷ Despite that, such exhibitions in a museum often focus on a particular artist or producer's works, where a curator's role remains auxiliary, serving the main subject.

However, in a more flexible, dispersed, and event-oriented biennale format, curators take on a more active and leading role in the process. Biennales emerged as alternatives to museum exhibitions, as critical sites for peripheral artists to display more contemporary artworks and for spectators to give more immediate responses.²³⁸ Yet, recent discussions engaging with colonial studies reveal that the globalization of biennales has facilitated the professionalization of curators and expanded their discursive power in knowledge production.²³⁹ For one, a powerful and coherent narrative by an influential (like a keynote speaker) becomes essential when emerging artists or architects worldwide are convened to display their works, not to mention that exhibition sites are often distributed across a host city.²⁴⁰ The global diffusion of biennales and the prosperity of exhibition-event allow curation to become an independent profession. From

²³⁷ Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," *New Formations* 4, no. 4 (1988): 73–102.

²³⁸ Elena Filipovic, "The Global White Cube," in *The Biennial Reader*, ed. Filipovic Elena, Marieke van Hal, and Solveig Øvstebo (Bergen, Norway: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010), 322–45.

²³⁹ Bydler, "The Global Art World, Inc.: On the Globalization of Contemporary Art"; Okwui Enwezor, "Mega-Exhibitions and the Antinomies of a Transnational Global Form," in *The Biennial Reader*, ed. Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal, and Solveig Øvstebo (Bergen, Norway: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004), 426–45.

²⁴⁰ O'Neil, "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse."

Western post-industrial cities to developing countries, the building of internationally connected infrastructure encourages curators to travel across the world and expand the biennale-making profession's network.

With organizers' ambition to increase biennales' influences, curators are also responsible for hosting various media events (such as symposia and journal interviews) to broadcast the exhibition to global audiences, followed by a series of discursive products (such as catalogs and volumes).²⁴¹ In these media events and products, curators take authorship in interpreting meanings of exhibited works and creating coherent narratives, which become primary interfaces between exhibited works and viewers. Furthermore, the recurrence of biennale events allows curators to put one exhibition in dialogue with the next and reference themselves as archives, enhancing curators' discursive power. The *Documenta*, an art exhibition occurring every five years in Germany, invites high-profile historians and theorists to contribute to its specific continuing theoretical volume in publication.²⁴² The Venice Biennale of Architecture is a pioneer in turning architecture exhibitions into media events, investing in photographs, video footage, exhibition catalogs, public narratives, and academic debates as final outputs.²⁴³ The various media forms and numerous outputs have increasingly made the exhibition's trajectory a significant part of cultural discourse in the global age.

However, the rising discursive power of curators needs to be questioned. As global agents of knowledge, curators carry prescribed sets of values, which affect their interpretations of life and culture in peripheral or local places. Yet, the risk is that local particularities are

²⁴¹ Filipovic, "The Global White Cube"; Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal, and Solveig Øvstebø, *The Biennial Reader*, ed. Filipovic Elena, Marieke van Hal, and Solveig Øvstebø (Bergen, Norway: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010).

²⁴² Tang, "Of Biennials and Biennialists: Venice, Documenta, Münster."

²⁴³ Léa-Catherine Szacka, "Debates on Display at the 1976 Venice Biennale," *Exhibiting Architecture, Place and Displacement*, 2014, 97–112; Szacka, "Exhibiting Ideologies: Architecture at the Venice Biennale 1968-1980"; Lea-Catherine. Szacka, *Exhibiting the Postmodern: The 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale* (Venice: Marsilio, 2017).

disregarded or misinterpreted to fulfill curators' ambition to appeal to global audiences. The 2017 UABB was faced with such paradox: curators intended to raise public and even global concerns over the massive demolition of ViCs; yet, inviting international architects and artists to present their projects across the globe or even intervene in ViCs controversially put ViC inhabitants in more precarious situations.

Architect-curators as activists. Recent architecture biennales have seen a return to activist positions. Like those urban activists who called for urban inhabitants' right to participate in spatial production and to appropriate urban spaces in the 1960s, emerging urban activists in the new century have extended similar concerns to a global scale. Echoing David Harvey's call to revisit Lefebvre's conceptualization of "the right to the city" in the new century, the field of architecture and urban design has seen increasing concerns for architecture's social significance, intending to address the more globalized manner of urbanization and gentrification.²⁴⁴ From Everyday Urbanism to Subaltern Urbanism and Radical Urbanism, emerging concepts have indicated that the design field has seen a shift to call for designers to identify, advocate, preserve, and create heterogeneous urban circumstances.²⁴⁵ International architecture biennales have become prominent sites and means for design activists to identify and intervene in emerging urban places worldwide.

Curators often take such an activist position and call for critical design interventions in remaking more inclusive urban places. In 2007, the curator Hou Hanru (who is also one of the chief curators for the 2017 UABB) proposed the program titled "*Trans(ient) City*" in Luxembourg and called for collaborations between the field of public art and disciplines of

²⁴⁴ Harvey, "The Right of the City"; Stickells, "The Right to the City: Rethinking Architecture's Social Significance"; Pugalís and Giddings, "A Renewed Right to Urban Life: A Twenty-First Century Engagement with Lefebvre's Initial 'Cry.'"

²⁴⁵ John Chase, Margaret Crawford, and Kaliski John, *Everyday Urbanism: Expanded*, ed. John Chase, Margaret Crawford, and Kaliski John (New York: Monacal Press, 2008); Roy, "Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism"; McGuirk, *Radical Cities: Across Latin America in Search of a New Architecture*.

architecture and urban planning to regenerate urban spaces for more communal living.²⁴⁶ Similarly, in the fourth International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam (IABR) in 2009, titled *Open City: Designing Coexistence*, the curator Kees Christiaanse, a Dutch architect and urbanist, urged architects and urban designers to take an active role in creating an “Open City” that could accommodate mutually beneficial coexistence through “spatial design practices.”²⁴⁷ Despite these activist propositions, some critics argue that architect-curators’ call for design collaboration does not include non-expert urban inhabitants’ participation in the negotiation and implementation processes.²⁴⁸ UABB, despite its propaganda origin, has increasingly connected to world’s biennale network through the participation of high-profile curators and exhibitors. It has also seen a tendency of curators to declare activist attempts. The 2017 UABB’s attempt to advocate for the value and preservation of ViCs showed curators’ activist proposition. Yet, the outcomes were contradictory: despite the preservation of ViCs’ physical fabric, the unleashed gentrification forces speeded up the eviction and displacement of low-income migrant tenants in ViCs. That was because, in reality, curators’ other role as brokers often weakens or even contradicts their activist intentions.

Architect-curators as brokers. It is not new that curators serve as brokers in the art market. Studies have identified art-curators’ power to promote artwork’s market value and elevate art producers’ careers through curators’ influence among dealers, collectors, and patrons.²⁴⁹ During this process, curators have become symbolic figures of “good taste,” whose aesthetic values could be easily turned into market values. In urban-scale biennales, the aesthetic

²⁴⁶ Hanru Hou, *Trans(lent) City* (Barcelona: Bom Publishers, 2008).

²⁴⁷ Tim Rieniets, Jennifer Sigler, and Kees Christiaanse, *Open City: Designing Coexistence* (Rhode Island: SUN, 2009).

²⁴⁸ Stickells, “The Right to the City: Rethinking Architecture’s Social Significance.”

²⁴⁹ Michael Brenson, “The Curator’s Moment: Trends in the Field of International Contemporary Art Exhibitions,” in *The Biennial Reader*, ed. Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal, and Solveig Øvstebø (Bergen, Norway: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 1998), 378–405; O’Neil, “The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse.”

and symbolic power of curators has expanded from the art market to the real estate market, as the effects of urban-scale biennales are increasingly connected to a host city's broader reconstruction plans, such as changing the city's economic structure from labor-intensive industries to consumerist or tourist economies. The financial supporters of an urban-scale biennale often include state actors and broader market players.

Some studies have seen nineteenth-century international expositions as precedents of contemporary international biennales regarding the enduring connection between urban-scale exhibitions' symbolic functions and financial effects.²⁵⁰ In what Caroline Jones, an American art historian, called "biennale culture," she identified a shared city-branding purpose of the 19th-century expos and contemporary biennales, which used exhibition tactics to promote certain urban places' aesthetic values to attract international visitors for new or exotic experiences.²⁵¹ Although Jones' structural approach is criticized for totalizing global histories and neglecting local particularities, her point of the long-lasting financial effect of urban-scale exhibitions nonetheless resonates with many observations of emerging biennales in different contexts.²⁵² These observations acknowledge curators' activist intention while revealing a general tendency of biennales' growing dependence on a host city's budget or additional corporate sponsorship and curators' career pursuits increasingly bundled with the desires of politicians and business enterprises.²⁵³ In many cases, despite curators' statements to bring radical changes to contested places, the exhibition sites fail to include forgotten populations.²⁵⁴ In the end, the exhibition sites

²⁵⁰ Caroline A. Jones, "Biennial Culture: A Longer History," in *The Biennial Reader*, ed. Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal, and Solveig Øvstebø (Bergen, Norway: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010), 66–87.

²⁵¹ Jones.

²⁵² O'Neil, "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse"; Tang, "Of Biennials and Biennialists: Venice, Documenta, Münster"; Frascina, "Berlin, Paris, Liverpool: 'Biennialization' and Left Critique in 2012."

²⁵³ Tang, "Of Biennials and Biennialists: Venice, Documenta, Münster"; Frascina, "Berlin, Paris, Liverpool: 'Biennialization' and Left Critique in 2012."

²⁵⁴ Frascina, "Berlin, Paris, Liverpool: 'Biennialization' and Left Critique in 2012"; Andrew Herscher and Ana María León, "Exhibition as Occupation," *Grazer Architektur Magazin 14 Exhibiting Matters* 14 (2018): 78–93.

with promoted aesthetic and cultural values often become heated tourist sites with elevated real-estate values.

Architecture biennales, with particular concerns about environmental experiences and various spatial-arrangement tactics, have become increasingly involved in real-estate development in contemporary cities. Architect-curators' controversial and complicated role is key to understanding the urban implications of prospering large-scale architecture biennales around the world. On the one hand, architect-curators' take an activist position to engage with local disadvantaged places and call for a critical design agency to make urban changes in the more globalized capitalist economic system. On the other hand, the globalized market and network that allow architect-curators to expand their discursive and symbolic power, in the end, put them in the position of brokers and even more active market players. Architect-curators in the case of UABB went beyond the role of brokers and took the lead in collaborating with developers. The facilitated gentrification processes and emerging real-estate operations that began in the five exhibited ViCs in 2017 and spreading to ViCs all over the city are among the outcomes of the 2017 UABB. The examination of architect-curators' expanding partnerships with politicians and developers and local impacts of UABB will add to the understanding of design agency through international architecture biennales.

The State Role in UABB

In contemporary Chinese cities, large-scale state-initiated redevelopment projects, featuring demolition and replacement, tend to dominate urban reconstruction processes. Large-scale urban events are also top-down and usually lead to more ambitious spatial reconfiguration and renewal projects. The 2010 Shanghai World Expo resulted in an overall adjustment in land policies and more concentrated industrial development zones in Shanghai; likewise, the 2010

Guangzhou Asian Games triggered the city-wide demolition of villages-in-the-city replaced by more profitable industrial and commercial projects.²⁵⁵ Whereas such mega-events in many Western cities become strategies to overcome structural obstacles and expand partnerships between the government and private sectors, the state and the local government institutions remain as leading players in the Chinese context.²⁵⁶ The seemingly diverse market players participating in mega-projects, including land development institutions, real-estate developers (state-owned enterprises), and investors, often turn out to represent the state.²⁵⁷ Yet, the UABB (Shenzhen), initiated and led by urban planners and architects, shows its potentials to become an alternative approach to state-dominated large-scale reconstruction projects. Compared to mega-events, UABB is smaller in scale and more flexible in format. More importantly, negotiations between architect-curators and Shenzhen's authorities demonstrate a possible way of including bottom-up inputs into urban reconstruction processes in the Chinese context.

The first Shenzhen Biennale in 2005 involved a high level of official propaganda and national promotion, yet it included architectural attempts and reactions to addressing challenging urban conditions at that time. On the one hand, the officer-planners at the Municipal Planning Bureau, Yunxing Zhang, Jianmin Meng, and Weiwen Huang, initiated the Biennale and invited a well-known Chinese architect, Yung Ho Chang, as the chief curator of the 2005 Shenzhen Biennale. The architect-curator named it "*City: Open Door!*" to echo Deng Xiaoping's open-door policies implemented twenty-five years ago.²⁵⁸ Branding Shenzhen as a modern socialist

²⁵⁵ Shenjing He, "Two Waves of Gentrification and Emerging Rights Issues in Guangzhou, China," *Environment and Planning A* 44, no. 12 (2012): 2817–33, <https://doi.org/10.1068/a44254>; Wu, "State Dominance in Urban Redevelopment: Beyond Gentrification in Urban China."

²⁵⁶ Andrew Smith, *Events and Urban Regeneration: The Strategic Use of Events to Revitalise Cities* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs_zarch/zarch.2019133966; He, "Two Waves of Gentrification and Emerging Rights Issues in Guangzhou, China"; Wu, "State Dominance in Urban Redevelopment: Beyond Gentrification in Urban China."

²⁵⁷ Wu, "State Dominance in Urban Redevelopment: Beyond Gentrification in Urban China."

²⁵⁸ Chang, *Chengshi, Kaimen! : 2005 Shoujie Shenzhen Chengshi, Jianzhu Shuangnianzhan (City, Open Door!: 2005 the First Edition of the Shenzhen Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture)*; The UABB Committee, ed., *Kan (Bu) Jian de Chengshi - "Shenshuang" Shinian Yanjiu (The Invisible Cities: UABB 10 Years)* (Beijing: China Building Industry Press, 2015).

metropolis was the central theme of the first edition. On the other hand, the architect-curator displayed his disciplinary pursuits by awarding pioneering architectural projects and convening international architects in Shenzhen. The awarded projects included the American Rural Studio's projects in impoverished communities and the Taiwanese architect Hsieh Ying-chun's work in reconstructing homes and communities with innovative architectural techniques after the devastating earthquake in Taiwan in 1999.²⁵⁹ In parallel, the architect-curator included a separate exhibition to engage with emerging urban environments in Shenzhen, especially the juxtaposition of hyper-modern structures and over-crowded ViCs.

This separate exhibition was an activist attempt that overcame the local state's censorship of ViC-related content on Chinese public media. Faced with the increasingly intense conflicts among villagers, developers, and the local government, the architect-curator and his team (including Juan Du and Xiaohong Li, professors at universities in Hong Kong) convinced local authorities that architectural creativity and imagination could serve as alternative solutions.²⁶⁰ Furthermore, the curatorial team persuaded city authorities to change the exhibition site from Shenzhen's city hall to vacant factory buildings at the dilapidated industrial/residential park, *Oversea Chinese Town* (OCT).²⁶¹ On the roof of the factory buildings hung banners of curators' manifestos, such as "seeking possibilities," "should ViCs only be demolished" (chéngzhōngcūn zhǐ néng bèi chāichú ma) and "rehabilitation" (Figure 4-4).²⁶² The curators aimed to use this exhibition to bring back design agency to the city's urban processes and call for designers to take critical actions in ViCs.

²⁵⁹ Chang, *Chengshi, Kaimen! : 2005 Shoujie Shenzhen Chengshi, Jianzhu Shuangnianzhan (City, Open Door!: 2005 the First Edition of the Shenzhen Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture)*.

²⁶⁰ Du, "Shenzhen 2005: Crisis Amidst Celebration."

²⁶¹ Du.

²⁶² The UABB Committee, *Kan (Bu) Jian de Chengshi - "Shenshuang" Shinian Yanjiu (The Invisible Cities: UABB 10 Years)*.

Yet, the effects of this exhibition were limited. The curators invited six design teams, from Shenzhen University, Beijing University, MIT, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Tongji University, and Princeton University, to jointly conduct a research project in the Daxing Village in Shenzhen.²⁶³ The six design teams displayed their research results in the exhibition mainly focused on architectural proposals to upgrade the ViC physical environments (Figure 4-5). The primary social issues that caused frictions among different groups, such as eliminating the collective land ownership, the marginalization of former peasants in the city, and the displacement of low-income rural-to-urban migrant workers, were not represented in these displays.

In juxtaposition, a few intervention projects done by local architects were also displayed. A local firm, URBANUS (whose two leading architects were the chief curators of the 2017 UABB [Shenzhen] located in ViCs), displayed its art museum project in the Dafen Village, known for painting replication and production.²⁶⁴ The architects projected the museum to serve as a community center; the reality was that the museum was empty most of the time, as artists who lived in the Dafen Village could not afford to display their works in the museum. Despite the compromised outcomes of the first ViC exhibition, an emerging mechanism that allowed architect-curators to negotiate the local state and enter the urban renewal process is worth noting.

²⁶³ Chang, *Chengshi, Kaimen! : 2005 Shoujie Shenzhen Chengshi, Jianzhu Shuangnianzhan (City, Open Door!: 2005 the First Edition of the Shenzhen Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture)*.

²⁶⁴ Chang.



Figure 4-4. Banners calling for alternative solutions to ViCs displayed at a separate exhibition, 2005 UABB
 (Photos from the UABB Committee, *The Invisible Cities: UABB 10 Years*, 2015, 14[*left*], 21[*right*])



Figure 4-5. The exhibition of “Shenzhen Urban Village Joint Studio Projects” by six universities
 (Photos from *City: Open Door!*: 2005 the first edition of the Shenzhen Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture, 2007, 254-259)

The joining of Hong Kong in 2007 marked the formation of a cross-border urban event, known as the Shenzhen/Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture (UABB).

This work mainly focuses on Shenzhen's side; however, the UABB (Hong Kong) serves as a counterexample to better reflect the difference in state intervention. In the beginning, the bi-city biennale brought urban planners, architects, and artists from both sides to form an academic committee. The academic committee was supposed to coordinate exhibition-making in both cities, recruit curators, and determine exhibition themes, sites, and dates. However, the different roles played by two local states gradually made the bi-city biennale impossible.

In Hong Kong, three non-governmental organizations, the Institute of Architects, the Institute of Planners, and the Institute of Artists, jointly work as the organizer and operate the exhibitions, with the government's minimal direct involvement. In Shenzhen, the municipal government is the sole organizer and final decision-maker, whereas the academic committee's proposals have to go through government censorship. An organizational committee constituted by city authorities, such as the vice mayor and director of the Municipal Planning Bureau, is above the academic committee. The academic committee has to report to the organizational committee in Shenzhen periodically for censorship. For Shenzhen, the dual committee setting allows a certain level of autonomy for the academic committee, as the organizational committee only regulates "what needs to be avoided" rather than determines "what needs to be done." Sometimes, the academic committee and curators can convince the organizational committee and change the censorship threshold.

This adaptive process of decision-making is not rare in the Chinese political system. In the seemingly dominant top-down operations, there is room for bottom-up actions to respond to and sometimes oppose top-down directions, which eventually concretizes and adjusts the government's plans or visions.²⁶⁵ The balance between the governmental direction and the

²⁶⁵ Elizabeth J. Perry, "Cultural Governance in Contemporary China: 'Re-Orienting' Party Propaganda," *Harvard-Yenching Institute Working Papers*, 2013; Ang, *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap*.

professional input makes the UABB (Shenzhen) 's a long-term engagement with ViCs possible. Nonetheless, this censorship system eventually led to the split of Shenzhen and Hong Kong's joint academic committee. While the name UABB is kept for branding, the cities now host the biennale-events separately.

The different levels of state involvement generate different ways of financial operations and sponsorship systems. In the more bottom-up model in Hong Kong, the academic committee takes the responsibility in seeking funds, which are mainly from non-governmental associations (such as Hong Kong Jockey Club), private sponsors, and a few real estate developers.²⁶⁶ In Shenzhen, as the primary organizer, the municipal government provides the startup money for every edition and takes on the role of raising funds, primarily from large state-owned enterprises. In exchange, the municipal government offers special subsidies to these state-owned enterprises in their future development projects. In many cases, these state-owned enterprises participate in the biennale as project contractors, working with the architect-curators to realize the renewal projects. After the biennale, these state-owned enterprises represent the state and take over the role of property managers.

With the raised funds up to the tens or hundreds of million dollars, the UABB (Shenzhen) can bring in high-profile curators, famous artists, starchitects in prestigious architectural firms and universities worldwide to convene in selected sites in Shenzhen. Again, the raised funds are not managed by curators or the academic committee but by a government institution, the Shenzhen Center for Design. The institution was specifically set up under the Municipal Planning Bureau to coordinate among the government, sponsors, curatorial teams, and local stakeholders.

²⁶⁶ (Wang & Zhu, 2008)

The state intervention and sponsorship system also influence curators' propositions in making urban changes. In addressing the same theme of urban regeneration, the two chief curators of the 2007 UABB conveyed different messages to audiences. Weijen Wang, the curator of the 2007 UABB (Hong Kong), used "City Re-Fabrication" to advocate for a more bottom-up process of urban transformation in response to the rising awareness of citizenship in Hong Kong.²⁶⁷ In contrast, Qingyun Ma, the curator of the UABB (Shenzhen), titled the biennale "City of Expiration and Regeneration" to suggest that demolition and replacement of old neighborhoods were an unavoidable pathway in post-industrial cities, which echoed Shenzhen's ongoing redevelopment plan of ViCs at that time.²⁶⁸ In both the 2005 and 2007 UABB (Shenzhen), the subtle balance between architect-curators' disciplinary pursuits and the local government's development goal was cautiously maintained. In the following editions, the balance or partnership between architect-curators and the local government allowed UABB (Shenzhen) 's urban effects of ViCs to grow.

²⁶⁷ (Wang & Zhu, 2008)

²⁶⁸ Qingyun Ma, *Dui Hua = Conversations*, ed. Jianzhu Shuangnianzhan Zuweihui (The organizing committee of the Shenzhen Biennale), 1st ed. (Shenzhen: Shenzhen Baoye Jituan Chubanshe (Shenzhen Press Group Publishing House), 2008); The UABB Committee, *Kan (Bu) Jian de Chengshi - "Shenshuang" Shinian Yanjiu (The Invisible Cities: UABB 10 Years)*.

Table 4-1 Overview of exhibition projects on ViCs throughout the seven editions of UABB (Shenzhen)

(Table by author, data from seven UABB catalogs)²⁶⁹

Year	The theme of UABB (Shenzhen)	Chief Curator(s)	Exhibition Site(s)	Project on Villages-in-the-City	Author(s)	Concepts/Proposals
2005	<i>City, Open Door!</i>	Yung Ho Chang	South area of OCT-LOFT	<i>Shenzhen Urban Village Joint Studio Projects</i>	Six universities around the world	Alternatives to total demolition (Chang, 2007, 253)
				<i>City/Village, Section</i>	URBANUS	Strategies of rehabilitation (262)
				<i>Extreme Survival and Future Prospects</i>	Tang Hua	As an ideal way of life (266)
				<i>Borders, Illegal Zones, and Urban Villages</i>	Ou Ning	Saving old buildings for development (269)
2007	<i>City of Expiration and Regeneration</i>	Ma Qingyun	North area of OCT-LOFT	<i>I Live in Here</i>	Bai Xiaoci	The urban reality of living in villas, high-rise commodity apartments, and ViCs (Bai, 2007)
2009	<i>City Mobilization</i>	Ou Ning	Shenzhen Civic Square	<i>City Metamorphosis-Shenzhen Caiwuwei Research</i>	IDU_Architecture	Reflecting tensions between rural and urban developments (Ou, 2009, 91)
				<i>Demolition Relocation</i>	Liu Xiaoliang	As social phenomena reflecting tensions between individual rights and economic interests (111)
2011	<i>Architecture creates cities. Cities create architecture.</i>	Terence Riley	Shenzhen Civic Square and OCT-LOFT	<i>10 Million Units: Housing an Affordable City (An Exhibition)</i>	Du Juan (Curator)	Seeking innovative design and research ideas and projects (UABB, 2014a, 256-269)
2013	<i>Urban Border</i>	Ole Bouman, Li Xiangning, Jeffrey Johnson	Guangdong Float Glass Factory and the Old Warehouse at Shekou	<i>Urban Fetish / Baishizhou</i>	Mary-Ann O'Donnell	Performing human relations (with puppets) in ViCs (UABB, 2014b, 106)
				<i>Research on the Laoxu Town</i>	Feng Guochuan	As an alternative bottom-up urban process in the Chinese urban context (192)

²⁶⁹ Chang, *Chengshi, Kaimen! : 2005 Shoujie Shenzhen Chengshi, Jianzhu Shuangnianzhan (City, Open Door!: 2005 the First Edition of the Shenzhen Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture)*; Ning Ou, *City Mobilization : 2009 Shenzhen & Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture*, ed. Jianzhu Shuangnianzhan Zuweihui (The organizing committee of the Shenzhen Biennale), 1st ed. (Shenzhen: Shenzhen Baoye Jituan Chubanshe (Shenzhen Press Group Publishing House), 2009); The UABB Committee, *Chengshi Chuangzao : 2011 Shenzhen, Xianggang Chengshi/Jianzhu Shuangcheng Shuangnianzhan [Architecture Creates Cities, Cities Create Architecture : 2011 Shenzhen & Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture]*, ed. The Organizing Committee of the Shenzhen Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture, 1st ed. (Beijing: China Architecture & Building Press, 2014); Uwe Altröck and Sonia Schoon eds., *Maturing Megacities: The Pearl River Delta in Progressive Transformation*, 2014, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-6674-7_1; Xiaoci Bai, *I Live In Here* (Shenzhen: Shenzhen Baoye Jituan Chubanshe (Shenzhen Press Group Publishing House), 2007); Aaron Betsky et al., *Re-Living the City: UABB 2015 Catalogue*, ed. Gideon Fink Shapiro, 1st ed. (New York: Actar, 2016); Hou, Liu, and Meng, *Cities, Grow in Difference*.

				<i>Metropolis and Practice</i>	URBANUS	Seeking more collaborative and innovative architectural strategies (330)
2015	<i>Re-living the City</i>	Aaron Betsky, Alfredo Brillembourg, Hubert Klumpner, Doreen Heng Liu	DaCheng Flour Factory and No. 8 Warehouse	<i>Hyper Metropolis - Speculations on Future Hybrid Lifestyle in Shenzhen</i>	URBANUS	Architectural solutions to accommodating the emerging entrepreneurial class (UABB, 2015, 400)
				<i>An Alternative Strategy for the PRD's Rural Villages</i>	Rural-Urban Framework	Prototyping housing in ViCs (404)
				<i>From Villages to City: The Informal History of Shenzhen</i>	Juan Du	As historical foundations where the success of the contemporary city grew (444)
				<i>Panyu: Rural Becoming Urban?</i>	Margret Crawford, Max Hirsh, and Dorothy Tang	For interpreting broader changes in the social, aesthetic, and economic landscapes of China's megacities (452)
				<i>PRD Revisited</i>	Charlie Koolhaas	Disappearing heterogeneity and experimentation in the PRD area (463)
2017	<i>Cities: Grow in Difference</i>	Hou Hanru, Liu Xiaodu, Meng Yan	The Nantou Old Town	All Projects	All Participants	A new concept of urban diversity to promote "coexistence" of differences (Hou <i>etc.</i> , 2017, 49)

UABB (Shenzhen) Redefining the Values of Villages-in-the-City

The rise of curators as prominent discursive figures empowers them to redefine places' value in the city. Throughout the seven editions of the UABB, the issue of redeveloping ViCs has reappeared as the main subject in various curatorial statements, project descriptions, narratives, and public forums. A survey of ViC-topic related projects throughout the seven editions of the UABB (based on published exhibition catalogs) shows that projects and interpretations of ViCs have shifted from seeing them as places to be upgraded, places that provide affordable housing units, to historic assets (Table 4-1). More importantly, in the Chinese context, the redefinition of ViCs and their relationship to the city impacts public perceptions and the visions of city authorities, which eventually leads to policy changes.

A pivotal moment of the discursive shift of ViCs was in 2007 when the Shenzhen Biennale was expanded to a bi-city event. A forum, organized by the biennale's academic committee, brought together an expanding network of urban planners, architects, scholars, and critics both locally and internationally and sparked stimulating debates on critical issues facing China, including the border issue, urban ecology, rural-to-urban migration, and ViCs (Figure 4-6).²⁷⁰ If the first edition of the Shenzhen Biennale in 2005 was a tentative action to test its reception from both city authorities and other stakeholders, the 2007 UABB saw rising disciplinary pursuits and increasing engagement with local politics. As the first edition of the joint Biennale, an increasing number of component discussions and symposiums among curators, scholars, and architects from mainland China and Hong Kong took place in 2007.

²⁷⁰ Ma, *Dui Hua = Conversations*.



Figure 4-6. A public symposium held during the 2007 UABB

(Photo from *Dui Hua = Conversations*, 2008, 15-16)

Unlike proposing architectural strategies and solutions to ViC upgrading, exhibition projects and discussions at the 2007 UABB saw an extension towards recognizing the social and economic functions of ViCs. In the *Conversation*, a volume documented those discussions and symposiums; participant exhibitors framed ViCs as places taking on the government's absent role in terms of maintaining the livelihoods of local former farmers and providing affordable housing and other welfare services for the majority of low-income migrant workers.²⁷¹ The debates in *Conversation* coincided with many studies in the following years, which revealed that while the collective organization of farmers within ViCs built the infrastructure, the city could implement policies for their use without paying for them.²⁷² The 2011 UABB (Shenzhen) featured a special exhibition of "10 Million Units: Housing an Affordable City," which echoed the 2007 UABB and stressed ViCs as potential solutions to addressing the inadequacies of

²⁷¹ Ma.

²⁷² Jonathan Bach, "They Come in Peasants and Leave Citizens': Urban Villages and the Making of Shenzhen, China," *Cultural Anthropology* 25, no. 3 (2010): 421–58, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1360.2010.01066.x>; Chung, "The Spatial Dimension of Negotiated Power Relations and Social Justice in the Redevelopment of Villages-in-the-City in China."

affordable housing provisions in the city.²⁷³ Between 2007 and 2013, an increasing number of exhibition projects appeared and began to research the evolving patterns and social functions of Shenzhen's ViCs, through the typical case studies, including Caiwuwei, Baishizhou, and Laoxu (Table 4-1).

Around 2015, another major shift emerged, which tended to frame ViCs as Chinese variations of emerging forms of subaltern or radical urbanism in the Global South. In 2015, the co-founders of the Urban-Think Tank (U-TT), Alfredo Brillembourg and Hubert Klumpner curated an independent exhibition at UABB (Shenzhen), titled "The Radical Urbanism," which constructed ViCs as essential parts of the radical urbanism of Shenzhen.²⁷⁴ The concept "radical urbanism," originated in the Latin American context, emphasized the human body as the main infrastructural unit or building block of urban space and interrogated the role of those operating within cities by claiming new territories and new functions, and new legitimacy.²⁷⁵ In the exhibition "The Radical Urbanism," curators framed ViCs as "fragments of an evolving social city built by and for the people."²⁷⁶ Under this theme, exhibited projects also framed ViCs as Shenzhen's historical foundations or assets, which gave ViCs new cultural and symbolic values (Table 4-1).

The 2015 UABB (Shenzhen) marked a critical moment when the curators and exhibitors together rediscovered the value of ViCs, completely contrasting the official narrative that saw ViCs as city "tumors." Starting from providing urban design solutions to reframing ViCs as essential forms of affordable housing and redefining them as manifestations of alternative

²⁷³ The UABB Committee, *Chengshi Chuangzao : 2011 Shenzhen, Xianggang Chengshi\Jianzhu Shuangcheng Shuangnianzhan [Architecture Creates Cities, Cities Create Architecture : 2011 Shenzhen & Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism\architecture]*.

²⁷⁴ Betsky et al., *Re-Living the City: UABB 2015 Catalogue*.

²⁷⁵ Brillembourg, Klumpner, and Kalagas, 2016, 75.

²⁷⁶ Brillembourg, Klumpner, and Kalagas, 2016, 77.

urbanism and radical urbanism, the effects through recurrent biennales signal and guide the perceptual change of city authorities and the public. The discursive shifts at UABB (Shenzhen) eventually made the 2017 UABB (Shenzhen) (seventh edition) directly intervening in selected ViCs possible.

Though the 2017 UABB (Shenzhen) featured on-site art installations and architectural interventions, the media effects of the 2017 UABB (Shenzhen) nonetheless were enhanced significantly. Before the exhibition, journalists and the interested public were invited to take walking tours with curators, highlighting the material and built-environment characteristics of the ViC and its historical and cultural values. Also, pre-exhibition educational programs arranged open meetings for invited rock stars, movie directors, novelists, artists, architects, and journalists to sit together with representative ViC occupants; sometimes, artists began improvisational performances based on ViC occupants' stories. During the exhibition, chief curators sat together with high-profile theorists and historians and reflected on the topic in the form of public lectures or symposia. After the exhibition, curators and the academic committee members' papers and essays appeared in public presses, journals, and online magazines, such as *the paper*, the journal *Time + Architecture*, *ArchDaily*, *E-flux*, *Biennial Foundation*, and *Volume*.²⁷⁷ All these discursive products amplified and extended the impacts of 2017 UABB (Shenzhen) to this moment, whereas the on-the-ground effects were seldom mentioned in these products.

From Architect-Curators to Real-Estate Developers

The 2017 UABB (Shenzhen) brought exceptional global attention during and after the exhibition event; however, the aftereffects on exhibited ViCs also put architect-curators in

²⁷⁷ Yan Meng, "City as Biennale, Exhibition Is Action," *Time + Architecture* 4 (2018): 174–79; Yuxing Zhang, "Nomadic Space in the Textured World: Review of the 2017 Shenzhen/Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture," *Time + Architecture* 4 (2018): 180–85; Arjen Oosterman, "Slow down: On UABB/SZ 2017 — Liu Xiaodu Interviewed by Arjen Oosterman," *Volume* 54 (2019); Nick Axel et al., "Urban Village," *E-Flux Architecture* Editorial (2018).

controversy. In contrast to architect-curators' activist manifestos, the creativity and imagination of curators, artists, and architects did not allow the city to "grow in difference," but rather facilitate the eviction and displacement of low-income ViC tenants due to the tripled rents and the rising real-estate value of these places. The unleashed gentrification forces in ViCs were acute yet not surprising. That was the dark side of the urban creative revolution, in Richard Florida's words.²⁷⁸ Whereas creativity unleashes re-urbanization forces, it also brings gentrification processes that price people out. In the case of UABB (Shenzhen), architect-curators' roles are not only important discursive figures but also leaders of the creative forces. That power of architect-curators enables them to become vital players in the real estate market.

Throughout the seven editions of UABB (Shenzhen), architect-curators' growing power has expanded their partnership with the local government and developer, which further has yielded a unique exhibition-development model in Shenzhen. The exhibition-development model evolved from the first edition of the Shenzhen Biennale in 2005 when architect-curators proactively persuaded city authorities to locate exhibitions in the dilapidated *Oversea Chinese Town* (OCT) and then revitalized the place as a creative and cultural center.²⁷⁹ Before the Biennale, the local architectural firm *URBANUS*, whose chief architects are key members of the academic committee, worked on the project to renovate the old buildings in the *Oversea Chinese Town* (OCT).²⁸⁰ After the architect-curators convinced the city authorities to change the exhibition site from the city hall to the vacant OCT, architects and curators collaborated in combining the architectural renovation programs with various displays, performances, and

²⁷⁸ Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life*; Florida, *The New Urban Crisis: How Our Cities Are Increasing Inequality, Deepening Segregation, and Failing the Middle Class-and What We Can Do About It*.

²⁷⁹ Du, "Shenzhen 2005: Crisis Amidst Celebration."

²⁸⁰ The UABB Committee, Kan (Bu) Jian de Chengshi - "Shenshuang" Shinian Yanjiu (The Invisible Cities: UABB 10 Years).

installations. The aesthetic-environmental values of architect-curators do not necessarily conflict with the values of development in this case.

The exhibition event attracted a wide range of interested audiences, including professionals, visitors, and investors, which created new aesthetic and environmental values in the OCT and brought in investment opportunities. After the Biennale, the firm *URBANUS* moved into one of the refurbished factory buildings and continued renovation projects within the OCT. A state-owned real-estate corporation, which was the primary sponsor of the biennale-event and contractor of the renovation projects, took over the use right of properties and became the official property manager of the OCT. The OCT now is a prominent tourist site and creative center in Shenzhen, with high real-estate value and prestigious handcraft studios, art studios, architecture studios, bookstores, cafeteria, and clubs. In this process, architect-curators' role was beyond the role of brokers and closer to developers, who identified, invested, and gained profits through the project.

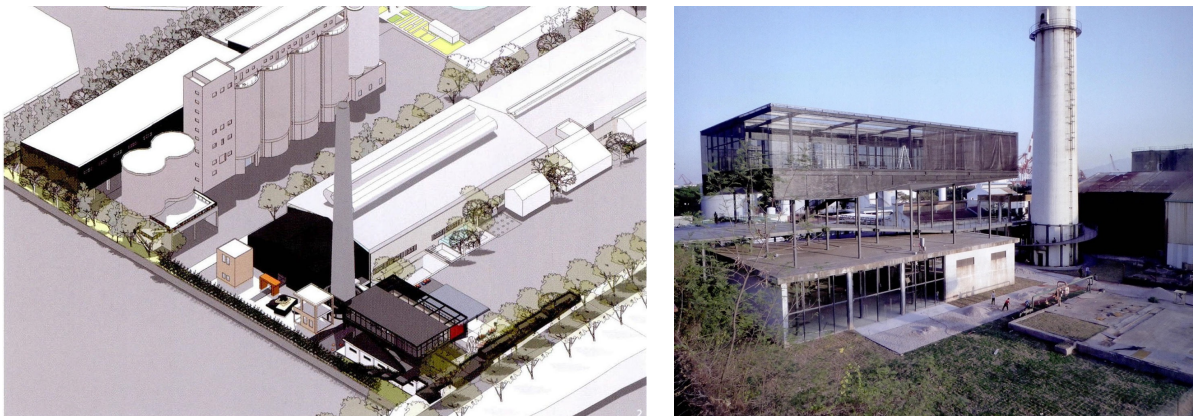


Figure 4-7. *Left*, the Fufa Glass Factory site at the Shekou District, Shenzhen; *right*, the renovated entrance building (Photos from Liu Heng and Li Xiangning, “‘Floating’ Entrance: 2013 UABB Fufa Glass Factory RENovations,” *Time + Architecture* 3 (2014), Fig. 1, Fig. 14)



Figure 4-8. *Left*, the Dachan Flour Mill site at the Shekou District, Shenzhen; *right*, façade of the renovated No. 8 Building (Photos from Liu Heng, “Re-Living the City: The Overview of 2015 Shenzhen/Hong Kong UABB, Shekou Dachan Flour Mill, Shenzhen,” *Time + Architecture* 1 (2016), Fig. 3, Fig. 15)

Throughout the seven editions of the UABB, this combined exhibition-development operation has been implemented to redevelop the older industrial parks selected as exhibition sites (Table 4-1). A curatorial pattern also emerged in the implementation, featuring the team-up of local architects and high-profile professional curators. High-profile professional curators serve as symbolic figures to attract visitors and investors, while local architects collaborate with local market players and implement renovation programs in selected exhibition sites. The 2007 (second edition) UABB (Shenzhen) renovated a different group of factory buildings within the OCT, continued and enhanced the effects of the first Biennale. The following editions extended the same strategy to more dilapidated industrial parks. The 2013 Shenzhen Biennale (fifth edition) was located in two industrial parks, the Fufa Glass Factory and an old warehouse at the terminal port in Shekou District, both of which were built in the 1980s by the China Merchants Shekou Industrial Zone Holdings Co., Ltd (CMSK), the leading state-owned enterprise (under the direct supervision of the central government) established in Shenzhen in 1979 (Figure 4-7).²⁸¹

²⁸¹ Heng Liu and Xiangning Li, “‘Floating’ Entrance: 2013 UABB Fufa Glass Factory RENovations,” *Time + Architecture* 3 (2014): 99–107; The UABB Committee, *Chengshi Bianyuan : 2013 Shen Gang Chengshi, Jianzhu Shuangcheng Shuangnianshan (Shenzhen) [City Border: 2013 Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture (Shenzhen)]*, ed. Qundao Gongzuoshi (Un-Forbidden Office), 1st ed. (Shanghai: Tongji Daxue Chubanshe (Tongji University Press), 2014).

The 2015 Shenzhen Biennale (sixth edition) used the Dachan Flour Mill in Shekou District as the main site, which was also the property of the CMSK, constructed in 1980 and abandoned in 2010 (Figure 4-8).²⁸² Collaborations between UABB (Shenzhen), the state-owned enterprise (CMSK), and the municipal government have extended to the 2017 UABB held in ViCs.

The curatorial team of the 2017 UABB adopted the same pattern, composed of two experienced local architects, Meng Yan and Liu Xiaodu, from *URBANUS*, and a high-profile curator with international experiences, Hou Hanru. While the professional curator convened global artists and exhibitors, architect-curators collaborated with local government institutions, village-based joint-stock companies, and developers. However, what makes the 2017 UABB more socially contested is that ViC properties belonged to neither the municipal government nor any state-owned enterprises. Local farmers collectively own the land and properties of ViCs. The essential problem was who could own the renovated properties in ViCs after the UABB, the local government, the sponsoring state-owned enterprises, or the ViC collectives. The following question would be whether the low-income migrant workers could stay in the exhibited ViCs. When the curatorial team claimed to seek possibilities for differentiated urban places to co-exist in the city through the UABB, the outcomes of the exhibition-development operation suggested the opposite.

²⁸² Heng Liu, "Re-Living the City: The Overview of 2015 Shenzhen/Hong Kong Urbanism\ Architecture Bi-City Biennale, Shekou Dachan Flour Mill, Shenzhen," *Time + Architecture* 1 (2016): 151–55; Betsky et al., *Re-Living the City: UABB 2015 Catalogue*.



Figure 4-9. The distribution map of 2017 UABB (Shenzhen) exhibition sites in five ViCs and an old railway station
(Map by author, data from UABB)

The Nantou Old Town/Village was the main exhibition site of the 2017 UABB (Shenzhen); five other exhibition sites included an old railway station and Dameisha Village within the Special Economic Zone and three emerging ViCs, Dalang Village, Guangming Village, and Shangwei Village in the northern, inland area (Figure 4-9). At Nantou, curators designed a tourist/visit route, which connected the entrance park at the south gate, the main south-north street, some major open spaces, and an old factory zone in the north (Figure 4-10). Curators intended to use this route to “implant public events into the daily life of the ViC community” and “encourage the participation of local residents.”²⁸³ The main exhibition venue for indoor exhibitions was the old factory zone, where many migrant tenants living at Nantou used to work. Before the exhibition, the local government evacuated all the factories and workers to prepare for the UABB event. One of the indoor exhibitions, “Governance & Spontaneity: Informal Interventions Case Study of Latin America,” displayed case studies of shantytowns or

²⁸³ Hou, Liu, and Meng, *Cities, Grow in Difference*, 179.

slums from Brazil, Spain, and Cuba (Figure 4-11).²⁸⁴ Whereas these exhibition projects highlighted the bottom-up or informal interventions in the disadvantaged places, the UABB itself retained the top-down elements.

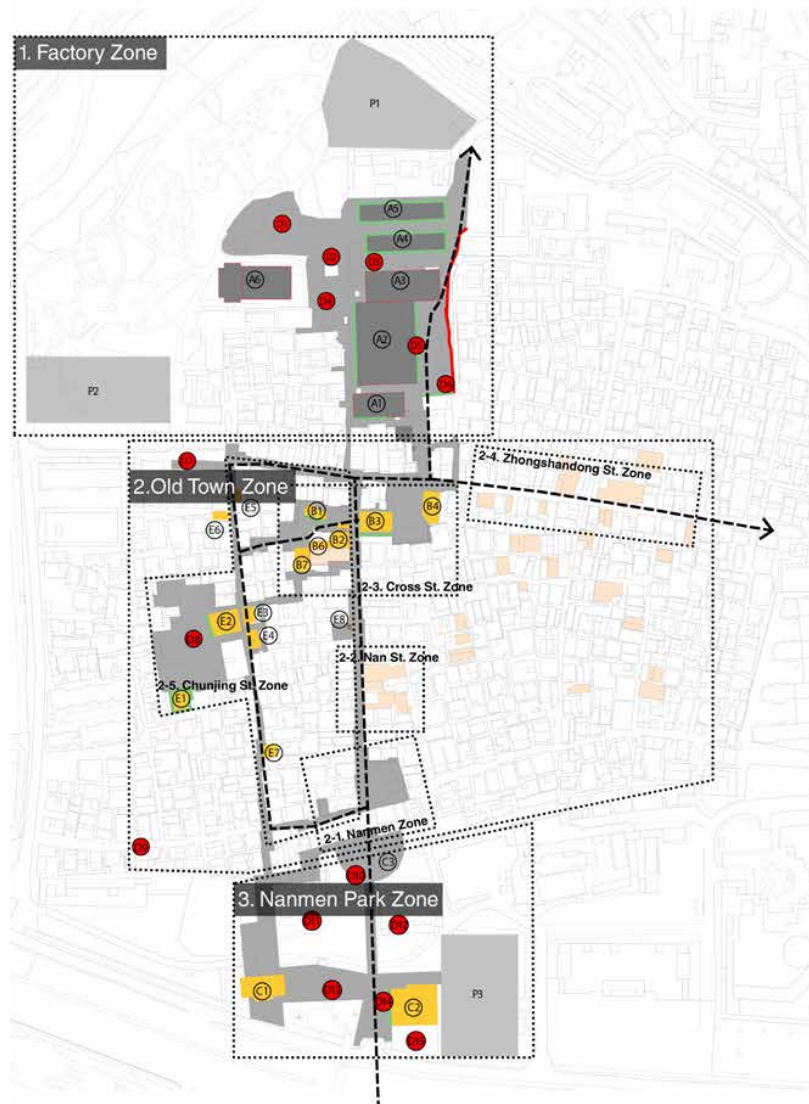


Figure 4-10. The map of the tourist/visit route at the Nantou Old Town during the 2017 UABB (Shenzhen)

(Map by URBANUS)

²⁸⁴ Hou, Liu, and Meng; Meng, “City as Biennale, Exhibition Is Action.”

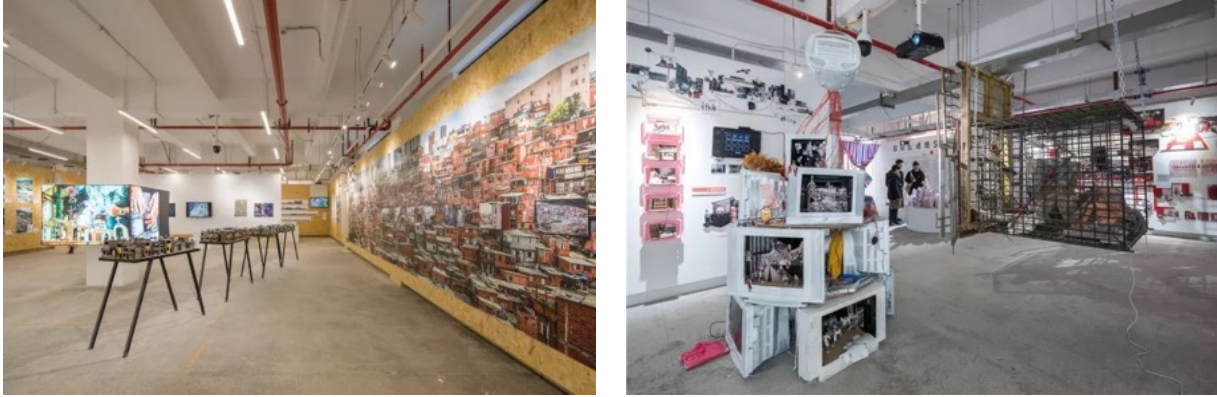


Figure 4-11. *Left*, indoor exhibition project, “Paraisopolis Art Practice,” by Franklin Lee and Gilson Rodrigues (Brazil), *right*, indoor exhibition project, “Mapping Nantou,” by He Zhisen

(Photos from Meng Yan, “City as Biennale, Exhibition is Action,” *Time + Architecture* 4 (2018), Fig.4, Fig. 5)

In addition, architect-curators distributed many smaller-scale art installations and renovation projects along the main street leading to the old factory zone. Around the central plaza, the URBANUS architect-curators removed an informal farmers’ market and replaced it with a modern exhibition hall and demolished an informal grocery market for a fancy bookstore (Figure 4-12).²⁸⁵ Also, they converted an old workers’ dormitory in the factory zone into a café and a few old houses with prominent historical features to bookstores and cafés (Figure 4-13, Figure 4-14). As shown in the map of the designed tourist route, the intervention and renovation projects occupying the open and busy parts of the Nantou ViC projected a new ViC living experience around cafés, bookstores, and exhibition halls. In curators’ imagination, these were public projects and events that could enter the daily life of the ViC community.

²⁸⁵ Yan Meng, “Village/City: Coexistence and Regeneration in Nantou, Shenzhen,” *Time + Architecture* 3 (2018): 58–64.



Figure 4-12. *Left*, two informally constructed markets located at the central plaza; *right*, two newly constructed buildings replaced the markets

(Photos from UABB, [http://2017.szhkbiennale.org.cn/Exhibits/.](http://2017.szhkbiennale.org.cn/Exhibits/))



Figure 4-13. *Left*, a worker's dormitory located at the old factory zone; *right*, a café on the ground floor and small exhibition rooms on upper floors

(Photo from UABB, [http://2017.szhkbiennale.org.cn/Exhibits/.](http://2017.szhkbiennale.org.cn/Exhibits/))



Figure 4-14. *Left*, an old and unused house facing the main street; *right*, a new bookstore

(Photo by [left] the author and [right] by UABB)



Figure 4-15. *Left*, an unattended waste site on an abandoned plot at Nantou; *right*, an inner street with twisted electronic wires exposed in the air

(Photo by author)

However, the promoted place images did not show the severe environmental issue that threatened occupants' health and life. Shenzhen is often hit a lot by storms and typhoons, especially in the summer, making ViCs the most affected places during the rain seasons. Abandoned plots within the village were left unattended waste sites (Figure 4-15). These unattended sites generated terrible odor affecting nearby tenants. They later became dangerous places culturing pollutants and bacteria carried by the surface water to affect the entire street during the rainy season. However, these sites were fenced off and visually concealed during the exhibition. The exposed twisted electronic wires between handshake buildings put people's lives at risk, especially when the rain and humid air met those broken electronic wires (Figure 4-15). Cases of tenants who died of electric shocks were not rare in ViCs. Yet, few intervention projects reflected or addressed these daily-life problems faced by the ViC community. The indoor exhibitions and intervention projects together created optimistic upward social possibilities, romantic environmental experiences, and middle-class life visions in ViCs. The imagination of ViC living attracted not only international visitors (including many exhibitors who were also

first-time visitors) but also emerging middle-class residents in the city. Eventually, the promoted historical values and upgraded environments were not for the current ViC occupants but potential middle-class tenants.

The new imagination of ViCs also conformed to the municipal government's broad goal to reconstruct Shenzhen as "a modern socialist metropolis." Instead of viewing ViCs as an embarrassment to modern-city image and demolishing them, the municipal government accepted the idea of making ViCs cultural symbols of Shenzhen. A few months after the 2017 UABB (Shenzhen), the Shenzhen Planning Bureau released a revised policy, "Comprehensive Remediation Master Plan of Villages-in-the-City (Old Villages) in Shenzhen (2019-25)" (*Shēnzhèn shì chéng zhōngcūn (jiù cūn) zònghé zhěngzhì zǒngtī guīhuà [2019-25]*). The plan claimed to preserve 75% of Shenzhen's ViCs for affordable housing provision and the city's cultural promotion.²⁸⁶ This was an achievement of UABB (Shenzhen) and its bottom-up advocacy of urban difference throughout the seven editions.

However, the top-down elements persisted and encouraged new real-estate operations to be incorporated in the 2017 UABB. Before exhibition events, the local government initiated an environmental upgrading program and worked with the village committee in cleaning up (evacuating) some major open spaces for exhibition projects, including the park at the entrance, the main plaza, some open spaces along the main street, and the factory buildings. Following the evacuation, architect-curators came in and worked with appointed state-owned enterprises (as contractors) to renovate and build the main exhibition venues, including the factory buildings and two exhibition halls at the plaza. After the event, the state-owned enterprises (in this case, the China Merchants Shekou Industrial Zone Holdings Co., Ltd) took over the management of

²⁸⁶ Shenzhen Planning and Natural Resource Bureau Committee, "Shēnzhèn Shì Chéng Zhōngcūn (Jiù Cūn) Zònghé Zhěngzhì Zǒngtī Guīhuà (2018-2025)(Shenzhen Master Plan for Renovating Urban Villages (Old Villages)(2018-2025))" (2018).

the renovated factory buildings and newly built structures and operated on future commercial investments. Neither the ViC joint-stock company nor any occupant could use the renovated factory buildings and newly built structures after the exhibition event. Despite the preservation of the ViC's physical fabric, the combined exhibition-development approach was not that different from the demolition-redevelopment approach, in terms of this conversion of the property ownership, from collective ownership to state ownership.

In addition, many private real-estate developers who participated in the UABB as sponsors continued their investments in ViCs after the UABB. During the exhibition event, these private real-estate developers were encouraged (with government subsidies) to renovate individual ViC buildings into hotels to host exhibitors and visitors. This operation further developed into a one-plot-by-one-plot real-estate development model after the UABB. In this operation, real-estate developers need not redevelop the entire village; instead, they could work with individual property owners (local former households), signing leasing contracts (usually ten years) with any of them who agreed and giving them one-off rental payments. After that, the developers could convert the “handshake” buildings into featured hotels or standard rental apartments. In 2018, *Vanke*, the multibillion-dollar residential real estate developer based in Shenzhen, adopted this model and launched a project, “A Proposal for Ten Thousand ViCs” (*Wan Cun Ji Hua*), aiming to expand this one-plot-by-one-plot redevelopment mode to all over China.²⁸⁷ Though *Vanke* promised to include affordable units in the project, the high rents of renovated apartments (sometimes three times higher than the rents requested by villagers) quickly led to the rising rents in the same area and pricing out low-income migrant workers.

²⁸⁷ Ronghua Li, “Wànkē Wàn Cūn Jihuà Gēqiǎn? (Vanke’s ‘Planning for 10,000 ViCs’ Is Called Off?)” (Shenzhen, 2019).

Meanwhile, *Vanke* continued to persuade villager-landlords to sign ten-year leasing contracts with them, which further resulted in villager-landlords hastily evicting existing tenants.

The hasty eviction of tenants in ViCs caused panic for the millions of migrant workers in Shenzhen. The municipal government called off *Vanke*'s ambitious project in 2009 due to Foxconn's workers' united resistance who mainly lived in ViCs.²⁸⁸ Yet, the unleashed market forces are unstoppable, together with the growing demand of emerging middle-class residents. More and more village-landlords have signed contracts with *Vanke* at Nantou, the same as the Dameicha Village within the SEZ. For the low-income tenants in ViCs, the raised rents and eviction requests left them no choice but to find more peripheral ViCs or return to their hometowns. Architect-curators imagined using intervention and renovation projects to upgrade the living environments and preserve urban diversity; however, that diversity turned out to be limited to the physical fabric, disconnected from the social fabric.

In the end, the promoted social values and cultural meanings of ViCs, such as providing affordable housing for low-income migrant workers and allowing unique rural-urban hybrid ways of living, are lost. The new real-estate operations only exacerbate the elimination of urban informality and displacement of disadvantaged groups, as the promoted symbolic values of ViCs are quickly turned into financial and real-estate values. In many cases, the established partnerships among architect-curators, the local government, and developers will continue to grow, allowing local architect-curators to expand their networks and participate in future redevelopment projects in the city. Therefore, UABB empowers architects by matching their architectural concerns up with the dominant values in the cultural symbolism led by the state.

²⁸⁸ Unnamed labor representative, "13 Wàn Fùshìkāng Láogōng Dàibiào Zhì Wànkē, Fángdōng Jí Jiānguǎn Bùmén Shū (A Letter to Vanke, Landlords and Regulatory Authorities from 130,000 Foxconn Labor Representatives)" (Shenzhen, 2018).

Conclusion

During Shenzhen's urban reconstruction era, the local state's goal to build a modern and globally influential city has allowed architects and urban designers, as creative forces, to take an increasingly important role in Shenzhen's modernization project. Whereas studies have recognized the leading role of the partnerships between various political and economic forces in the globalized urbanization and reconstruction processes, the design agency in these processes has not been fully understood.²⁸⁹ Yet, the world has seen how creativity and imagination unleashed gentrification forces. In the 1970s and 1980s, New York experienced a city-wide real-estate development of stylish SoHo units, which began with artists occupying loft spaces. In Sharon Zukin's book *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*, she recognized the power of art in the process of gentrification in both mobilizing real estate investments and creating a preferred living style for the middle class.²⁹⁰ Developers utilized artists' creation to promote their redevelopment plans, with the state support to lift zone regulations and building codes for converting industrial spaces into residential units. Also, in the wake of postmodernist movements, the loft-living style aligned with a middle-class nostalgia for the "authentic" past and a preference for artistic forms of living and production. On both production and consumption sides, artistic imagination created commercial possibilities, which led to establishing the loft market in New York.

²⁸⁹ Smith, "New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy."

²⁹⁰ Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*, 1st ed. (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2070511>.

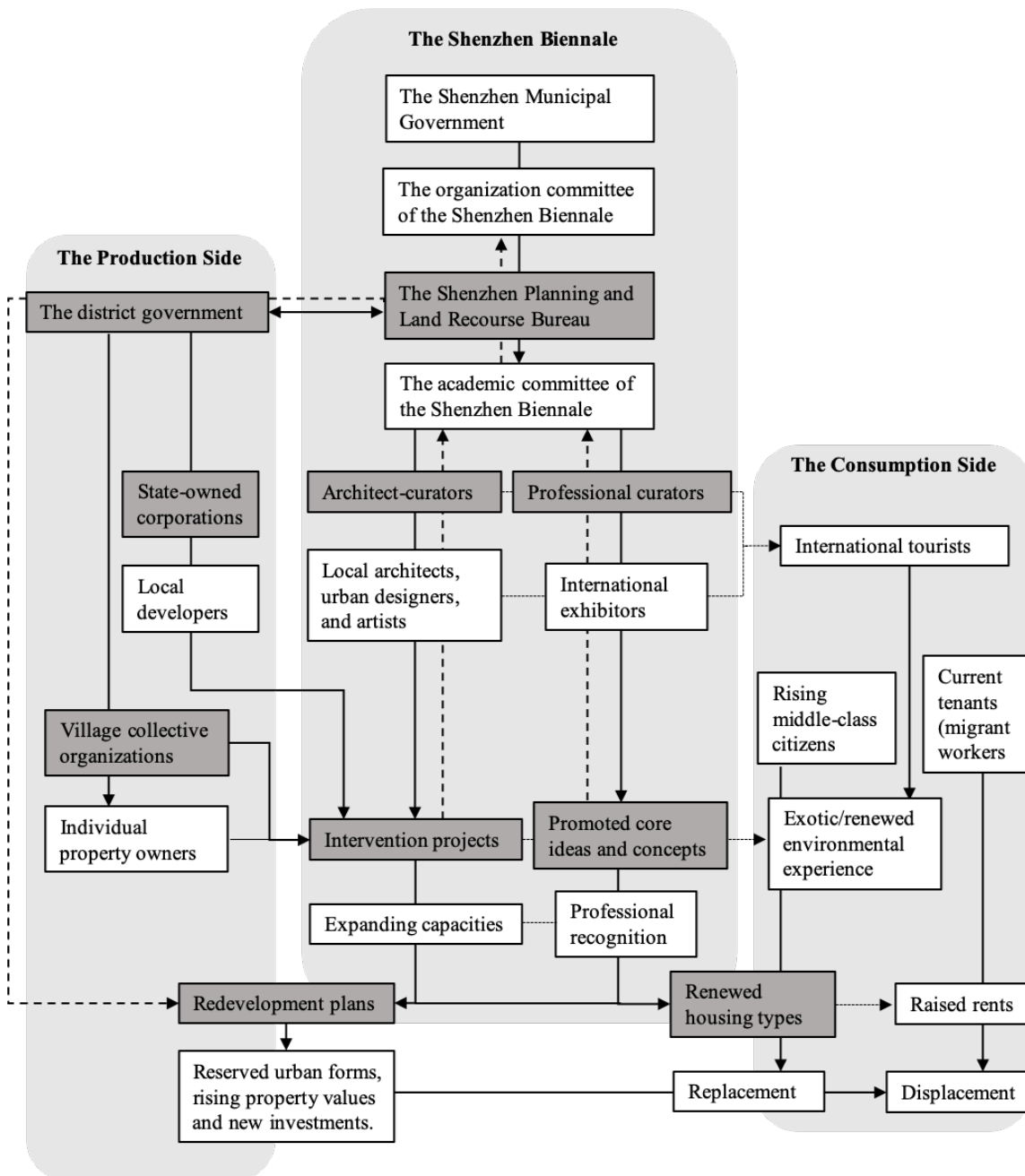


Figure 4-16. A diagram of the mechanism where UABB (Shenzhen) using exhibitionary tactics to create real-estate possibilities
(Diagram by author)

Shenzhen has seen a similar mechanism of architectural imagination creating real-estate possibilities. The recurring UABB is a prominent case showing that architects and urban designers have proactively participated in the modernization project by incorporating exhibition tactics to redevelop old industrial sites and ViCs. Through the reoccurring of UABB, architect-

curators made their discursive and aesthetic values compatible with the dominant symbolic pursuits of the key market players, especially the local state and developers, and therefore, generated a combined exhibition-development mode (Figure 4-16). On the production side, the architect-curators carefully select the exhibition sites, which can both reflect their disciplinary concerns and allow room for negotiation and collaboration with governmental institutions (revising building codes and regulations) and real-estate developers (investment). On the consumption side, architect-curators implant cafés, bookstores, exhibition halls in traditional village fabric, creating an environmental experience of both modernity and nostalgia for residents and visitors. It appeals to the rise of middle-class citizens' behavioral and living preferences. By working with both sides, the UABB (Shenzhen) enters and takes a central position in Shenzhen's urbanism, characterized by an entwinement of the socialist reform ideology, administrative practicality, and economic expansion based on real-estate development and global tourism. Therefore, UABB (Shenzhen) represents a "biennial complex," where expanding exhibitionary technologies enable creativity and imagination to combine with discursive, symbolic, and fiscal power in reshaping urban experiences in the global age.

Chapter 5 Project: Relocating the Social Architecture?



Figure 5-1. A migrant contractor working on an old house as a renovation project for the 2017 UABB at Nantou

(Photo courtesy of the design team of the exhibition/renovation project *House 17*)

The renovation project, *House 17*, was among the many renovation projects that the 2017 Shenzhen/Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture (UABB) (Shenzhen venue) implanted in villages-in-the-city (Figure 5-1). The original old house was a remnant kitchen part of a typical courtyard in the area, numbered as seventh in an inner street at the Nantou ViC (Figure 5-2). Not located in the main street or open places, the project was not recognized by the UABB committee nor the visitors during the exhibition event. Nevertheless,

one of the chief curators, Meng Yan, commented on this project as the one closest to his original vision of how the exhibition event should engage with ViCs. That was to “encourage the participation of local residents” by “implanting public events into the daily life of the ViC community.”²⁹¹ The *House 17* project itself was not yet a perfect example of community intervention at the global age; arguments and conflicts among international design teams, the local property owner, and migrant contractors appeared in the process. However, its attempt to engage with ViC places and occupants more deeply and resist commercializing the project served as a counterexample to the many exhibition interventions by fly-in architects, disconnected from the local community.

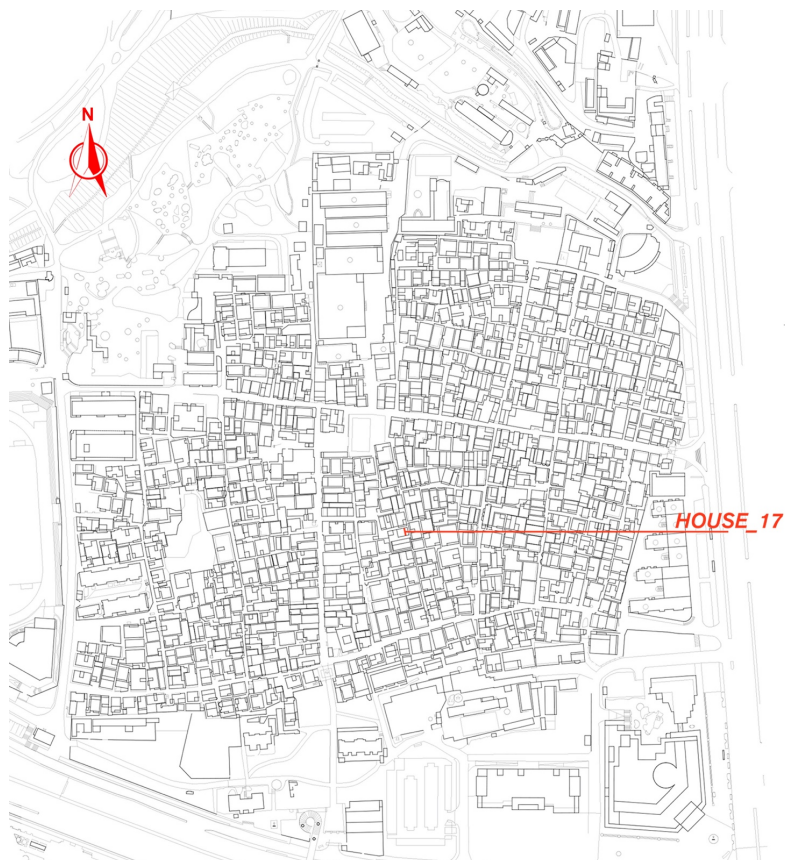


Figure 5-2. A site map of the Nantou Old Town/ ViC
(Map by the design team of the exhibition/renovation project *House 17*)

²⁹¹ Hou, Liu, and Meng, *Cities, Grow in Difference*.

The increasingly globalized building industry has made the profession of architecture more international, allowing architects to fly over the continents to realize their architectural imagination and experimentation in underdeveloped places. While the growing scale of iconic architecture around the world has allowed architects to become superhuman figures, these projects' colossal structure has made the mass of migrant construction workers sacrifices of the fulfillment from the CCTV tower in Beijing to the World Cup 2022 stadium in Qatar.²⁹²²⁹³ Once completed, security guards would keep the alleged civic places created around these colossal urban structures from local citizens and migrant construction workers from entering. UABB, like many emerging architecture biennales, can be considered another form of architecture production, a byproduct of the globalized architectural profession. Despite the distributed sites and event-oriented format, the architecture biennale embraces similar power relations among architect-curators, international exhibitors, workers, and residents. The 2017 UABB located in Shenzhen's five ViCs reproduced such relationships in a particular way. In the intervention projects and component public events, whereas fly-in curators, artists, and architects dominated the description and projection of ViC life, the ViC occupants, including migrant workers, street vendors, and residents, nonetheless were often left outside of the spaces.

Titled "Cities: Grow in Difference," the 2017 UABB was an architectural attempt to participate in Shenzhen's large urban renewal project of redeveloping ViCs. As curators indicated in their statement, a significant part of this Biennale was to find new locations for architectural creativity and imagination and preserve urban difference.²⁹⁴ The curatorial statement echoed a recent call in the field of art and architecture that urged for a return to the

²⁹² William Thomson, "Mr. December," *Clog*, 2014.

²⁹³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/25/zaha-hadid-qatar-world-cup-migrant-worker-deaths>

²⁹⁴ Hou, Liu, and Meng, *Cities, Grow in Difference*.

concern for design power and its social significance. Recent revisits to radical social movements in the 1960s, especially Lefebvre's call for "the right to the city," have renewed the concepts such as "participatory design" and "social architecture" that emerged in post-industrial cities in the 1960s to address the more globalized manner of capitalist production that resulted in the deprivation of people's right to living in the city in the new century.²⁹⁵ ViCs have been identified as Chinese versions of such socially and politically contested places lacking radical actions.²⁹⁶ Yet, the top-down renewal plan and dominant demolition-replacement approach have left little room for bottom-up architectural interventions. To some extent, the 2017 UABB's call for art and architectural imagination provided an opportunity for local and international design activists to explore new meanings of "participatory design" and "social architecture" in the Chinese context.

However, the exacerbated gentrification process and increasingly precarious situation of the disadvantaged groups have put the architect-curators and the many "fly-in" exhibitors (artists and architects) in a questionable position. Whereas the media effects of the large-scale exhibition event allow exhibitors to promote their profiles and increase career opportunities, the alleged activist interventions often lack the engagement with local communities and even contribute to putting local life in greater uncertainties. In the 2017 UABB, the architect-curators implemented about thirty intervention projects, including newly constructed buildings, renovated old houses, murals, and installations that occupied almost every corner of open spaces (not including indoor exhibitions).

²⁹⁵ Hatch, *The Scope of Social Architecture*; Harvey, "The Right of the City"; Stickells, "The Right to the City: Rethinking Architecture's Social Significance"; Pugalís and Giddings, "A Renewed Right to Urban Life: A Twenty-First Century Engagement with Lefebvre's Initial 'Cry.'"

²⁹⁶ Harvey, "The Right of the City," 36.

In reality, few of the participant exhibitors ever visited the site before the exhibition event, not to mention their community engagement; most of the exhibitors simply took whatever the architect-curators selected and assigned to them. The renovated old houses, where exhibitors used to display objects or perform programs, were often prepared and handed over to exhibitors a few days before the event. The selected old houses for the renovation were usually collective properties belonging to the village joint-stock company or historical sites belonging to the government institutions (such as Shenzhen Cultural Relics Bureau) (Figure 5-3). In such cases, the local government would hire a partner contractor team to assist the curators and take charge of renovation. Invited exhibitors flew in and then used the spaces for display during the event. After the exhibition event, a government-appointed state-owned enterprise often took over these renovated properties. Far from the imagined community engagement or participation, exhibitors did not even need to meet with any ViC occupants in the entire process. To a large extent, the so-called biennale exhibition was not different from a modernist exhibition in a museum, where a curator created small cubes (usually painted white) for displayed objects.

In this situation, the project *House 17* was a counterexample, which gave up the site assigned by the architect-curators and engaged with local villagers and migrant contractors in the ViC directly. The small old house, numbered seventeen, located on the Leping Street, was private property, not among those houses selected by the curators for renovation (Figure 5-4). The design team, led by University of Michigan faculty members Robert Adams and Mary-Ann Ray, identified this abandoned house during their site visit, half a year before the exhibition.²⁹⁷ (I, the author, was part of this design team and worked as a project coordinator).²⁹⁸ The owner of

²⁹⁷ The design team also included University of Michigan's graduate students, Javiera Oyarzun Balut, Swati Goel, Hong Zehui, Jin, Ting-Chian, Shreya Porey, Reema Tarabichi, and Yan Xuefei at Taubman College.

²⁹⁸ The author was also part of the design team and participated in the entire process, including meetings with the chief curators, locating the site of the project, negotiating and signing the contract with the property owner, communicating with neighbors and

this house was Granny Huang, a local farmer who was born at Nantou. She abandoned the house a few years ago because the timber roof was rotten, while the local government prohibited any forms of private construction work within the ViC. For safety reasons, the owner, Granny Huang, had to abandon the house as it was. The design team hoped to use the UABB event (supported by the government) to overcome the administrative obstacle and reinforce the roof structure so that the house could be put in use again. Instead of using the UABB partner contractor team, the design team hired a migrant contractor living on the same street. From negotiation to implementation and final exhibition, misunderstandings and conflicts emerged in the next few months. However, such a process that allowed different groups of ViC occupants to participate in the project provided an alternative way of exhibiting ViCs, as opposed to the approach of making the ViC another modernist “museum.”

As the field of architecture and urban design recalls participatory design and social architecture in a global context, there is a risk of neglecting particular cultures and politics while implementing preset architectural values in local places. In this case, the international biennale has provided platforms for architects to advocate for and even implement activist values in local communities. Nonetheless, there lacks an on-the-ground examination of power relations among international architects, migrant contractors, and local property owners. By documenting and reflecting on the processes of negotiating, implementing, and exhibiting *House 17*, this chapter reveals the power relations among international architects, migrant contractors, and local property owners on the ViC construction site.

various local officers, recruiting contractors and construction workers, implementation, and returning the property to the owner after the exhibition.



Figure 5-3. Six renovation projects of old courtyard houses at Nantou

(Photos by UABB)



Figure 5-4. *Left*, a view of House 17 from the Leping Street before renovation; *right*, an indoor view of House 17 before renovation

(Photo courtesy of the design team of House 17)

The Return of Social Architecture

The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is,

moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization (Harvey, "The right to the city," 2008, 23).

In 2008, in memory of Henri Lefebvre's original theorization for "the right to the city" in 1968, David Harvey called for a return to the concern of this most neglected human right, concerning the reproduced dispossession of living spaces and displacement of disadvantaged groups facing the world in the twenty-first century.²⁹⁹ In the field of architecture and urban design, similar calls for alternative practices have emerged. In 2007, the *Urban/Act: A Handbook for Alternative Practice* published by the European Platform for Alternative Practice and Research on the City (PEPRAV) advocated for a multiplicity of viewpoints and actions to make urban changes; alternative practice in this call meant collaborative work among different creative forces, including artist groups, media activists, cultural workers, software designers, architects, students, researchers, neighborhood organizations, and city dwellers.³⁰⁰

A following-up publication, *Trans-Local-Act: Cultural Practices Within and Across* in 2010 (also by the PEPRAV), raised concerns about the relocation of alternative practices in different places and reinterpretation of local cultures in globalization.³⁰¹ In Sydney, an exhibition titled "The Right to the City" held at the Tin Sheds Gallery in 2009 was the field's particular response to Harvey's 2008 essay. The exhibition also recalled urban and architectural activism in the 1960s and reengaged with Lefebvre's initial call for the right to participation (as to allow urban inhabitants to access and to influence the decisions that produce urban space) and to appropriation (as to allow inhabitants to use and to create new spaces that meet their basic

²⁹⁹ Harvey, "The Right of the City."

³⁰⁰ AAA-PEPRAV, ed., *Urban/Act: A Handbook of Alternative Practice* (Paris: AAA-PEPRAV, 2007).

³⁰¹ Doina Petrescu, Constantin Petcou, and Nishat Awan, eds., *TRANS-LOCAL-ACT: Cultural Practices within and Across* (Paris: AAA-PEPRAV, 2010).

needs).³⁰² A series of discursive products generated by the exhibition further identified renewed forms of architectural activism in the new century, as continuations of urban and architectural activist movements in the 1960s.

In the 1960s, activist design in architecture emerged and joined in the wave of radical social movements that protested the systematic exploitation of violence and fought for personal agency in making urban changes, especially in many Western post-industrial cities.³⁰³ From “non-plan” experiments in the United Kingdom to “learning from Las Vegas” in the United States, designers and architects questioned the dominance of “good-taste” professional architects and planners over the public; they advocated for the inclusion of inhabitants’ creativity in designing urban places.³⁰⁴ These ideas gave rise to postmodernist movements in the field and raised concerns over the retreat of architecture in social actions. A group of architects and historians formed *Team 10*, urged for architecture’s significance in making radical social changes. In their teaching and publications, the *Team 10* architects criticized the increasingly ambiguous relationship between architecture and social realities: while businessmen and politicians used architecture as an instrument for capitalist speculation or a bureaucratic machine, academics and critics retreated and began to produce verbal and academic architecture in reviews, competitions, and mass media.³⁰⁵ To some extent, architecture biennales functioned as media for verbal and academic architecture in the wave of postmodernist movements.

³⁰² Pugalis and Giddings, “A Renewed Right to Urban Life: A Twenty-First Century Engagement with Lefebvre’s Initial ‘Cry’”; Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*.

³⁰³ Bryn Jones and Mike O’Donnell, eds., *Sixties Radicalism and Social Movement Activism: Retreat or Resurgence?*, *Sixties Radicalism and Social Movement Activism* (New York, New York: Anthem Press, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.7135/upo9781843313403>.

³⁰⁴ Paul Barker, “Non-Plan Revisited: Or the Real Way Cities Grow: The Tenth Reyner Banham Memorial Lecture,” *Journal of Design History* 12, no. 2 (1999): 95–110; Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, *Connaissance Des Arts* (MIT Press, 1972).

³⁰⁵ Hatch, *The Scope of Social Architecture*.

The first independent architecture biennale, the 1980 Venice Biennale of Architecture, was a prominent example. It promoted the idea of Postmodernist architecture in the field and stepped back from responding to social and political concerns. The curator Paolo Portoghesi, an Italian architect, theorist, and historian, and his advisory board consisting of pioneers of Postmodernist architecture (including Charles Jencks, Vincent Scully, Kenneth Frampton, Robert A. M. Stern, and Christian Norberg-Schulz), curated an exhibition called *The Presence of the Past*. This exhibition featured an installation of a full-scale cardboard “street,” where each invited architect used cardboard to design a “building” façade on the “street.”³⁰⁶ The purpose of making this cardboard street was to create a virtual environment for visitors and redefine the relationship between materiality, representation, and experience in architecture. This exhibition was considered as a symbolic event that promoted and disseminated the idea of Postmodernist architecture across the world.

Yet, recent criticisms also revealed the exhibition’s retreat from engaging with social realities.³⁰⁷ In the 1970s and 1980s, the continuous economic decline in Italy resulted in public affairs often giving way to private interests and developing a consumerist culture.³⁰⁸ The exhibition created a virtual nostalgia environment for visitors, with little connection or reflection to the local social conditions. Even today, the Venice Biennale of Architecture’s pursuits of creating unfamiliar environmental experiences and investing in media effects remain two significant elements of many contemporary architecture biennales.

Another emerging element is architectural activism, which called for architectural practices to confront, instead of complying with, the economic system that produced a

³⁰⁶ Szacka, “Exhibiting Ideologies: Architecture at the Venice Biennale 1968-1980.”

³⁰⁷ Szacka, *Exhibiting the Postmodern: The 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale*.

³⁰⁸ Szacka.

tremendous amount of social wealth and extremely impoverished individuals at the same time. Built on *Team 10* architects' advocations for architecture's social significance, the concept of "social architecture" responded to architectural production's divergent pathways by identifying three essential qualities from exemplary projects across Europe and America.³⁰⁹ The first quality was participation, meaning that architecture as a participatory process should empower ordinary people to discover individuals' demands and create environments that meet their needs, instead of functioning as a bureaucratic machine.³¹⁰ The second quality was rational transparency, meaning that the form of social architecture should be the concrete manifestation of human relations and social structures, beyond aesthetic pursuits or engineering principles.³¹¹ The third quality was the human experience, meaning social architecture should first study natural human activity patterns and integrate them into the spatial ordering instead of implementing top-down planning that meets financial and administrative requirements.³¹² These qualities or ideas may have been institutionalized and become mainstream in architectural education and practice in more developed societies over the past decades.

However, in the new round of more globalized urbanization, a similar system simultaneously producing extraordinary wealth and extreme poverty has taken place on the global scale. The social role of architecture has encountered new challenges. In resonance with recent revisits to the 1960s' radicalism in urban politics, the field of architecture and urban design has also seen a resurgence of architectural activism in renewed concepts and forms. In particular, the new scale of spatial production has reproduced inequalities and dispossessions in emerging megacities Global South, which have become new social realities for architecture.

³⁰⁹ Hatch, *The Scope of Social Architecture*.

³¹⁰ Hatch, 7-20.

³¹¹ Hatch, 7-20.

³¹² Hatch, 7-10.

New concepts have emerged to understand emerging forms of architecture and urbanism at a global scale. Everyday Urbanism in the American context reengages with Lefebvre's theorization of the everyday life as the basis of all social and political relations and calls for concrete and flexible urban design strategies that respond to everyday experiences and community activities.³¹³ Subaltern Urbanism, which is widely associated with slum habitation in the Global South, recognizes and theorizes that spaces of poverty and forms of popular agency are significant components of emerging megacities.³¹⁴ Radical Urbanism, a concept initially raised in the Latin American context, also emphasizes that the main urban infrastructural unit or building block is the human body, which calls for a radical change in city-building operations.³¹⁵ In the age of globalization, these concepts of activist architecture have moved beyond advocating for ordinary people's participation in the process of spatial production and shifted to redefining the agency of architecture and urbanism in enlarged economic and political systems. In particular, the rising recognition of informally created urban environments in different socio-political contexts around the world challenges those established theories and values that evolved in Western contexts, reflecting the qualities of social architecture in the 1980s. The meaning of the 'social' has to be redefined for architecture.

In practice, a return to architectural activism has taken on more collaborative forms. The proliferation of international architecture exhibitions and component symposiums, as powerful platforms for architectural activism, have extended the participatory process to include local people and global audiences who constitute a more complex network of spatial production. A series of city-centered architecture exhibitions have emerged since the beginning of the new

³¹³ Chase, Crawford, and John, *Everyday Urbanism: Expanded*.

³¹⁴ Roy, "Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism."

³¹⁵ McGuirk, *Radical Cities: Across Latin America in Search of a New Architecture*; Betsky et al., *Re-Living the City: UABB 2015 Catalogue*.

century. In the *ENTRY2006* in Essen (Germany), the “Talking Cities” exhibition featured projects that involved collaborative actions across art, architecture, and planning in addressing fragmented urban conditions.³¹⁶ In 2007, the curator Hou Hanru (who is also one of the curators for the 2017 Shenzhen Biennale) proposed the program titled “Trans(ient) City” in Luxembourg, which called for collaborations between the field of public art and disciplines of architecture and urban planning to regenerate urban spaces for a communal living.³¹⁷

Likewise, in the fourth International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam (IABR) in 2009 titled “Open City: Designing Coexistence,” the Dutch architect and urbanist Kees Christiaanse, as the curator, urged architects and urban designers to take an active and specific role in changing the socio-spatial processes in the city.³¹⁸ Selected artists, writers, curators, geographers, planners, cinematographers, and economists presented their research and proposals for “spatial design practices” to create an “Open City” that could accommodate mutually beneficial coexistence.³¹⁹ These exhibition programs emphasized cross-disciplinary communications and collaborations in making urban changes; however, non-expert urban inhabitants’ participation was neglected in the decision-making and productive processes.

As a counterexample, the exhibition “Action: What You Can Do With the City” at the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) in Montréal in 2008 presented how everyday activities (such as walking, playing, and gardening) could make positive changes in contemporary cities, as an attempt to push back against top-down design and planning, and bring back the significance of participation in the production of urban space.³²⁰ The resurgence of the discursive

³¹⁶ Francesca Ferguson and urban drift productions Ltd., eds., *Talking Cities: The Micropolitics of Urban Space* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2006).

³¹⁷ Hou, *Trans(ient) City*.

³¹⁸ Rieniets, Sigler, and Christiaanse, *Open City: Designing Coexistence*.

³¹⁹ Rieniets, Sigler, and Christiaanse.

³²⁰ Mirko Zardini, “A New Urban Takeover,” in *Actions: What You Can Do with the City*, ed. Giovanna Borasi and Mirko Zardini (Montréal: Canadian Centre for Architecture (co-published by SUN), 2008), 15.

output and dissemination, together with booming material practices through exhibitions, have contributed to the globalization of architectural activism.

China has also seen emerging forms of architectural collaboration and activism as alternative practices to the state-led urbanization and urban renewal projects. Around 2005, several non-for-profit research and design collaboratives have emerged, as the central government announced its plan to speed up the urbanization process by turning half of the remaining 700 million rural citizens into urban citizens by 2030. The Rural-Urban Framework (RUF), co-founded by two faculty of Architecture at the University of Hong Kong, Joshua Bolchover and John Lin, is an activist research group. RUF has focused on the transformation of different types of villages in China, including rural villages, peri-urban villages, factory villages, and suburban villages under urbanization. RUF aims to inform policymakers by finding new rural development models that could prevent the elimination of “village living” in the overwhelming process of urbanization.³²¹ However, in the Chinese context, non-profit research and design collaboratives without government endorsement have limited policymaking impacts.

The UABB represents a more hybrid model, where architects and planning officials collaborate to seek new directions in making policy changes. Yet, the sacrifice is that many of the activist attempts tend to be compromised. Clearly, neither the concept of “social architecture” in the 1980s nor the newly advocated activist/collaborative design in Europe can be directly applied to the Chinese context. That means, from the qualities of participation, rational transparency, and human experience to emerging concepts of urbanism (everyday, subaltern, or radical urbanism), their meanings vary in a different social-political context. Inevitably, China has seen similar practices of “social architecture” and alternative design approaches as

³²¹ Joshua Bolchover, John Lin, and Christiane Lange, eds., *Designing the Rural: A Global Countryside in Flux (Architectural Design)* (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2016).

influenced by a global tendency of calling for design action or collaboration; however, the meaning of “social architecture” or alternative design has to be reexamined through local experiences. Despite that most intervention projects at the 2017 UABB ended up either being commercial projects or disconnected from the community, there remained a few attempts. *House 17* was one of these attempts, not perfect yet explored a way of making “social” architecture in the Chinese context.

Negotiating the Site

The location of the project site determined how designers engaged with the community. The majority of the intervention/exhibition projects either took up the open places in the factory zone or entrance park area or occupied busy spots on the two main streets, mainly selected and appointed by the architect-curators (Figure 5-5). While these selected collective-owned or state-owned properties allowed exhibitors (designers) to avoid dealing with the complicated property ownership issues in ViCs, they also discouraged exhibitors (designers) from engaging with local communities to address the real conditions. Alternatively, *House 17*, hidden in an inner street, not originally selected by the architect-curators, allowed designers to engage with the local community more directly and invite them to participate in the project.

The architect-curators initially assigned an exhibition site to the design team at the extended entrance park (in the Nanmen Park Zone in Figure 5-5). The park zone was located outside and walled off the main living areas (the Old Town Zone in Figure 5-5). With the confidence and intention to better engage with Nantou’s social dynamics, the design team decided to refuse the assigned site and search for a new location within the village. The design team’s faculty leaders, Adams and Ray, had long-term research and practice experience in one ViC called *Caochangdi* in Beijing. They had established connections with various social groups

living in the *Caochangdi* ViC, including artists, taxi drivers, migrant workers, and former local farmers.³²² As part of the search and design team, I had been interviewing occupants in this village for one month, before the design team arrived in August. These earlier experiences and preparations made the design team familiar with the conditions and allowed them to build up some trust. In the end, the team found an old, abandoned house numbered seventeen on the Leping Street and gained the permission of the property owner, Granny Huang, a local ex-farmer who was born at Nantou about seventy years ago.

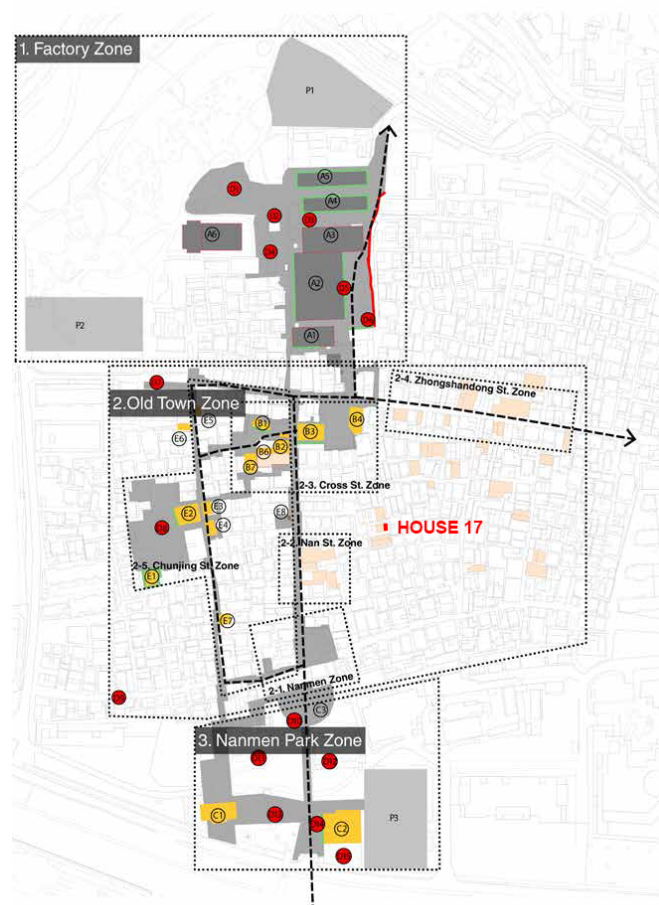


Figure 5-5. The exhibition map of the Nantou ViC

(Map by URBANUS)

³²² Robert Mangurian and Mary-Ann Ray, *Caochangdi Beijing inside out : Farmers, Floaters, Taxi Drivers, Artists, and the International Art Mob Challenge and Remake the Cit* (Hong Kong: Timezone 8, 2009).

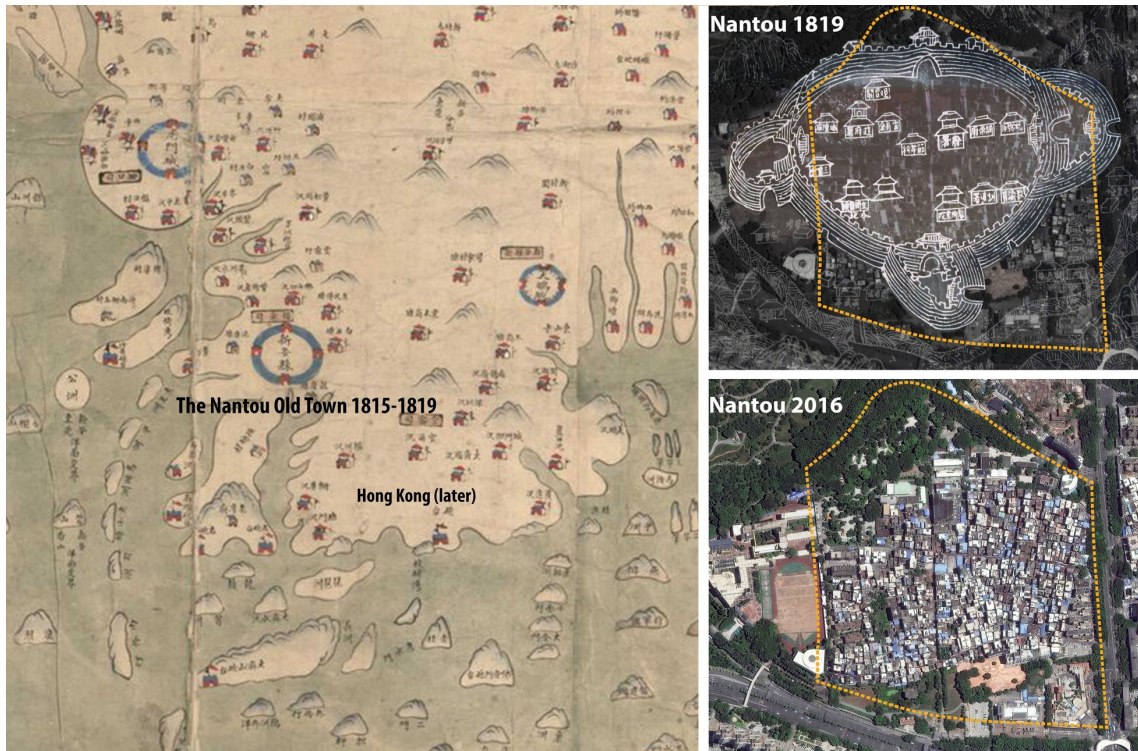


Figure 5-6. The site transformation of Nantou Old Town, from a fortress city to a ViC

(Left, map by Arthur W. Hummel, “Map of the Waterways in Guangdong Province,” [Guangdong Tong Sheng Shui Dao Tu], The Congress Library; right & above, reproduced from *The Annals of Xin’an County 1819*; right & below, reproduced from Google Maps)

Through communications with Granny Huang and neighbors, the design team learned numerous undocumented stories about the Nantou Old Town and the house. The Nantou Old Town was built on the site of a fortress city. During the People’s Commune movement in the 1950s, the newly established socialist regime converted the fortress city into a commune. It regrouped residents (including landlords and peasants) into several agricultural production cooperatives. The local government appropriated privately owned land and properties and redistributed most of them to agricultural production cooperatives and peasant households (as discussed in previous chapters). Between the 1950s and 1960s, young sons of the landlord families at Nantou ran away and swam to Hong Kong through the Shenzhen River, which left many properties unattended and occupied by their neighbors during the 1980s’ building boom. Though Nantou was called an old town and retained the ancient fortress city’s spatial

organization, it was under the rural administration of people's commune and organized by agricultural production cooperatives, like many other ViCs in Shenzhen.

Nantou carried the common characteristics shared by most of Shenzhen's ViCs. For instance, occupants are living in an overcrowded environment characterized by five-to-nine-story square buildings standing close enough to each other to allow residential occupants to shake hands from their windows (known as "handshaking buildings," Figure 5-7). Yet, vegetable and fish markets exist along the main street, which allows busy flows of people to get fresh fruits, vegetables, and meat every day (Figure 5-8). However, all these are not visible from the outside. The thick "city walls" and buildings on top of the walls' remnants enclosed the ViC and segregated it from the rest of the city (Figure 5-9). The segregation and concealment of the ViC made it once a place for preserving traditional living activities and illegal activities such as unregulated resales and gang fights. Because of Nantou's ViC status and rediscovered historical value as Shenzhen's root, its redevelopment process was caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, Shenzhen Cultural Relics Bureau recognized several places and old houses within Nantou as historic sites for preservation to promote the city's cultural and tourist values. On the other, the historic preservation regulated Nantou's redevelopment to not exceed certain building heights and plot ratios, which significantly reduced developers' potential profitability. Under such circumstances, decision-makers and architect-curators selected Nantou as the main exhibition site for the 2017 UABB, aiming to promote its cultural values and use exhibition technologies to overcome the development obstacles.



Figure 5-7. Handshake buildings at Nantou

(Photo by author)



Figure 5-8. Busy flows at the fresh market along the main street at Nantou

(Photo by author)



Figure 5-9. The thick wall and South Gate of Nantou

(Photo by author)

The design team's encounter with the small house further offered an entry point to revelations about Nantou's spatial transformation over the past century. Starting from the property owner's (Granny Huang) initial rejection of the team's offer to renovate her house, the design team learned about the house's untold stories and various restrictions faced by local property owners. The land ownership and hidden safety issues were sensitive to local (peasant) property owners. Before the UABB, the local office of construction labeled the small house as a "dangerous" structure because of the rotten timber-structure roof, which prohibited it from any private construction work or leasing activities. If any accidents happened, such as roof collapses and electric shocks, property owners had to take full responsibility. The property owner was concerned about violating the regulations and had to abandon the property. Yet, the small house was not one of the self-built structures that the local government considered illegal; it was a remnant (kitchen wing) of a typical courtyard house built almost a century ago. Therefore, the design team identified that the major problem was to reinforce the house's structure and remove the safety concerns.

The UABB, as an event supported and organized by the municipal government, was empowered to negotiate with local authorities and overcome the regulatory obstacles (as discussed in the preceding chapter). Invited by the architect-curators, the design team further used the help of the UABB to obtain permission from local government institutions for renovation. However, the permission did not solve all of the owner's concerns. The involvement of UABB brought another concern. That was whether the property owner could get back the renovated property after the UABB event. Given that the local government had been trying to eliminate peasants' collective land and property ownership since the urban renewal plan, Granny Huang's concern that the government may expropriate the house and land after the UABB was reasonable. This concern urged the design team to keep the project's independent from any other forms of institutional or commercial involvement, except for a small amount of initial funding from the UABB. To make sure, the design team also signed a "hold harmless" agreement and also a lease contract with Granny Huang for the exhibition to protect her and her family from any charges or liability coming from the UABB. Despite the winding processes, the design team managed to repair the roof structure and return the renovated property to Granny Huang after the event.

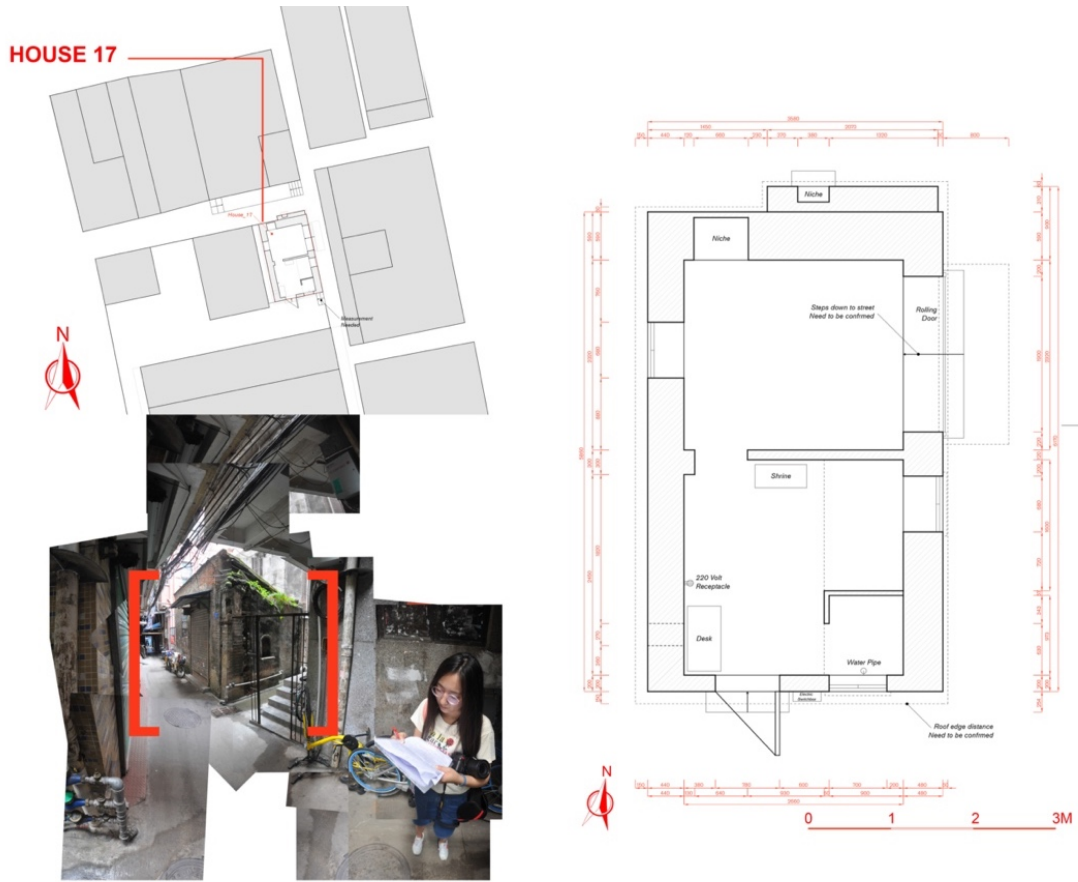


Figure 5-10. The site information of *House 17* at Nantou

(Drawing courtesy of the design team of *House 17*)



Figure 5-11. Two traditional three-room-two-corridor houses located on Chunjing Street at Nantou

(Photo by author)

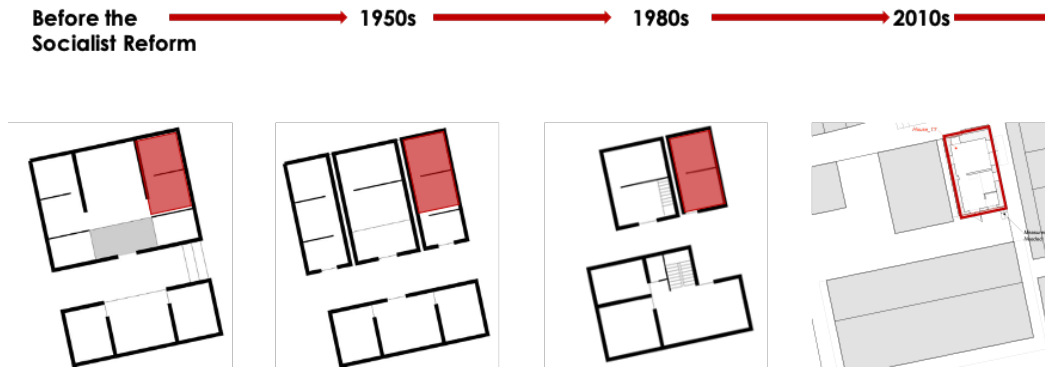


Figure 5-12. A diagram of the transformation of *House 17* at Nantou over the century

(Drawings by author)

The house's unusual features, including the small size (141 inches wide and 231 inches long), the thick back wall (23.2 inches) yet thin front wall (7.9 inches), and attached walls with niches, suggested that it was a remnant of a traditional courtyard house in this region (Figure 5-10). The property owner, Granny Huang, further confirmed such an assumption. The house was one room of a traditional courtyard house (known as the three-room-two-corridor house) built around the late Qing Dynasty; usually, the east wing was a kitchen. Variations of such three-room-two-corridor houses could still be found in some of the ViCs in Shenzhen today (Figure 5-11). Over time, while other parts of the courtyard house were demolished and rebuilt, the kitchen-room detached from the central part was kept (Figure 5-12). That was because, during the land reform and People's Commune movements in the 1950s, the newly built regime broke down the large courtyard houses and redistributed each room to different peasant households. Granny Huang's family got the kitchen part of the house.

During the building boom in the 1980s, while the neighbors rebuilt the other two-thirds of the house into new rental housing apartments, Granny Huang kept this small kitchen part as a shrine for the family. The family simply covered the roof and kept the original brick walls unchanged. The thin front wall used to be an interior partition that separated two rooms. The

back wall was an original exterior wall, containing the niches for worship. When village-based factories attracted migrant workers to work and live in Nantou, Granny Huang leased the small old house to a migrant worker who worked at a nearby toy factory, served as her single dormitory room. In the late 1990s, when the government evicted many low-tech manufacturing factories to more peripheral areas, the migrant worker also left Nantou. When the service sector began to prosper in Shenzhen, Granny Huang leased the old house to a migrant barber, who used the space as a barbershop for several years. In the new century, when the government initiated the top-down renewal plan of ViCs and restricted building activities in ViCs. Simultaneously, the simply repaired roof structure got rotten after two decades, which made it dangerous for living or other uses any more. Granny Huang had to abandon the old house until the design team found it.

The house held meaning beyond its use as a dwelling. It witnessed the life changes of a local former peasant and her family. It also accommodated migrant workers of different generations during Shenzhen's rapid urbanization process. Unfortunately, the rural-to-urban migrants who left their hometown to come to the city for better jobs often ended up either moving to more peripheral villages or returning to their hometowns. Despite their ambitions to live and stay in the city, the reality was that small rooms like *House 17* in the ViC were the only living places they could afford. This small old house was the material evidence of that history of the forgotten and marginalized social groups, including both the local peasants and rural-to-urban migrant workers. The story of *House 17* provided an alternative narrative to the grand stories of the global city of Shenzhen.

Community Participation

The design team made minimal changes to the house's appearance and major structure, except for the reinforcement of the roof structure and refurbishment of windows and doors for

safety reasons. The design team's strategy was to approach the project as a social process. In this process, the former local farmer, migrant contractors and construction workers, neighbors, the design team (including faculty and architecture students), and visitors negotiated and worked together (Figure 5-13). Before the exhibition, the property owner (Granny Huang) informed designers and students of the house's details, including the tectonic details of the house, the dropping and leaking issues she identified, and her expectations of the future use of the house. Granny Huang further directed and joined the design team to clean up the house and prepare for the renovation.



Figure 5-13. The negotiations and collaborations among the design team, the property owner, migrant contractors, and construction workers on the site

(Photo courtesy of the design team of *House 17*)

The property owner's knowledge of structural and tectonic details of the house was quite rich. She described how to lay beams, purlins, and tiles and calculated the needed quantity. She gained the knowledge through her experience during the building boom in ViCs in the 1980s and 1990s. At that moment, her family possessed three properties at Nantou, including House 17, an

eight-story apartment building on the street, and a five-story apartment building on a neighboring street (Figure 5-14). The five-story apartment building (numbered 12), like House 17, used to be a traditional courtyard house owned by Granny Huang's husband's family. After the state requisitioned their farmland in 1982, the village leaders allocated a new homestead on the same Leping Street, where they built an additional three-story house. The family lived in this three-story house for about ten years. In the second wave of the building boom in Shenzhen's ViCs in the early 1990s, they demolished the old courtyard house (numbered 12) and rebuilt a five-story house for lease on the same lot. In the next ten years, the family moved into the five-story building apartment and demolished the three-story house on Leping Street. In 2004, they completed the construction of an eight-story apartment building on the three-story house's lot. When the design team found Granny Huang, she was living in the eight-story apartment building and worked as the property manager of the two rental apartment buildings. Another property owner and manager, Granny Liao, lived on a different street and experienced a similar process between 1982 and 2004. Her family owned two properties at Nantou: one five-story building reconstructed on the original homestead and an additional seven-story building standing on a new allocated piece of land (Figure 5-14). This was a general pattern of villagers' land investment at Nantou. Some other Shenzhen's ViCs experienced a similar process of building booms, such as a group of Shatou Villages (as mentioned in the Ideology chapter).³²³

³²³ “Shā Tóu Zhī Gēn 沙头之根 [The Root of Shatou Villages].”



Figure 5-14. A map of Granny Huang's and Granny Liao's properties at Nantou

(Map by author)



Figure 5-15. Interactions among the property owner, migrant contractors, construction workers, and neighbors

(Photo by author)



Figure 5-16. A map of ViC occupants who participated in *House 17*

(Map by author)

The *House 17* project further increased interactions among the local property owner, migrant workers, and neighboring tenants and generated new social dynamics in the neighborhood (Figure 5-15). Studies have shown the “generative” function of space; making one space more visible or accessible can change the connections among space and further affect people’s movements and interactions, which leads to the new construction of social relations.³²⁴ When the design team was investigating the site and proposing their renovation plan with Granny Huang, migrant contractors who lived on the same street approached the design team and

³²⁴ Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984); John Peponis and Jean Wineman, “Spatial Structure of Environment and Behavior,” *The Handbook of Environmental Psychology*, 2002, 271.

offered to collaborate. The contractors were brothers with the last name Gong, known as the Gong brothers. Together with a fellow townsman named Li, the three of them founded and managed a Nantou-based construction team. They came from the Hunan province to Shenzhen in 1998 and later arrived at Nantou in 2004. Most of their families stayed in their hometown. Two of them lived on the same street as Granny Huang, and the other lived on a different street with his son (Figure 5-16). Granny Huang did not know about them for all those years living in the same village or even on the same street.

In many cases, local property owners had their circles, while migrant tenants tended to live in clusters with their fellow townsmen. While emerging narratives tend to promote the social diversity within ViCs, the segregation between local peasants and migrant tenants and the segregation among different clusters of migrants are often neglected. This project offered a social space for local property owners and migrant workers to work together and an opportunity for neighbors to communicate and interact (Figure 5-15).

However, this was not sufficient. The disconnection and distrust issues existed and affected the progress of the project. Despite the design team's good intentions, their lack of connection to the local construction market disqualified them from searching for the most experienced contractors that could meet the owner's demands. The Gong brothers did have a construction team; however, as Granny Huang complained, they were not the best choice in renovating old houses like *House 17*, and their skills did not match the kind of work. Granny Huang did not trust their skills. As Figure 5-13 shows, how the workers put up the timbers to support the roof structure was not the traditional "right way" as Granny Huang described. In the meanwhile, the Gong brother did not trust the design team either. In the middle way of the work, the Gong brothers did not receive the payment from the design team as promised (due to China's

restriction on currency exchanges). They were worried that the international design team would disappear suddenly without paying them. For the migrant workers, that situation was not rare. During China's building booms, it was not rare that investors disappeared and left the mass migrant construction workers who worked on the site for months unpaid. Migrant contractors and construction workers suffered greatly from the many unfinished building projects and lacked security. However, the design team considered the distrust was an insult. The problem was resolved when the money arrived, yet the misunderstanding between different groups demonstrated a fundamental problem faced by international architects who intended to intervene in local communities. That is to what extent the globalized professionals, including those who are citizens, could understand local communities' life struggles.

The results of the project *House 17* became controversial, though the design team intended to help the local property owner reuse the house, create opportunities for migrant workers, and foster communication among them. Granny Huang expressed her appreciation of the renovation work yet was not satisfied with the quality of work done by the Gong brothers. With her rich experience in property investment and management, Granny Huang and many property owners in the village established their network with local construction teams and formed an evaluation system. While the design team employed self-recommended contractors outside of the local network, the property owner considered them less professional. Such work relations between local property owners and migrant construction workers put the design team in an awkward position. However, built forms and rent charts can hardly reflect such work-related politics in ViCs. The small project and its deep engagement with the local community uncovered these hidden politics.

In addition, the design team invited migrant artists to perform traditional operas and disperse artworks and handicrafts during the exhibition (Figure 5-17). The performances attracted both neighbors and international visitors, who filled the narrow street. The invisible, quiet street was one of the focal points of a village among the exhibition events, and the house became a social stage for the once forgotten migrant artists. One young migrant tenant praised the performances as they reminded her of her hometown and childhood when her grandparents would take her to such performances. Despite that, many appreciated the project as opposed to the dominant commercial operations during the exhibition event. A few neighbors nonetheless complained about some design elements of the performances. For example, the lanterns hanging on the street used to be red in the Chinese tradition, while in this case, they were blue, which was a color used in funeral-related ritual activities in most Chinese cultures. As blue lanterns made pitchy sounds whenever a person passed through, neighbors found them scary and annoying. The design team intended to use the blue color as a signal for handicapped or senior inhabitants (an international standard) to make village spaces more legible and accessible. The difference in cultural meanings made such an intention less effective and acceptable.



Figure 5-17. Performances by migrant artists occupying *House 17* during the biennial exhibition in *Nantou*

(Photo courtesy of the design team of *House 17*)

The same applies to the renovation project as a whole. The design team helped the owner overcome the administrative obstacles and secured the property; however, the imagined communal benefits of the project were limited. The house was only used as a public stage for performances during the event. It returned to private use after the exhibition. As one of the migrant workers once joked, the design team chose one of the village's wealthiest (property owners) to support. The project *House 17* invested in community participation by recruiting local contractors and construction workers; yet, it turned out that architects' pursuits of visual representations and symbolic values still took precedence over considerations of local life patterns and social realities. The paradox appeared in the project: while the international architects intended to preserve the heterogeneity of urban circumstances by encouraging ordinary people to participate in the production of spaces, the implementation of a set of abstract values of

participation and heterogeneity nonetheless tended to neglect the local translation and meaning of such values. The reality turned out to be that, in the end, the intervention projects of the 2017 UABB either served for commercial activities or became short-lived performances due to a lack of understanding, financial support, and long-term commitment.

Conclusion: Implications for Design Pedagogy

In reality, this small project was not capable of changing the imperative gentrification of ViCs. It nonetheless provided a lesson for college students and faculty designers invested in academic architecture. While exhibition curators and critics tend to assert activist propositions, the on-the-ground implementation of such activist ideas, nonetheless, often generates controversial results. Various social and political conditions, beyond creativity and imagination, impacted *House 17* from bringing substantial changes to communal life in the ViC in the long term. In addition to inhabitants' cultural preferences, the enduring administrative divide and increasing social stratification that create various forms of social segregation are more fundamental factors in the Chinese case. The scale and the temporality of global biennales inevitably involve sponsorships from large corporations, usually dominated by the government and developers cooperatively. These sponsorships affect the curators' propositions and the long-term viability of these resistive/activist projects. Without lasting funding support, a pursuit for best profits driven by the "rent gap" can quickly turn over the outcomes.³²⁵

However, this is not to suggest that prolonging architectural occupations could not develop broader conversations and connections within the local context; instead, a lesson for architectural

³²⁵ A "rent gap," as Neil Smith explained, was the gap "between the actual ground rent capitalized from the present land use and potential rent that could be capitalized from the 'highest and best' use, given the central location" in the inner city. Neil Smith, "Gentrification, the Frontier, and the Restructuring of Urban Space," in *Gentrification of the City*, ed. Neil Smith and Peter Williams, 1st ed. (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 23, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315889092>.

education is to acknowledge these urban realities and the power of architecture as important means of revelation and implementation. In many cases, our education tends to encourage students to use their imagination to address contested terrains worldwide while lacking on-the-ground knowledge of the real social struggles and consequences. As creative as these imagined interventions might be, there exists a risk of romanticizing those situations without real-world lessons. The project *House 17* offered an alternative example for studio teaching. It allowed students to communicate with the curatorial team about design ideas, and in the meanwhile, to work with local communities and learn about real-life struggles. These real-world conflicts allowed both architects and students to receive immediate feedback on the effects of their imagination and make an adjustment. A lesson for future architects is that, before claiming the social significance of architecture, a first step would be to find out the different meanings of social significance for local communities.

Chapter 6 Identity: Living in a Village-in-the-Global-City

In the past, urban residents used to buy food with the money paid by the state, and they could work in companies and factories. We were peasants and had to farm, no other opportunities. No one wanted to teach us skills, and no factories wanted us. (MY, a local ex-farmer at Nantou, Shenzhen, 2017)

We came to Shenzhen to start a business to improve our life. If you kept working in the farmland in the rural area, you would be peasants forever. Now many went back home. I won't stay here for long either. I've lost my confidence here. (ZY, a migrant tenant at Nantou, Shenzhen, 2017)

Localized politics on the ground make Shenzhen SEZ's urban processes very different from the familiar model in history and elsewhere in the global South. Existing literature on Chinese urbanism in the reform era has emphasized either emerging neoliberal operations where public regulations give way to private gains through state entrepreneurship or corporatism featuring top-down control and politics. Not enough attention has been given to the bottom-up actors. As I described in previous chapters, Shenzhen SEZ's local villagers had actively participated in and even led the village-based industrialization and later produced the building boom of housing. The figure of villagers in this context is beyond our conventional understanding of reserved rural labor. At the same time, the ViCs' main tenants, who came to the city as peasants and constituted Shenzhen SEZ's major labor forces, remain largely excluded

from citizenship entitlement and are subject to displacement. Through ethnographic observations and interviews, this chapter identifies the shifting social struggles surrounding ViC housing from the divide between rural and urban residents to the gap between local citizens and migrant workers.

Local Capitalism and Local Citizenship

Previous ethnographic research uses “local capitalism” to refer to the unique mechanism of the capitalist economy in the Pearl River Delta (PRD) region in the reform era, when capitalist production was subordinated to and reliant on existing local relations and connections.³²⁶ This observation echoes with some urban scholars’ more general conclusion that “China’s market transition started in rural areas”³²⁷ That is, that local villages and towns accumulated collective capital by engaging with external market forces through kinship or social networks. For instance, the kinship structures in rural villages and the clan-like social relations connecting to Hong Kong and various overseas relatives established the transnational networks of the border-city through village-based industries and businesses.³²⁸ A Chinese sociologist, Li Peilin, once explained the formation of ViCs as a result of local peasants’ behavioral adaptation from “growing grains” to “growing buildings.”³²⁹ However, the behavioral change did not lead to radical changes in local social relations at that time. The kinship-based social principles remained determinant in more capitalist production, which created the hybrid status of ViCs existing with the city. These local villagers are sometimes considered as “tough” (*qiang shi*) groups.³³⁰

³²⁶ Smart and Lin, “Local Capitalisms, Local Citizenship and Translocality: Rescaling from below in the Pearl River Delta Region, China,” 285

³²⁷ Wu, “Emerging Chinese Cities: Implications for Global Urban Studies,” 339.

³²⁸ Bach, “‘They Come in Peasants and Leave Citizens’: Urban Villages and the Making of Shenzhen, China”: 432

³²⁹ Li, *Cun Luo de Zhong Jie: Yangcheng Cun de Gu Shi*; Lan, *Dūshì Lǐ de Cūnzhuāng: Yīgè “Xīncūn Shè Gòngtóngtǐ” de Shídi Yánjiū 都市里的村庄: 一个“新村社共同体”的实地研究 [The Village in the City: A Field Study of the “New Village Community”]*.

³³⁰ Zhang and Zhu, “Diàochá, Tòushì, Chònggòu (Investigation, Observation, Reconstruction),” 40-42.

The following studies further recognized the unique role of collective-owned joint-stock companies, evolving from the original organization of agricultural production cooperatives of local villagers in the 1950s, producing infrastructure and housing booms, as alternative forces to state-owned corporations or private entities.³³¹ Huang Quanle's study of the Shipai Village in Guangzhou demonstrated the joint-stock company's capacity to manage collective properties and invest in constructing basic infrastructure facilities on behalf of villagers, including roads connecting to the city and schools, which even took over the local government's functions in completing urban systems.³³² Similarly, in Jonathan Bach's observation, Shenzhen SEZ's ViC-owned joint-stock companies built road, water, and power infrastructure and provided private schools, security, and housing for dwellers, including rural migrants.³³³ One city official once commented on "Shenzhen's secret of success" as "building the city at no cost."³³⁴ Despite the prominent economic role, these joint-stock companies allowed the original cooperative production leaders to become the executive board. They further kept the mixture of kinship-based social principles, socialist production cooperative organizations, and market rules.

Such bottom-up perspectives also provide nuances in the growing social difference between the two groups, local villagers and migrant workers, as created locally rather than resulting from national frameworks or globally restructured labor divisions. In particular, China's distinctive *hukou* household registration policy creates a system where entitlements of citizenship are determined locally rather than nationally, in terms of the redistribution of social

³³¹ Huang, *Metropolis of Rurality: A Spatial History of Shipai in Guangzhou from the Perspectives of Typo—Morphology (1978—2008)*; Ma, "'Villages' in Shenzhen: Persistence and Transformation of an Old Social System in an Emerging Mega City."

³³² Huang, *Metropolis of Rurality: A Spatial History of Shipai in Guangzhou from the Perspectives of Typo—Morphology (1978—2008)*.

³³³ Bach: 433.

³³⁴ Bach: 434.

resources and commitment to social welfares and protection.³³⁵ That explains why former peasants who came from inland areas to the coastal cities are called “migrant” workers or the “floating population,” though they are all Chinese citizens.³³⁶ Whereas peasants with local *hukou* are granted collective land ownership, access to social welfare, and a certain economic power to develop the land, migrant workers with non-local *hukou* remain largely excluded. The polarization of these former peasants evolved into direct social conflicts during the ongoing redevelopment projects and gentrification process, when local villagers, as property owners, took on the role of evicting migrant tenants in ViCs.

Grounding Displacement and Trans-locality

Nevertheless, some anthropologists tend to push back against the dichotomic view of seeing local villagers as privileged groups compared to migrant workers as disadvantaged groups. Helen F. Siu, a professor of Anthropology at Yale University, observed that local villagers with agrarian *hukou* were also displaced in ViCs, as they were isolated from urbanites with non-agrarian *hukou*.³³⁷ Before the divide between local and non-local citizens, the earlier institutionalized rural-urban divide remained significant, reinforced by the market forces after the reform and the increasing pursuits in symbolism. Siu argued that local villagers were rendered as the “other” who represented “backwardness” in the dominant discourse of development and modernization.³³⁸ Such narratives further referred to the local (landlord) villagers, especially a younger generation who heavily relied on rents for a living as “youths with four negatives” (*sibu*

³³⁵ Smart and Lin, 286.

³³⁶ The term “floating population”, indicating the living conditions of the migrant population—with their original agrarian Hukous, they were officially prohibited obtaining property rights in the host urban villages and were also excluded from any access to formal urban services; as a result, they became villages’ short-term tenants, who always lived in high risk and mobility. See Zhang, *Strangers in the City*.

³³⁷ Helen F. Siu, “Grounding Displacement: Uncivil Urban Spaces in Postreform South,” *American Ethnologist* 34, no. 2 (2007): 330.

³³⁸ Siu: 332.

qingnian) with lower social status than migrant laborers in official narratives.³³⁹ While many studies tend to associate the segregation of ViCs and the substandard living conditions with the displacement and marginalization of migrant workers, Siu's historical-ethnographic study adds a new level of understanding to the social meaning of ViCs, as a grounded form of displacement of local villagers, due to the enduring rural-urban divide through history to the present day.

Meanwhile, migration studies tend to use the term "trans-locality" to indicate the capability of migrants to establish new social networks or communities in the host country or city. In Zhang's notion of trans-locality, rural-to-urban migrants in China could reconstruct their social identities to transcend geographic locations and eventually became the agents to negotiate the borders between marginalized places and the city.³⁴⁰ Zhang's study challenged the dominant view of the migrant workers or the floating population as "dangerous," uncivilized, and unregulated laborers in cities by showing that the floating population living in Beijing's peri-urban villages were wealthier and more powerful groups. Similarly, in Saunders' *Arrival City*, he argued that, like arrival-city slums around the world, ViCs in Shenzhen provided transitory spaces for rural migrants to "stage their arrival in an organic, self-generated, bottom-up fashion" and supported migrants' ascendance up the social ladder.³⁴¹ However, Andersson's ethnographic work in Xiancun, a famous ViC in Guangzhou, revealed another form of trans-locality in the PRD region.³⁴² Andersson's observation of rural-to-urban migrants' trans-locality was due to a lack of a sense of security and belonging; ViCs could hardly provide a social mobility path for rural migrants whose ambition was to become urban citizens and eventually stay in cities.³⁴³

³³⁹ Siu: 334.

³⁴⁰ Zhang, *Strangers in the City: Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Networks within China Floating Population*.

³⁴¹ Doug Saunders, *Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History Is Reshaping Our World* (Windmill, 2010), 58-63.

³⁴² Andersson, "Migrant Positioning: In Transforming Urban Ambience Urban Villages and the City, Guangzhou, China."

³⁴³ Andersson; Andersson, "Situating Translocality in Flux Landscapes: Migrants and Urban Villages in the City of Guangzhou."

Therefore, the trans-locality for migrants in the PRD region only meant the capability to move from one ViC to another ViC.

Former peasants, both local and migrated, made and redefined the city of Shenzhen.³⁴⁴ Yet, they have been experiencing social and cultural marginalization in different ways, as well as the increasing segregation between these groups. Migrant workers, who constitute the city's major labor power, are often seen as dangerous, uncivilized, and unregulated "floating populations" in cities.³⁴⁵ Local former peasants, who are quasi-landlords and ViCs' property owners, remain segregated from urban communities, despite their position as wealthier than most urbanites.³⁴⁶ For cities such as Shenzhen, even though the government has formally transformed local peasants' agrarian *hukou* status to non-agrarian ones in the 1990s, local villagers, who are former peasants, seem to be not yet integrated into the city. In addition to institutional and social barriers, the perceptual and cognitive levels of spatial segregation experienced by ViC occupants in their daily life need to be further explored. Engaging with these discussions on citizenship, displacement, and trans-locality, this chapter explores how ViC occupants associate themselves to the place where they stay in this age of high geographic mobility and the transformed meaning of locality.

A Spatial-Ethnographic Approach

Recent studies of global urbanism highlight that capital accumulation continues to find its new territories of "spatial fix" through transnational flows and networks in globalization yet

³⁴⁴ Bach, "They Come in Peasants and Leave Citizens': Urban Villages and the Making of Shenzhen, China," 2010; O'Donnell, Wong, and Bach, *Learn from Shenzhen China's Post-Mao Exp. from Spec. Zo. to Model City*.

³⁴⁵ Zhang, *Strangers in the City: Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Networks within China Floating Population*; Andersson, "Migrant Positioning: In Transforming Urban Ambience Urban Villages and the City, Guangzhou, China"; Bach, "They Come in Peasants and Leave Citizens': Urban Villages and the Making of Shenzhen, China," 2010.

³⁴⁶ Siu, "Grounding Displacement: Uncivil Urban Spaces in Postreform South"; Southern Metropolis Daily, *Weilai Meiyou Chengzhongcun - Yizuo Xianfeng Chengshi de Chaiqian Zaofu Shenhua 未来没有城中村—一座先锋城市的拆迁造富神话 [There Is No Urban Village in the Future: The Myth of Demolition and Enrichment in a Pioneer City]*.

often neglect local people's spatial practice and spatial experience that also shape the formation of space on the ground. In French philosopher Henri Lefebvre's concept of "social space," space is neither a simply fixed geographic location nor an empty container; it is something produced by human beings over time. Lefebvre saw spatial relations changing and continuously reconstructed by three forms of human actions: representations of space, spatial practice, and representational space.³⁴⁷ The representations of space come from the policies, plans, drawings, and paintings by governments, planners, architects, and artists, who conceive, imagine, and even regulate spatial relations. Spatial practice refers to how people on the ground actually perceive, use, and move around spaces in their daily life. It takes place at different scales, from different rooms within a house to different cities through infrastructures. Representational space moves to the cultural and symbolic sense of space; that is, people experience and associate themselves with living places through a set of symbolic meanings, in addition to housing function and physical movement.

While Lefebvre's work has tremendously influenced Marxist geographers, such as Castells, Harvey, and Brenner, the focus has remained largely on the language of representing spatial changes or the history of spatial changes in Marxist structural terms.³⁴⁸ Preceding chapters engage with such critical urban theories in global urbanism and approaches Shenzhen SEZ's ViCs as emerging locations for the "spatial fix" of capital accumulation at the global scale. However, as studies show, the specificity of Shenzhen SEZ's ViCs is largely rooted in the local villagers' existing networks to Hong Kong industrialists and developers, which dovetailed with the dual land regime and citizenship system in creating the disparate situations for urban/non-urban and local/non-local citizens.

³⁴⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX: Blackwell, 1991); Richard White, "What Is Spatial History?," *Spatial History Lab*, 2010.

³⁴⁸ White, "What Is Spatial History?" 3.

Lefebvre's triad of space has offered us a framework for identifying the capacity and precarity of the two major groups of former peasants housed by ViCs, and the ability to interrogate their spatial practice and spatial experience on the ground in addition to the lexicons developed in critical urban theories. In this chapter, I approach ViCs by "being there," listening to people there, and writing in "thick description."³⁴⁹ This ethnographic approach allowed me to use my body, my "self," to engage with and interpret people's descriptions, practices, and experiences of place on the ground.³⁵⁰ My experience moving around and using ViC spaces, and qualitative analysis of interviews with ViC occupants, combine to become my additional instrument of knowing, complementing existing theories.

The Site and Data

This section involved in-depth interviews with 40 people who were living or working at the Nantou Old Town. The Nantou Old Town is a hybrid of ViC and the historic town (Figure 6-1). It maintained both the traditional spatial arrangement of streets and plots and the grassroots organization among rural communities (as discussed in the second and third chapters). The 2017 Shenzhen/Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture (UABB) used Nantou Old Town as the major site for art and architectural interventions, intending to upgrade the old village-town's cultural and environmental conditions (as discussed in the fourth and fifth chapters). The rich history, hybrid culture, and complex built environments of the old village-town, now undergoing rapid changes, offered a typical case for this intended study, to investigate people's different experiences with ViCs and their perceptions of the emerging design interventions.

³⁴⁹ Carole McGranahan, "What Is Ethnography? Teaching Ethnographic Sensibilities without Fieldwork," *Teaching Anthropology* 4 (2014): 24, 27.

³⁵⁰ Sherry, *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject*, 42.



Figure 6-1. An aerial view of the Nantou Old Town

(Photo by URBANUS)

The 40 participants included occupants with official Shenzhen *hukou* (mainly local former farmers, also property owners and quasi-landlords of the ViC, hereafter local ex-farmers) and those without Shenzhen *hukou* (the primary group of ViC occupants, including tenants and shopkeepers, hereafter migrants). During the first phase of fieldwork, half a year before the UABB, I interviewed 25 participants, including six local ex-farmers, two locally born Hong Kong citizens, and seventeen migrants. Table 6-1 shows that the occupancy length ranged from less than half a year to more than seven decades. Thirteen of the respondents were female, and twelve were male. As Table 6-2 shows, the age ranged from 19 to 79 years, with a mode between 60 and 69. The sample also included a wide range of occupations, from property managers (most

of whom were local ex-peasants/landlords) to shopkeepers, white-collar workers, company or public institution employees, traditional craftsmen contractors.

Table 6-1 Occupancy length for local and non-local respondents in Phase 1

	<1 year	1-4 years	5-9 years	10-14 years	15-19 years	20-29 years	30-50 years	>50 years	Total
Local	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	6
Born Local (with Hong Kong citizenship)	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Not local	5	4	2	3	3	0	0	0	17
Total	5	4	4	3	3	1	3	2	25

Table 6-2 Age range for female and male respondents in Phase 1

	AGE:10-19	AGE:20-29	AGE:30-39	AGE:40-49	AGE:50-59	AGE:60-69	AGE:70-79	Total
Female	0	4	2	1	2	3	1	13
Male	1	0	2	3	1	5	0	12
Total	1	4	4	4	3	8	1	25

I used the sticker-mapping tactic to collect information about participants’ cognitive maps related to their everyday activities and values. During the exhibition, I randomly interviewed people at intervention sites within the ViC to solicit their responses to the interventions concerning their expectations. Some of the interviewees overlapped with the participants in the first phase. During the third phase of fieldwork, half a year after the UABB, I returned to the site. I interviewed 20 participants (including five participants who overlapped with those who participated in the first phase). I combined the walking-tour tactic and the multiple-sorting task to solicit participants’ interpretations and evaluations of art and architectural interventions.

Phase 1: Meaningful Places within the ViC and Relations with These Places

The first phase of this research included three tactics—Sticker Mapping, Walking Tour, and Semi-structured Interviews—and intended to map out important places for ViC occupants. A

pilot study indicated that the ViC was more than a type of settlement occupied by a fixed social group of people but a living and working hybrid place for a wider range of socio-demographic groups in a larger urban area. Instead of applying existing frameworks, the first phase of research broke down the ViC into different places and populations into different social groups to provide a more nuanced understanding of occupant-ViC relations. The mapping results and accompanied interviews represented occupants' cognitive maps and patterns of how occupants experienced different places within the ViC. Also, the results of a survey instrument identified sociodemographic variables of the respondents. This information tested how demographic profiles were associated with the data gathered in the first research phase.

Sticker Mapping Tactic. I used this tactic to identify “important” places for people living and/or working in the ViC and explore their cognitive maps. In the task of sticker mapping, the interviewees were given an aerial-view map of the Nantou Old Town and asked to use stickers of different colors to mark different types of places that impact their everyday activities (0). Drawn from on-site observations during the pilot study and existing studies on the quality of life and place attachment, I identified five different types of places that people tended to engage daily within the ViC. The five types are living places (red stickers), working places (yellow stickers), social or recreational places (purple stickers), sanitation facilities (such as garbage collection and recycling) (pink stickers), and places easy to access and well connected (green stickers).³⁵¹ Participants were also asked to add any places that did not fit into the categories but were important to them (blue stickers) (Figure 6-3).

³⁵¹ In Marans and Stimson's (2011) book *Quality of Urban Life (QOUL)*, the authors constructed five dimensions to measure this concept: 1) objective or subjective perspective, 2) the time domain as the life stage, 3) the life or social domains, 4) the level of geographical scales, and 5) socio-demographic status, pp. 58-79. In the dimensions of life domain and geographical scales, they focused on the relationship between city size and urban load, such as congestion, overcrowding, cost of housing, access to services and facilities, and environmental degradation. The concept of urban load primarily covers the broad economic and environmental aspects of quality of life, which overlooks the aspects of nuanced spatial characteristics such as integration, diversity, flexibility, identification, attachment, etc. in affecting quality of life. The overlaps and complementing nature of these

Walking Tour. Like the sticker mapping task, I used the walking-tour tactic to show ViC occupants' cognitive maps. During the walking tour, I asked participants to walk with me through places they engaged every day.³⁵² I then recorded the stops the participant made and drew out the routes on a site map (Figure 6-4). If the participants could not do the walking-tour task, they would be asked to draw the routes based on their daily routines.

Mapping results revealed clusters of social or recreational places (purple stickers), sanitation facilities (pink stickers), places easy to access and well connected, and places that supported people's other daily activities (blue) (Figure 6-3). These marked places turned out to congregate around the city park at the north, the two main streets connecting the South and East Gates, and an inner plaza at the intersection of the two main streets (Figure 6-6).

Semi-structured Interview. I also designed a set of interviews to investigate how participants perceived and used the places they identified as "important" to grasp differences in people's experience of the identified places (0). The semi-structured interviews allowed participants to explain why they selected these places. Key elements and actors emerged in their verbal explanations, revealing different patterns of people-place relations in the ViC context.

Demographic Measures. The demographic measures included information on age, gender, occupancy length (as measures of mobility), hometown, occupation, and *hukou* registration status (Appendix C). It was clear that the occupants of the ViC did not fall into the same social category. Although most of them belonged to the lower social strata, their differences in age, occupancy length, hometown, and occupation tended to impact their experience of places.

theories provide rich knowledge for understanding the complex links between built spaces, human perception and activities, which serves as both theoretical and methodological foundations for my empirical research.

³⁵² Sarah Pink, "Walking with Video," *Visual Studies* 22, no. 3 (2007): 240–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725860701657142>.

Phase 2 & 3: Perception of Interventions

During the second and third phases of the fieldwork, I mainly used interviews and the multiple-sorting task to grasp occupants' perceptions of the changes brought by the UABB.

Interviews. During the UABB, I designed a set of questions to inquire about people's interactions and interpretations of intervention exhibition projects. These intervention sites included those important places marked by people in the first phase: South-gate Park (4), -Street (2), the plaza at the intersection (1), and Zhongshan Park at the North (1) (Figure 6-6).

Multiple-sorting Tactic. Seven months after the biennale, I returned to the ViC and designed the multiple-sorting task to understand how occupants perceived the impacts of the exhibition and intervention projects. I identified twenty-eight exhibition and intervention projects and used them for the sorting task (Figure 6-5). During the task, I invited twelve participants to categorize the 28 projects based on a criterion, name each category, and then rank each project based on the criterion. I repeated this process until participants were unable to find a new criterion to categorize the projects. The criteria participants selected and the categories they created helped reveal their perceptions of these projects and their preferences regarding the intervention projects.

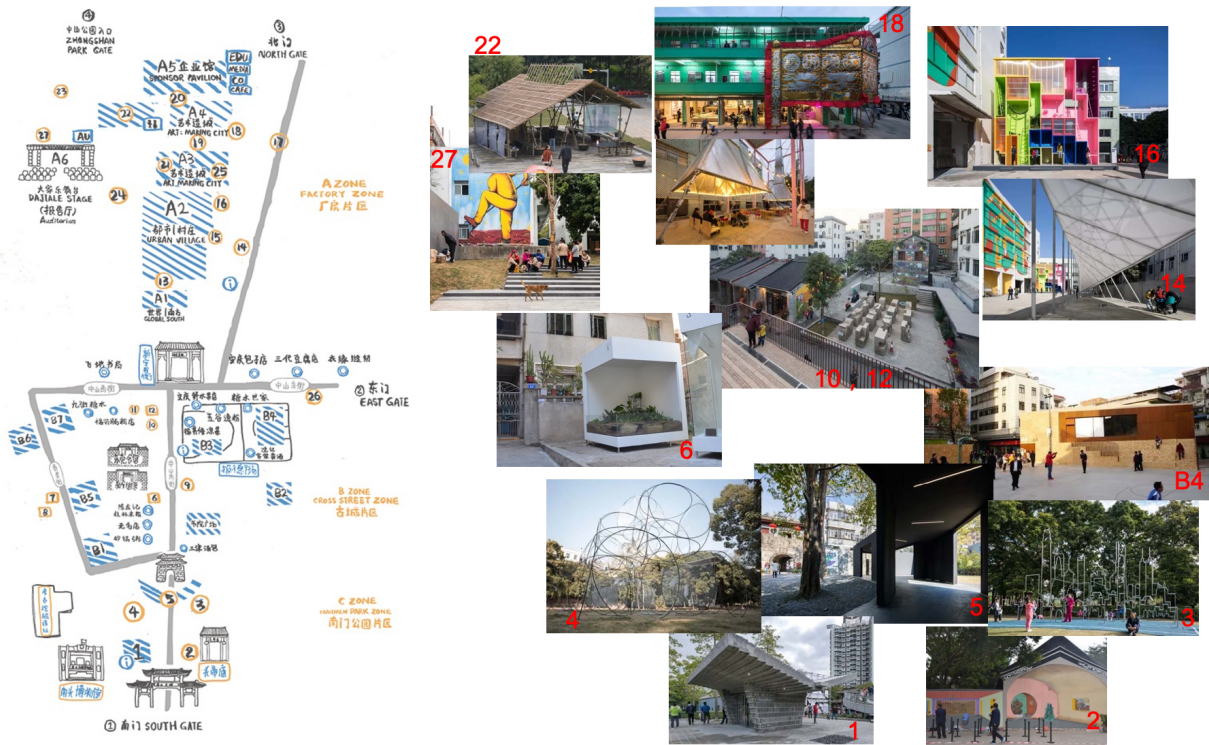


Figure 6-2. *Left*, a map of exhibition projects; *right*. Selected exhibition/intervention projects for analysis

(Map and photo by UABB)

Thematic Analysis Using NVivo

To further reveal the meaning of ViC places and intervention projects for ViC occupants, I adopted the thematic analysis to go over interview transcripts, in complement with the sticker-mapping analysis. Thematic analysis rejects pre-assumptions of possible relationships (in this case, people-place relations) and seeks a new or revised theoretic framework through an iterated coding process and categorizing interview data. In this case study, three steps were taken in the thematic analysis using the NVivo software. Firstly, using the Word Frequency Query in NVivo, the words (after excluding insignificant auxiliary words) that most frequently appeared in interview transcripts were identified. These frequently used words provided a rough outline of emerging codes. Secondly, interview transcripts were carefully reviewed and coded, using occupants' own descriptive words. Thirdly, similarities and variations across these codes were

identified, enabling further categorization of these codes into more abstract themes. In this case, I referenced emerging themes from previous theoretic constructs in place identity to identify revised patterns of people-place relations in the contemporary Chinese context, especially for lower-strata citizens in ViCs faced with displacement. I used the same thematic analysis to search follow-up interview data to complement the multiple-sorting tactic in the post-exhibition phase to reveal implications of the UABB interventions for the ViC occupants. In addition, I looked for emerging patterns of place identity across different socio-demographic attributes, including age generation, gender, occupancy length, and occupation. This crosstab analysis allowed me to identify differences and changes in people-place relations among the various groups of occupants as well as key socio-demographic factors.

Result 1-1: Important Places within the ViC and Cognitive Maps

The results of the sticker mapping identified clusters on the map (Figure 6-3). While participants' housing locations (red) were scattered, the marked working locations (yellow), places for social or recreational activities (purple), sanitation facilities (pink), and places easy to access and well connected (green) tended to congregate on several spots.

The most notable pattern came from marked places for social or recreational activities (purple). Stickers tended to primarily distribute along two main streets and concentrate on four spots—the Zhongshan city park (in memory of Sun Yat-sen, the founding father of the Republic of China) adjacent to the northern boundary of the ViC, a public plaza at the intersection of the two main streets, the school zone, and a small park at the South Gate. These were also open and public places. For sanitation facilities, participants showed difficulty identifying them; however, their stickers mainly concentrated on Zhongshan Park and the inner plaza for those who responded to the question.

For places considered to be easy to access and well connected (green), the South Gate was considered the most well-connected place by participants. The Zhongshan Park in the north, though considered as the most popular for socializing, was not considered well connected. More reasons and details were explained in in-depth interviews.

The open option (blue) also revealed some very significant everyday activities in the ViC, not covered by the types of places created by me. These activities, including visiting the fresh vegetable and fish market, playing Mahjong, and babysitting grandchildren, took place along particular streets and the two parks. These activities outlined the daily routine of ViC occupants: In the morning and evening, occupants would go to East Street to get fresh vegetables and fish for lunch and dinner; in the afternoon, they play Mahjong with their friends or neighbors along inner streets; during the day, the elderly took their grandchildren to play in open places; after dinner, they participate in walking exercise with friends in the city park.

The results of the daily pathways drawn by the interviewees also conformed with the findings of the sticker mapping. The city park, the east gate, and the south gate were the main destinations for the interviewed residents, and residents always used the main streets to get to their destinations (Figure 6-4).

Together, we can summarize the urban village residents' cognitive maps as characterized by three dominant nodes and a reversed "L" shaped street pattern with function-based branches. In terms of everyday behaviors and activities, we can find a hybrid of rural and urban lifestyles. Putting the cognitive map in juxtaposition with the exhibition guide map shows the difference in perception between the two groups. The curatorial team emphasized the south-to-north spatial sequence, especially the factory zone, while inhabitants highlighted disconnected spatial nodes and East Market Street.



Figure 6-3. Sticker mapping results of Nantou



Figure 6-4. Respondents' daily routines at Nantou



Figure 6-5. A summary of sticker mapping results

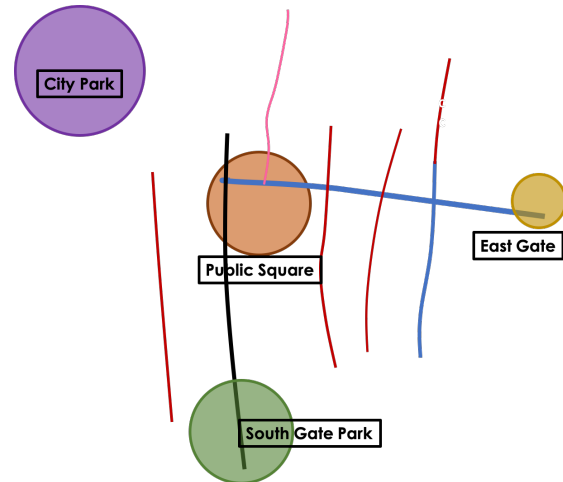


Figure 6-6. A summary diagram of respondents' cognitive map of Nantou

Result 1-2: Place Identity and Spatial Pattern

While the sticker mapping tool tended to show a general pattern of ViC occupants' collective cognitive or mental map, in-depth interviews, along with the sticker mapping, allowed me to document the various reasons behind the emerging pattern and identify how spatial practices and perceptions impact occupants' place identity. Based on NVivo analysis of the interview transcripts, keywords (factors) emerged in terms of participants' perceptions of selected places, indicating variations among different social groups. The Word Frequency Query in NVivo identifies the words that most frequently appeared (after excluding insignificant auxiliary words) that the 25 participants used in responding to interviews. As Table 6-3 shows, local ex-farmers and migrants tended to focus on very different aspects describing their interactions with the place. Nonetheless, there were some overlaps. Two words, “*fangzi*” (meaning house, apartment, or building) and “*gongyuan*” (meaning public park), appeared in the top ten most frequently used words among the 1,000 words captured by NVivo. In particular, “*fangzi*” appeared predominantly in both groups' most frequently mentioned terms, taking up

44% of the 1,000 words among the eight local ex-farmers' interview transcripts and 39% among migrants. Another word, “*gongyuan*,” superseded “*fangzi*” in migrants' most frequently mentioned terms, taking up 41% of the 1,000 words among the 17 migrants' interview transcripts and 11% among local ex-farmers.

Table 6-3 Analysis of word frequency by respondents at Nantou

Word Frequency Analysis of Local Ex-farmers			Word Frequency Analysis of Migrants		
Word	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)	Word	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
House/ Apartment/ Building 房子	120	0.44	Public park 公园	191	0.41
Government 政府	52	0.19	House/ Apartment/ Building 房子	183	0.39
Company 公司	47	0.17	Time 时间	85	0.18
Chairman of the board 董事长	46	0.17	Work/Job 工作	77	0.17
Son 儿子	45	0.17	Old Town 古城	74	0.16
(Agricultural) Production Cooperative 生产队	39	0.14	Night 晚上	70	0.15
Come back 回来	32	0.12	Not good 不好	66	0.14
Family/Home 家里	32	0.12	Go out 出去	65	0.14
Public park 公园	30	0.11	Environment 环境	64	0.14
Solution 办法	30	0.11	Shenzhen 深圳	63	0.14

Nevertheless, those words appearing after “*fangzi*” also indicated that “*fangzi*” had different meanings for local ex-farmers and migrants, beyond its general function as a dwelling. Local ex-farmers also frequently mentioned the key players involved in the property management and development, including the local government, the (village-based) company, the

chairman of the company's board, the (agricultural) production cooperative, and family members. In contrast, migrants tended to talk about time, work, night, environment, and Shenzhen related to their working and living conditions in the host city. The word “*gongyuan*” (meaning public park) appeared on the top of the list and indicated the most important environmental feature of the ViC for migrants. Another interesting contrast was the terms indicating the direction of their movement and mobility. While migrants used “going-out” in their descriptions of daily activities, local ex-farmers tended to use “coming-back” in their narratives.

Two migrant shopkeepers, both in their fifties, described their daily engagement with places within the ViC. They expressed their desire to go outside of the ViC, while the long working hours limited their chance to fulfill it.

*I don't have time. Every day and every year, I just want to **go out** for a trip or just play around, but I do not have time for that. Perhaps that's the thing about my job (as a shopkeeper) – I have to stay here for the whole day. ZY*

*I rarely walk around within the Nantou Town. I live within it; if I really want to go for a walk, I'd **go outside**, such as the Big Nanshan Mountain. I have to stay in the shop, and I do not have the mood to walk around the town, except I have something to do with the shop. ZS*

Three young women working at a bubble-tea shop expressed a similar desire to explore the city's larger area instead of staying in a confined area.

*We rarely **go out** for fun in this area because we do not live in this area...so we usually do not hang out in this area. ZZ*

*I haven't walked around this area. I **moved out** with my brother a few months ago. I usually **go back home** directly after work. When I don't need to work, I would just go back to my hometown to visit my parents. MY*

*I haven't been to many places within this old town. I work late. I usually go back home directly. When I don't need to work, I just **go out** and visit marketplaces, such as the Flower Town. WN*

For migrants, “going-out” indicated their dilemma: migrant workers went out of the hinterland to realize their city dreams in Shenzhen; the reality was that they spent most of their time working and living inside the ViC, segregated by walls trying to conceal it from the city. Many migrants left the hinterland as peasants and came to the fast-growing coastal city as factory or construction workers. For decades, they had only lived and worked within the ViC; however, they considered themselves as leaving their hometowns to start their businesses in Shenzhen.

The majority of local ex-farmers' families have moved out of the ViC and into tall apartment buildings in the recently developed neighborhoods. Those who still were living in the ViC usually worked as property managers. For those who moved to Hong Kong in the 1970s, they came back for a similar reason. Two Nantou-born Hong Kong citizens, who came back to reclaim their properties, expressed their fear of losing their families' assets to others. Some had immigrated to foreign countries, which left their properties unattended and abandoned.

*I **came back** five years ago. Every one or two months, I'll **come back** and live here for a while, just to keep an eye on my property to prevent it from being occupied by others. Seriously, if you do not **come back** from time to time, they might just demolish your house and build their own on top of it. It then would become big trouble when you want to fight with them in the court. CT (HK)*

*I ran off [to Hong Kong] during the Cultural Revolution [1966-1976]...I **came back** to rebuild the house in 2007. I **came back** because I could have the old house. My family is in Hong Kong, and my wife was born in Hong Kong...I do not go out when I am here. I just sit here reading a newspaper. CW (HK)*

“Coming-back” reflected the situation that many local landlords had moved out and into apartments outside of the ViC, and some of them had moved to Hong Kong during the Cultural Revolution between the 1960s and 1970s and become Hong Kong citizens. Many had “come back” to the ViC after their retirement to look after and manage their old properties (becoming landlords) during the building boom in the late 1990s, as they were afraid that their properties might just be encroached on by their neighbors. For these local people, “coming back” to the ViC was more than nostalgia; it was out of a fear of losing their old properties in the unregulated urbanization and a struggle to find a new way of living in the rapidly changing city. For both migrants and local ex-farmers, the ViC was more than a place of residence; it was also a working place.

Territorial boundaries and place identification. Respondents did not have congruent identifications of the ViC as a type of settlement. While local ex-farmers differentiated the place from other urban neighborhoods, as a rural settlement, migrants tended to view the place as part of the city, a transient place for starting a business, a historical/tourist town, an affordable rental housing community, or even a company’s dormitory site. Their differences in identifying the ViC was associated with their self-identification in the city. Five out of six local ex-farmers called themselves peasants. As one woman described, demarcations of living and workplaces were strict for urban and rural residents in the past. Whereas urban residents could work in factories and live with government subsidies, peasants were confined to work only on farmland and depend on land for a living.

*The boundaries were clear...In the past, **urban residents** used to buy food with the money paid by the state, and they could work in companies and factories. We were **peasants** and had to farm, no other opportunities. No one wanted to teach us skills, and no factories wanted us. Urban residents discriminated*

*against us. Now we **peasants owned the land**, and life became better. People became envious. MY*

Simultaneously, local ex-farmers tended to take a strong position in protecting local peasants' legal ownership of properties and land. Five local ex-farmers (overlapping with those who called themselves peasants) called themselves indigenous landlords. A young man complained about the intervention of the local government and criticized the exhibition operations.

*I'm an **indigenous landlord**. This [exhibition project] is just messing around. We, the ViC's joint-stock **company**, have not signed any contract with the government or any developers. The local **government** just stepped in and helped them occupy those factory buildings for exhibition events. Many issues such as compensation or rent have not been solved. XC*

Local ex-farmers' self-identification concerning the ViC was closely associated with the contested land and property ownership issue, which they were trying to protect from urban encroachment. For migrants, the association with their former social category of peasantry turned out to be something they were trying to disregard. They tended to associate themselves more with the city of Shenzhen instead of the ViC. Eleven out of twelve migrants differentiated themselves from local peasants by identifying their status as the migrant population. Their responses to their living experience in the sticker mapping exercise tended to focus on differences between living in the city of Shenzhen and living in their hometowns. Also, they described their social identities as workers with skills, businessmen with an entrepreneurial spirit, or urbanites in transition between jobs. A man stressed his migrant social status, in which he justified his substandard living conditions in the ViC as a temporal choice and expressed his expectations of better residence back in his hometown. Similarly, a woman saw herself as an

entrepreneur who migrated to the big city for a better life (than peasantry) but was disappointed by recent changes in the city.

*To be honest, we came out as **migrant workers**, living in **other people's** houses, so we do not pay much attention to the environment. It only needs to be friendly and clean. But our **own house** back in the **hometown** has to be exquisite. You shouldn't be that picky when you are out for work. It's **enough** to have a clean place to stay. GS*

*We came to Shenzhen to **start a business** to improve our life. If you kept working in the farmland in the rural area, you would be peasants forever... A lot of people went back **home**. Some went back to a **home-city** to restart up their businesses, and some went back to their **hometowns** to farm or work on aquaculture. You can see that much fewer people are here now. I think I won't stay here for long. I've lost my confidence here. ZY*

Scale turned to be a critical dimension for local ex-farmers and migrants in their relationship with place. For local ex-farmers, it was at the scale of the neighborhood that they differentiated their social category as local peasants, and hence reinforced their right to the land by differentiating the ViC from other urban neighborhoods. For migrants, their identity was characterized more at the scale of the city. The regional differences between the more developed coastal city and the underdeveloped hinterland rural areas appeared to be more profound for migrants than settlement differences between the ViC and other neighborhoods within the city.

Memories and transferability. Respondents tend to demonstrate two types of relationships to place, based on their life experiences in the past. For local ex-farmers, though many of them stayed in the ViC only to collect rents and manage properties, some expressed their desire to stay in the ViC by showing their emotional attachment to the place. Four women talked about their memories of family, social, and working life associated with particular places, including old houses, the central plaza, streets, and the farmland area surrounding the ViC.

*My husband was born in that old house down this street...I was also born in this town but on a different street. My **grandfather** was a landlord before land reform [in the 1950s]; he owned all the land and properties along that street.*

HN

*That [**Baode Plaza**] was a great place in the past. We [villagers] used to **dance** there. We used to get together there on the March 8 Women's Day and **play the game** "Pull the Rope." During the harvest seasons, we would **dry grains** there, then beans and peanuts, until the end of the year, when we would dry cassavas. Now all the space is occupied. **No space for such activities...** MY*

*The massive built area north of Zhongshan Park, Shennan Avenue, and residential blocks across that avenue used to be our **farmland**. We used to get up at 3 AM and walk for miles to **harvest chives** in the farmland. We had to come back before 8 AM to join the work in the commune. We had to work up to 8 PM. **Peasant life in the past was not easy...**FD*

*I don't want to move out. This place is better - more people and more **vibrant**. But if it's demolished, I have to move out. I don't have any other choices. **I won't move unless it's demolished**. I have so many friends here. [If] you live in those high-rise apartment buildings, you won't even know people living next door. LY*

In contrast to the local ex-farmers who tended to show attachment to place with reference to past events and experiences, some migrants showed a transferrable identity. They described the aspects of the ViC they valued in comparison to other urban neighborhoods in Shenzhen. The income-rent ratio and the social environment (social capital) within the ViC appeared to be the two most valued qualities by migrants. Many of them prioritized money-saving and responsibility to their families. As one man explained, he chose to live in the ViC because the rent was relatively low, and he wanted to save money for his children's education and live a better life when back in his hometown.

It's impossible for us to live in those "garden-city" neighborhoods, where the rent is ¥3,000-4,000.³⁵³ I don't want to spend all my salary on rent. I have to prioritize the affordable rents because I have a family to raise, and my daughter needs money to go to school... We cannot indulge ourselves out here. We do not have degrees and retirement pay either. We all depend on the income from physical labor. Since now my health condition allows me to work, I have to save money. But if I go back to my hometown, I can live better [with my skills]. GS

The rent affordability appeared as the most valuable aspect of the ViC for migrant respondents. Though there lacks a clear standard in China's housing policy, the concept of affordability in U.S. housing policy means that an affordable unit is one where the household occupying it is paying no more than 25-30% of their income. To get a sense of housing affordability in the ViC, we can compare the housing rents with wage levels in Shenzhen. In 2019, the entire city's median income was ¥5,826, where the median income of those who worked as construction workers, cleaners, service workers, and processing factory workers (mostly ViC occupants) was between ¥3,000 and ¥4,000.³⁵⁴ As shown in Table 6-4, the average rent of a regular two-bedroom apartment unit (30-40m²) of the district was ¥3,000-4,000. In comparison, the average rent of a ViC two-bedroom unit (30-40m²) was about ¥2,000, only half of the average rent of regularly developed housing units. Also, for a household of two low-income working people, a ViC two-bedroom unit's average rent was approximately 25-33% of their income. Although the rent of storefronts or shops within the ViC showed little difference from the district average, the total rents were lower, as many shopkeepers tended to also live in the same building. Among the 17 migrant respondents, almost one-third of them lived in two-

³⁵³ ¥1 (Chinese Yuen) equals approximately \$0.15 (US dollars).

³⁵⁴ "2019 Shēnzhèn Shì Rénlì Zīyuán Shichǎng Gōngzī Zhǐdǎo Jiǎwèi [2019 Shenzhen Human Resources Market Wage Guidance]" (Shenzhen, China, 2019).

bedroom-one-living-room units with family members. Twelves of them revealed their current rents, while the other five refused to talk about the rent.

Table 6-4 Rental room types and rents in Shenzhen, 2019

(Data from the National Enterprise Credit Information Publicity System, November 5, 2020, <https://www.creprice.cn/city/sz.html>)

Rental Room Type and Size (m ²)	Average in the Nanshan District in 2019 (¥)	Rent Range within the Nantou ViC (¥)						Unknown
		<500	500-1,000	1,000-2,000	2,000-3,000	3,000-5,000	>5,000	
1 Single Room (10 m ²)	1,014	1						
1 Bedroom (15 m ²)	1,521		2					
2 Bedrooms (30 m ²)	3,041			2				
2 Bedrooms and 1 Living-room (40 m ²)	4,055			2	1			3
3 Bedrooms and 1 Living-room (60 m ²)	6082				1	1		
1 Storefront (20m ²)	5,600						1	
1 Storefront and 1 Bedroom (40m ²)	7,628					1		2

The social environment or available social capital emerged as another important quality that migrants valued. On the one hand, migrants found living places and working opportunities primarily through kinships and fellow townsmen's networks in the same ViC. On the other, migrants' relationships with their landlords and local ex-farmers were critical to their viability in the place. Almost every migrant respondent mentioned that they found the living place or the current job through the recommendation of their family members, relatives, or fellow townsmen.

My cousins lived here. I moved here to live with them. ZZ

My brother and his girlfriend used to live here. So I moved in to live with them.

MY

My fellow townsmen and my cousin brought me to the city in 1998. I worked for them in a hardware company, where I learned my electric welding and electromechanical skills. They all lived here in Nantou, so did I... I don't want

*this place to be demolished. We left our hometowns to work in the city. It is not easy to find a place full of our fellow townsmen. We can speak our **dialect** with fellow townsmen, just like at home. **It's easier for us to communicate with and understand each other.** My fellow townsmen sometimes can introduce me to different job opportunities. GS*

Comparing the ViC with the occupants' hometown was essential for forming a transferrable place identity for migrants. For them, previous living skills and experiences became transferrable in the ViC. Still, the language barrier was a critical issue. Local people of Shenzhen primarily speak Cantonese instead of Mandarin. Migrants from the southern part of the nation tend to speak each region's dialect. While speaking the same dialect enhanced the information sharing within the group of people, communications among different migrant groups and migrants and local people were negatively impacted.

Geographic regions and dialects delimited migrant groups, who lived and worked together by taking up a particular occupation and occupying a street within the ViC. One man who had stayed in the ViC for over 20 years observed that their hometown regions also marked the types of work they did.

*People living here [Nantou] mainly came from three provinces, Hubei, Hunan, and Jiangxi. People from Hubei mainly worked as **bus drivers**. In the 1980s, when Shenzhen was established, drivers from Hubei brought an entire town of people to Shenzhen to drive buses. They were all living on Wutong Street at Nantou. People from Hunan tended to work in **the service sector**, such as **cleaners and housekeepers**. People from Jiangxi mainly worked as **contractors or interior-renovation workers**. They were well known for their woodworking. WS*

Region-based grouping of migrants turned out to a positive factor in developing migrants' transferrable place identities; however, the relationships between migrants and local

landlords complicated migrants' place identity. Such relationships determined the rent change margin and migrants' viability in living in the place. Three participants complained about the increase in rent every year. One mentioned her forced relocation experience due to the owner's sudden decision to transfer the property management to a real-estate developer.

*In the recent two years, the owner **raised the rent** madly. Rents have been doubled. Mine [for a storefront] has increased ¥800 this year. LJ*

*Rents here have been increasing every year. The owners do not care how long you've lived here. **They raise rents as they want**. Many other people still want to move in, so they really don't care if we leave. I've lived here for over ten years. In 2002, the rent was around ¥500 per month. Now it's 2,600, raised 800 just this year. GS*

*There has been **an increase** of ¥200 in rent every year. In 2007, when we just arrived here, the rent was 1,000. Now it's ¥2,700. ZY*

*When I came to the place in 2000, the rent was ¥500; however, the owner just suddenly asked us to **move out** because he transferred the management to a real-estate company. I had to find a new room. The rent was ¥1,000 now. PY*

Three other participants spoke confidently about their relationship with the property

owners and showed satisfaction with the rents.

*The property owner is very nice, and I've **maintained a good relationship** with him. He only raised the rent once for all these years. He lives in Hong Kong. It also depends – some tenants have really tense relationships with their property owners. Their rents go up every year. XY*

*The rent for my two-bedroom-one-living-room unit is **relatively cheap** (¥1,800), compared to others, which were usually above ¥2,000. WS*

*I cannot tell you how much my rent is because I have **a secret deal with my landlord**. I have to keep the secret for him. My rent was increased a little bit over the 20 years, but not much. ZS*

Overall, ViC occupants demonstrated the importance of memories and experiences in the past in shaping their relationships with place. Local ex-farmers tended to refer to special places that held their memories or supported their traditional activities. Migrants valued general qualities such as rent, fellow-townsmen-based social support, and personal relationships with local landlords, which helped them develop a transferrable place-congruent continuity.

Environmental manageability. Occupants' environmental manageability in the ViC considers how the environment supports or threatens their daily activities and their agency in making changes. Both local ex-peasants and migrants mentioned the support aspects of the ViC environment, including its convenient location, diverse businesses, vibrant atmosphere, and closeness to nature, but also expressed their concerns over density, sanitation, accessibility, and security issues. As indicated in their sticker-mapping results, the two parks, the plaza, and the East-Marker street were the most selected places supporting their daily life.

After his retirement, a local-born man who moved back from Hong Kong enjoyed the convenient and free life in the ViC. Similarly, several migrants also appreciated the convenience and vibrance of life in the ViC and its closeness to nature.

*The **location** of the place is good. I can easily go to the Seafood Market and eat together with my friends... It's a good place to spend your time. I can play Mahjong with neighbors in my free time. If I need some fresh air, I can simply walk out of the door and sit in the yard. I **feel free** here. CW (HK)*

*The **air quality** is good here. It's near Zhongshan Park. We can take a walk to the park, and my grandchildren can play around. GS*

*It's good here. You can find anything you need here. Life here is very **convenient**. Many people have gotten attached to the place. They have lived here for decades. The other day I was out in a new neighborhood, and my phone battery died. Suddenly, I was panicked; I was waiting for my friend's call. But in that neighborhood, you just cannot find such small shops like here that selling portable power-banks... Eating here is very convenient as well. Just across my shop, many restaurants on that street. I often take my children there. The plaza here is also very **vibrant**. I sometimes watch people playing basketball there in the afternoon. In the evening, many barbecue stalls will show up in the plaza. LJ*

*My friend recommended this neighborhood to me. It's close to where I work. I did not get a good first impression, because the **old town** looks really dilapidated. Then I thought that, overall, this Nanshan District was quite developed and modern, so it shouldn't be too bad. I took a tour and saw the somewhat **clean main streets, busy flows of people, and security guards everywhere**. YG*

However, there were some shared concerns of occupants over the built environment. The same local-born HK man complained about other occupants' behaviors, while the same migrant man was unsatisfied with the high density.

*But I don't like people's behaviors here. They **spit and litter** everywhere. They do not care about the environment. CW (HK)*

*Inside the village, buildings are **too close** to each other. GS*

Though the place was well connected to other places in nature, the increased security nonetheless made the place less connected. A few young women mentioned improved security and cleaned-up street spaces but expressed their concerns over limited accessibility and forced eviction.

*It seems to be **safer** here. A few days ago, there were four cases of scaring scuffles in one night—a lot of blood on the street. But the security guards arrived shortly and put them down...But the **guards were annoying** sometimes. They drove away many vendors that used to set up stalls on the streets. They also would not let any scooters and cars enter the old town. We have to walk a long distance to get into the shop. We usually do not have that much time. **The streets were tidier, but people were leaving.** LJ*

*It's very inconvenient for me now. They guarded gates to **block cars and scooters** from entering the old town. I understand that it's for pedestrians' safety. Now I have to take a long way to pass around the guarded gates. I do not have much time to spend on the road. PY*

*Although bus stations are close to the gates, it is still **a long distance** for me to walk from my apartment to the bus stations. YG*

In addition to the environmental affordance, another critical aspect of the environmental manageability for ViC occupants is the capability to make changes or resist changes. In local ex-farmers' descriptions, they showed relatively high confidence in that capability due to their participation in the joint-stock company. The joint-stock company evolved from the people's commune and its component agriculture production teams, which formed based on traditional kinship and clan relationships during the socialization of agriculture in the 1950s. In local ex-farmers' eyes, the joint-stock company was the main agent in managing villagers' collective assets, improving utilities, and providing social benefits, replacing the role of the local government.

Meanwhile, almost every local respondent complained about the corrupt relationship between the company and local street-level officials, resulting in the dispossession of the collective land from farmers. Local ex-farmers demonstrated their strong resistance in attitude and action confronting those activities. A woman told the story about how a group of peasants,

including herself, appealed all the way to the provincial court to get back the land and compensation for ex-farmers and put the former chairman of the company in prison.

*We have much farmland, up to hundreds of thousands of square meters, which was just requisitioned without any compensation to peasants. We saw that peasants in other villages had received pieces of constructive land and funds as compensation for the requisitioned farmland. We wondered why our village did not have that much compensation. It turned out that the previous chairman of our joint-stock company had many **secret contracts with street-level officials**. The chairman established his real-estate companies by embezzling our compensation, with the help of local officials. In turn, these officials received apartments from the previous chairman as gifts. Those upscale neighborhoods were built on the land, which should be compensated to us. LY*

One man talked about his action in preventing an attempt by the local officials to take up a piece of vacant land and build an apartment building next to his house.

*One day some local officials came over and wanted to build something on that vacant land. **I fought back strongly**. I have **legal documents** that showed the boundaries of my homestead. **They cannot trespass on my land**. And my house needs sunlight and ventilation. I cannot let them block my house. The place has been crowded enough, all occupied by buildings. YB*

Another man, now a Hong Kong citizen, condemned the joint-stock company's decision in demolishing historic buildings and called for solidarity of local ex-farmers to push for better compensation if the property is demolished.

*It's too **brutal** of them [the joint-stock company] to demolish those buildings of significant **historical values**, the memorial tablets, the Office of the Coast Defense, and so on. I just don't understand – these buildings standing there are not interrupting anyone. CT (HK)*

*It seems that everyone [the local property owner] expects the village to be demolished and get a great amount of money as compensation. But they cannot **unite themselves to fight** for it, just like people in other villages did. CT (HK)*

In contrast, migrants showed little confidence in their ability to make changes favorable to themselves.

*What I say **does not count**. The changes made so far inside the town were **not realistic**. The living basics were still problems, including water and electricity, not to mention the sanitation facilities. ZS*

*For me, the improvement of environmental qualities **has little to do with me**. I do **not belong here**. I have my house back in my hometown. If the government wants to demolish the place, we have to move to another place. We are migrant workers. We have **no right** to say anything. GS*

Both local ex-farmers and migrants shared the environmental affordance of the ViC in supporting their daily activities; however, faced with threats of redevelopment and demolition, they differentiated in terms of their confidence and capability in making changes. While local ex-farmers strongly defended their position in negotiating with the state and market forces, migrants lacked that kind of community-level support and opportunity.

Affordability and Preference. For many ViC occupants, living in the ViC was less a choice of preference but more a result of affordability. Nonetheless, occupants' perception of and interaction with the place had changed due to recent operations on environmental upgrading. They expressed a few different ways in which their relationships with the place had positively impacted their preference by recognizing its historical values and increased interactions with renovated public parks. Local ex-farmers tended to be prouder of the place's historical value; nonetheless, a young woman who moved in recently also showed great interest in the renovated historical buildings.

*Have you ever seen those memorial tablets at the entrance? It was inscribed with **the long history of our village**. Every place inside the village has a history. CT (HK)*

*Since I moved in, I have **visited those historical sites** several times, including the historical government office (yamen), the ancestral hall of Wen Tianxiang, and those ruins of battlefields. YG*

The newly renovated public park also became the favorite place for many occupants. Everyone mentioned that Zhongshan Park was the place they visit every day after its renovation.

*Zhongshan Park is really **beautiful** now. A lot of people nearby come to do exercises in the park in the evening. In the past, no one dared to come to the park. It was dilapidated and controlled by gangs. Now you can see the paved roads, trimmed plants, and new benches and facilities. LJ*

*The Zhongshan Park is truly **a great job** [of the recent renovation]. I usually take a walk there after lunch. You feel free and relaxed in open spaces in the park. If the park was not here, there were no other places to take a rest living in this village. ZS*

As indicated in respondents' descriptions, recent renovations of old buildings and public parks have significantly improved the environmental qualities of the ViC, which raised occupants' preference to live in the ViC beyond its affordability. However, for many occupants who lived in the ViC for years, the ongoing renovation did not seem to change their perception of the place significantly. One women shopkeeper expressed her doubts about the purpose of advertising the ViC.

*Why is Nantou selected for the international exhibition? I mean, people who were living here were **in a lower class**. Is it to attract outside people to visit the place? I saw many **advertisements** that spoke highly of it and defined it as "a historic town." LJ*

For most ViC occupants, the recent environmental upgrading had improved their quality of life and increased rent, as mentioned previously. With the decrease in job opportunities, the rent increase had made their living situations in the city more precarious. In the words of one migrant: “eventually, the improved environmental qualities and living facilities are not for us.”

In general, both migrants and local villagers who shared the same social category as former peasants tended to associate their identity with Shenzhen instead of the ViC as a specific settlement identification. Especially for migrants, their identity processes concerning the ViC reflected their identity processes in relation to the city. Though they identified and picked out the important places within the ViC in the sticker mapping, their descriptions and explanations indicated that the spatial features and environmental qualities within the ViC were less significant than the affordable rent and convenient location of the ViC in the city. In their cases, memories, past experiences, environmental manageability, and affordability played a more determinant role than spatial boundaries and environmental preferences. In other words, transferable living and working skills and a supportive physical environment to help them stay in the host city were more important than distinctive settlement types or preferred environmental qualities.

Local ex-farmers demonstrated a more complicated relationship to the ViC in the transformation of identity processes. On the one hand, they tended to use specific spatial characteristics to maintain their identity in association with place by differentiating the ViC from other urban neighborhoods, telling past/rural life stories in relation to particular sites, and advertising the place’s historical values. However, as indicated by their responses, the meaning of the ViC had changed for them. It was not only a residential place but also an investment project for them. Faced with constant encroachments from external development forces,

maintaining or even enhancing their identity in association with the place turned out to be a way of claiming their property rights.

Result 1-3: Place Identity and Demographic Variables

In addition to the ViC occupants' *hukou* status (being local or migrant), variations in occupants' relationship to the place were also influenced by the occupants' age, occupancy length, and occupation.

Age. Social identification and place identification varied among different age groups, as Table 6-5 and Table 6-6 show. An overall tendency was that the territorial boundaries in the development of place-related identity was less evident in younger generations, especially in terms of differences between rural and urban categories. Table 6-5 suggests that younger respondents (under the age of 30) tended to view themselves as urbanites; in comparison, older respondents tended to associate themselves with peasants, even though they also identified themselves as migrants. Therefore, for younger generations born after China's economic reform, differences in local and non-local *hukou* status had more impacts on social identification than rural-urban divides. Table 6-6 shows a similar tendency in place identification. Younger generations tended to view the ViC as a settlement type with more urban characteristics, while older generations associated it with rural settlements.

Differences among age groups were also evident in referent memories and the transferrable social capital impacted their identity. Table 6-7 shows that older generations tended to tell stories about the ViC through their memories of broader social changes before and after the economic reform, life changes from peasants to quasi-landlords and physical changes in places. Younger generations did not mention these stories and memories. In terms of the transferrable place identity, Table 6-8 presented different sources of social capital that ViC

occupants mentioned. Mid-aged respondents (between age 40 and 60) tended to have a wider range of social resources, from family members, kinship or clan-based relatives, fellow townsmen, to current neighbors, to connect themselves with job opportunities in the city. More elderly respondents tended to rely more on family members and kinship or clan-based relatives, while younger generations tended to be more dependent on family members and friends.

Almost all age groups recognized the ViC's closeness to public parks, convenience, and reduced crime rate as supportive spatial characteristics (Table 6-9). Some younger and older respondents also mentioned improved cleanness and recognized historical values as positive aspects, which few mid-aged respondents mentioned. Table 6-10 categorizes respondents' different attitudes and reactions towards ongoing spatial changes. Overall, older generations tended to express stronger attitudes or actions towards the ongoing changes of ViCs, including revealing corruption cases, criticizing bureaucratic administration, expressing concerns over state interventions and pro-development programs, and expressing concerns over their limited agency. Fewer young respondents expressed their concerns over the ongoing changes.

Table 6-5 Age generation and self-identification

(Respondents may identify themselves as more than one social categories)

	Former peasant	Local landlord	Hong Konger	Migrant worker	Urbanite	Total (Unique)
AGE RANGE = 10-19 (1)	0	0	0	1	1	1
AGE RANGE = 20-29 (4)	0	0	0	2	4	4
AGE RANGE = 30-39 (4)	0	1	0	2	0	3
AGE RANGE = 40-49 (4)	1	0	0	1	0	1
AGE RANGE = 50-59 (3)	1	1	1	1	0	2
AGE RANGE = 60-69 (8)	4	3	1	4	0	7
AGE RANGE = 70-79 (1)	1	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL (25)	7	5	2	11	5	19

Table 6-6 Age generation and settlement types

(Respondents may identify the ViC as more than one settlement types)

	Rural village	Migrant enclave	Historical town	Urban neighborhood	Dormitory	Total (Unique)
AGE RANGE = 10-19 (1)	0	1	1	0	1	1
AGE RANGE = 20-29 (4)	0	2	4	4	0	4
AGE RANGE = 30-39 (4)	2	2	2	1	1	4
AGE RANGE = 40-49 (4)	1	1	2	3	0	3
AGE RANGE = 50-59 (3)	2	2	3	2	0	3
AGE RANGE = 60-69 (8)	6	5	6	4	0	8
AGE RANGE = 70-79 (1)	1	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL (25)	12	13	18	14	2	24

Table 6-7 Age generation and types of memories

	Memories of economic reforms	Memories of life changes	Memories of old places	Total (Unique)
AGE RANGE = 10-19 (1)	0	0	0	0
AGE RANGE = 20-29 (4)	0	0	0	0
AGE RANGE = 30-39 (4)	0	0	1	1
AGE RANGE = 40-49 (4)	0	1	0	1
AGE RANGE = 50-59 (3)	1	1	1	1
AGE RANGE = 60-69 (8)	1	5	6	6
AGE RANGE = 70-79 (1)	0	1	1	1
TOTAL (25)	2	8	9	10

Table 6-8 Age generation and social capital

	Kinship and clan relatives	Fellow townsmen	Building a friendship with neighbors	Religious groups	Family members and friends	Total (Unique)
AGE RANGE = 10-19 (1)	0	0	0	0	1	1
AGE RANGE = 20-29 (4)	0	0	0	0	2	2
AGE RANGE = 30-39 (4)	0	0	0	1	1	1
AGE RANGE = 40-49 (4)	0	2	1	0	2	2
AGE RANGE = 50-59 (3)	1	1	1	0	1	2
AGE RANGE = 60-69 (8)	4	0	1	0	1	4
AGE RANGE = 70-79 (1)	1	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL (25)	6	3	3	1	8	13

Table 6-9 Age generation and supportive spatial features

	Close to public parks	Private yards	Improved sanitation	Reduced crime rate	Convenience	Close to workplace	Historical values	Total (Unique)
AGE RANGE = 10-19 (1)	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
AGE RANGE = 20-29 (4)	3	0	3	2	3	1	1	5
AGE RANGE = 30-39 (4)	3	1	2	1	2	0	0	5
AGE RANGE = 40-49 (4)	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
AGE RANGE = 50-59 (3)	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
AGE RANGE = 60-69 (8)	3	1	2	2	3	0	1	5
AGE RANGE = 70-79 (1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL (25)	13	2	7	7	10	1	2	20

Table 6-10 Age generation and agency in making changes

	Resisting redevelopment		Opposing redevelopment		Concerning changes			Lacking capabilities		Pro-demolition	Total (Unique)
	Rejecting redevelopment proposals	Charging corruption	Opposing demolition	Criticizing bureaucratic administration	Concerning demolition and renovation	Concerning external interventions and pro-development programs	Concerning constant and rapid changes	Incapable of making changes	Limited impacts of the UABB	Pro-demolition and call for solidarity	
AGE RANGE = 10-19 (1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
AGE RANGE = 20-29 (4)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
AGE RANGE = 30-39 (4)	0	2	0	0	2	2	2	1	0	0	3
AGE RANGE = 40-49 (4)	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1
AGE RANGE = 50-59 (3)	0	1	2	1	0	1	2	2	0	1	3
AGE RANGE = 60-69 (8)	1	4	2	4	3	5	4	6	2	0	7
AGE RANGE = 70-79 (1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL (25)	1	7	5	5	5	9	9	11	2	1	15

Occupancy Length. How long the occupants had lived or worked at the ViC has similar impacts on their relationships to place as the age variable. As Figure 6-7 shows, the length of occupancy tended to be positively associated with age. In general, the older the respondent, the longer they might live or work at the ViC. This association also indicated that the turnover rate

within the ViC was not high, as well as the mobility of ViC occupants. For local ex-farmers, many of them had lived in the ViC since they were born. Many mid-aged migrant tenants had also lived in the place for twenty or thirty years. Nevertheless, it can also be seen from the figure that there were newcomers (especially young respondents under the age of thirty) who had only lived in the place for less than one year.

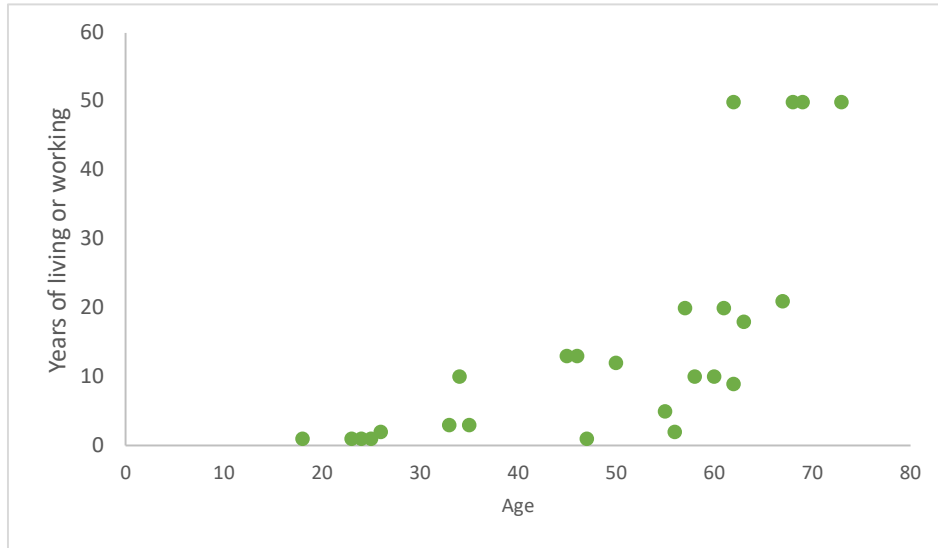


Figure 6-7. Age and years of occupancy at Nantou

Compared to long-time occupants who were more segregated, newcomers tended to explore and engage with different social places across the boundaries between the ViC and the city. Table 6-11 charts the relationship between occupancy length and respondents' social activities/places in their free time. It shows that those who have stayed in the ViC for more than ten years tended to have fewer social activities or engage with fewer places. Three out of nine mentioned that they took a walk in nearby public parks. Two mentioned they would just stay at home watching TV. Newly moved-in groups tended to have more diverse social activities in different environments. In addition to those existing informal markets, such as the fresh fish and vegetable market, fleet market, and grocery stores, those emerging bubble-tea houses, street bars,

and salons within the ViC and some recreational parks and commercial complexes outside of the ViC were also popular among newer occupants.

Table 6-11 Occupancy length and types of engaged places

	Outside of the ViC in the City			Nearby public parks		Open-door places within the ViC				In-door places within the ViC			Private homes within the ViC				Total (Unique)
	Recreational activities	Morning tea	Townsmen gathering	Walking and exercises	Child-sitting	Sport games	Fish and vegetable Market	Fleet market and grocery stores	Street bars and vendors	Beauty shops	Bubble tea shops	Mahjong	Playing Chess with Friends	Noon nap	Watch TV at Home	Drink alone	
RESIDENCE LENGTH = 1 (5)	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	1	4	0	0	0	1	0	4
RESIDENCE LENGTH = 2-4 (4)	1	0	0	0	2	1	3	1	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	3
RESIDENCE LENGTH = 5-9 (4)	3	2	1	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	1	3
RESIDENCE LENGTH = 10-14 (3)	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
RESIDENCE LENGTH = 15-19 (3)	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
RESIDENCE LENGTH = 20-29 (1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
RESIDENCE LENGTH = 30-50 (3)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
RESIDENCE LENGTH > 50 (2)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL (25)	8	2	1	5	4	2	6	2	5	2	5	4	1	1	4	1	14

Occupation. Respondents’ occupation as a variable appeared to be associated with their past experiences and capabilities to manage the living environment, in developing place-related identity. ViC occupants represented a wide range of traditional and modern occupations, including property managers (local landlords), shopkeepers, shop employees, white-collar workers, craftsmen, contractors, construction workers, and blue-collar workers in the service sector. As Table 6-12 shows, respondents with different occupations tended to rely on different forms of social capital as a means to fit into the social environment and develop transferrable place identity. For respondents who were landlords, traditional craftsmen, and blue-collar workers in the service sector, kinship and clan relationships appeared as their main source of

social capital, although the income of landlords was much higher than traditional craftsmen and blue-collar workers. In contrast, shopkeepers and shop employees turned out to be more dependent on close family members and friends.

Respondents with different occupations also tended to have different needs in terms of the supportive environment. As mentioned previously, the most supportive features recognized were the ViC’s closeness to public parks, convenience, and reduced crime rate. Nevertheless, Table 6-13 shows that respondents who were local property managers, traditional craftsmen, and blue-collar workers in the service sector mentioned fewer spatial features that were supportive. An interesting contrast was that two among the three groups, local property managers and traditional craftsmen, expressed their opinions or concerns over the ongoing changes in the ViC (Table 6-14). Compared to respondents in other occupations who tended to avoid the question or emphasize their lack of ability to make changes, traditional craftsmen expressed their strong attitude against demolition and replacement of the ViC, despite their acknowledgment of inability to make any changes.

Table 6-12 Occupation and social capital

	Kinship and clan relationships	Fellow townsmen	Building a friendship with neighbors	Religion	Family members and friends	Total (Unique)
OCCUPATION = Property Manager (7)	3	0	0	0	0	3
OCCUPATION = Shopkeeper (4)	0	1	1	1	2	2
OCCUPATION = White-Collar (2)	0	0	0	0	0	0
OCCUPATION = Employee (4)	0	0	0	0	3	3
OCCUPATION = Traditional Craftsman (2)	2	0	1	0	0	2
OCCUPATION = Contractor (3)	0	1	1	0	0	1
OCCUPATION = Service (1)	1	1	0	0	0	2
TOTAL (25)	6	3	3	1	8	13

Table 6-13 Occupation and supportive spatial features

	Close to public parks	Private yards	Improved cleanness	Reduced crime rate	Convenience	Close to workplace	Historical features	Total (Unique)
OCCUPATION = Property Manager (7)	1	2	0	2	1	0	0	4
OCCUPATION = Shopkeeper (4)	4	0	2	2	3	0	1	4
OCCUPATION = White-Collar (2)	2	0	2	0	1	1	1	2
OCCUPATION = Employee (4)	3	0	2	2	3	0	0	3
OCCUPATION = Traditional Craftsmen (2)	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	2
OCCUPATION = Contractor (3)	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
OCCUPATION = Service (3)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL (25)	13	2	7	8	10	1	2	17

Table 6-14 Occupation and agency in making changes

	Resisting redevelopment		Opposing redevelopment		Concerning changes			Lacking capabilities	Pro-demolition	Total (Unique)	
	Rejecting redevelopment proposals	Charging corruption	Against demolition	Bureaucratic administration	Demolition and renovation	State intervention and pro-development programs	Constant and rapid changes	Incapacity	Limited impacts of the UAB		Pro-demolition but require solidarity in compensation
OCCUPATION = Property Manager (7)	1	5	1	3	2	4	3	4	0	1	6
OCCUPATION = Shopkeeper (4)	0	1	0	0	1	2	2	3	1	0	4
OCCUPATION = White-Collar (2)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
OCCUPATION = Employee (4)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
OCCUPATION = Traditional Craftsman (2)	0	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	0	2
OCCUPATION = Contractor (3)	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1
OCCUPATION = Service (3)	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
TOTAL (25)	1	7	5	5	5	9	9	11	2	1	15

Discussion 1: Identity Construction Process in ViCs

Sticker mapping results revealed current ViC occupants' cognitive maps, which were different from how planners or architects conceptualized the spatial structure of the ViC. While

the ViC, like many ViCs in China, was described as a walled-off and isolated migrant enclave in many official or scholarly narratives, the cognitive maps showed that the most engaged and important places for ViC occupants were not necessarily within the ViC but those located at the interfaces of the ViC and city, especially those open places such as city parks and local markets within walking distance. Although the ViC kept the historic nine-street structure of the ViC (that's why the ViC is also called Nine-Street Village), occupants nonetheless tended to recognize the fragments of the street structure (Figure 6-6). The plaza and the informal market street were the only two "important" places within the ViC that its occupants recognized. The fragmented cognitive maps of ViC occupants reflected that many ViC occupants could not "know" the complicated environments within the ViC, not to mention to "change" any of the environments via their personal agency.

The cognitive map, along with in-depth interviews, explained why occupants selected public parks and local markets as "important" places, as reflected in complicated people-place relationships. In the case of a Chinese ViC, people-place relationships are beyond the dichotomy of attached and non-attached relationships. Nor does Lewicka's revised five types of people-place relationships (namely the everyday or traditional attachment, ideological or active attachment, alienation, place relativity, and placelessness) apply directly to the Chinese ViC.³⁵⁵ Therefore, it requires more grounded investigations into occupants' own descriptions to understand the implications of their cognitive maps and their relationships to place and even the city. Instead of categorizing the people-place relationships into different types, this section presents the means by which occupants develop people-place relationships in the ViC based on the emerging prominent themes in their interviews.

³⁵⁵ Maria Lewicka, "On the Varieties of People's Relationships with Places: Hummon's Typology Revisited," *Environment and Behavior* 43, no. 5 (2011): 676–709, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013916510364917>.

Theme analysis of interview transcripts revealed that, while ViC occupants lacked opportunities to compare the ViC with other urban neighborhoods (especially those low-income migrants who could not afford the rents of regularly developed neighborhoods), they nonetheless maintained some level of active interest in one particular ViC compared with hundreds other ViCs in the city. However, the attractive features were not necessarily coming from the ViC itself, but its geographic relations to services and facilities in the larger urban area, including its closeness to high-tech industrial sites, public parks, and schools, as shown in their cognitive map of five types of important places.

Boundary and Scale. Territorial boundaries tend to mark social boundaries. In official narratives and outsiders' perceptions, ViCs have long been described as places where “dangerous, uncivilized, and unregulated floating populations” (migrant workers) or “youths with four negatives” (the second generation of local landlords) concentrated in cities.³⁵⁶ However, in the eyes of ViC occupants, the ViC was more than a place of residence. In terms of self-identification, ViC occupants identified themselves as ex-farmers, indigenous landlords, Hong Kongers, migrant workers, or urbanites. The identification of the ViC also ranged from being a rural village, a migrant enclave, a historic town, a market/working place, an urban neighborhood, to a company's dormitory site. The ViC as a place had different meanings for different social groups. The physical boundary between the ViC and the city had a significant meaning for local ex-farmers due to the long-existing land ownership conflicts. By defining the boundaries of the village as a rural terrain, local ex-farmers intended to protect their collective ownership of the land from urban encroachment. By identifying themselves as ex-farmers or indigenous landlords, they intended to legitimize their relationships with the land.

³⁵⁶ Zhang, *Strangers in the City: Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Networks within China Floating Population*; Siu, “Grounding Displacement: Uncivil Urban Spaces in Postreform South.”

In contrast, scale turned out to be an important element for migrants to associate themselves with ViCs. Instead of associating themselves with the ViC as a particular type of settlements (such as a gated urban community, a migrant enclave, a suburban neighborhood, or a rural village), migrant occupants tended to relate themselves to unique functions of the ViC in the city. Its closeness to high-tech industry hubs and public schools, its affordance for business/innovation startups, its relatively low rents, its natural surroundings (reserved city parks), its retained rural social relations and lifestyles, and less regulated marketplaces were the reasons why migrants and incoming young technicians selected the ViC. In other words, they perceived the ViC as an integral part of the city. It was less from within the ViC itself but more from what the ViC could provide related to occupants' conveniences and affordances to survive in the city that the people-place relation was generated.

For migrants, instead of distinguishing themselves from those who are living in regular urban neighborhoods, a stronger desire was to integrate themselves into the category of urban residents both socially and administratively. Due to the *hukou* registration system, their social identification remained connected to their birthplaces. They lacked access to social benefits and resources in the host city, including government subsidies for housing, medical insurance, and education. The administrative division between rural and urban areas and the geographic differences between coastal cities and hinterland areas all contributed to the difficulty for migrants to integrate themselves into the city. The sense of alienation from the city, and simultaneously, the ambition to stay in the city, engendered migrants' contradictory attitudes towards associating themselves with the ViC. Calling themselves migrant workers or business starters indicated their attempts to differentiate themselves from local ex-farmers by stressing their working skills and capability in making a living in the city. Although migrant tenants'

social identification was largely associated with their birth hometowns due to the *hukou* registration system, they struggled to reestablish their association with the host city by associating with the ViC first. Their relationship or attachment to the ViC was a self-conscious yet strategic attitude due to the lack of available choices in the city.

Age generation and occupation turned out to be the most prominent variables in place identification. The gentrification process has been attracting the creative class, namely young white-collar workers and technicians that constitute the emerging middle class in China, into the ViC. While the process is improving the image of the ViC, it is also diminishing its affordability for migrant workers in the city. Incoming younger generations in the ViC tended to identify themselves as urbanites, whereas older generations who had occupied the ViC for decades continued to classify themselves as former peasants, as many local property owners who were potential millionaires did as well. Age generation appeared to be a critical variable affecting people's perceptions of spatial boundaries and scales in forming their place identity. Age generation, in this case, was more than an indicator of personal features; it reflected the rapid changes of society: with emerging high-tech industries supported by the local government, the types of skills acquired by the older generations and their life experiences were less valued in the city.

Peasant Life and Social Capital. Partially retained rural (or traditional) characteristics appeared to be significant factors in maintaining people-place relationships within the ViC, especially for those who experienced massive social and life changes over the past forty years (usually above age forty). The economic reform and open-door policy in 1979, which led to the rapid urbanization in China, unleashed urban development forces that swept over farmland in Shenzhen. Both local peasants who lost their farmland and those who came from the hinterland

to work in the city in the 1980s had remained deeply reliant on traditional lifestyles and social relations established in rural villages, namely closeness to nature, dependence on fresh agricultural products, organically organized houses, and kinship-based social networks. When asked about their living experiences in the ViC, both local landlords (also ex-peasants) and migrants tended to refer back to their old days of being farmers, living in a traditional village setting, and working in surrounding farmland.

The peasants further connected their experiences to the spatial patterns and environmental characteristics tied to their memories of family members or previous life as farmers. For local landlords, places of the ViC were full of stories and memories: the walkable street scales and more organic layouts of houses were maintained (though much condensed); the preserved shrines located at the heads of each street identified the properties along a particular street that used to belong to a certain family name or kinship; the plaza was the place to dry grains and host public meetings; each building had a history of being rebuilt multiple times on the same footprint. Together with the physical characteristics were the traditional kinship-based social structure and relations. Similarly, migrants tended to transfer their experiences in living in rural villages to the ViC as well. For instance, people from the same hometown tended to concentrate on the same street. The fellow-townsmen's network, which evolved from the kinship-based rural society, became the most significant self-organized supportive groups for rural migrants in the city. As in rural villages, occupants tended to use small yards in front of buildings or open spaces along the street for casual chats. These traditional patterns of spatial use can seldom be found in modern high-rise apartment buildings in Chinese cities.

Age generation turned out to be an important variable in this aspect as well. In contrast to the older generations who held the sentiments of the rural past or hometowns, those occupants

under the age of thirty shared few memories of traditional rural lifestyles or the massive changes in social life and economic reforms over the past four decades. Nonetheless, they valued the unique lifestyle in the ViC, which was a combination of traditional rural lifestyle (in terms of walkable streets, vendors and handicraft stalls at street corners, fresh markets, and affordable rents) and urban convenience (including exchanges among populations across the country, vibrant street life, and its closeness to working places and transit stations). Young generations who did not have the memory or experience of living in rural villages tended to view ViC living as an alternative urban lifestyle, in contrast to living in unaffordable yet monotonous modern apartments in Chinese cities.

Environmental Affordance and Manageability. The ViC's closeness to nature (public parks), convenience to various goods/services, and reduced crime rates appeared as the most salient place qualities supporting occupants' needs. Compared to other regularly developed urban neighborhoods, the ViC was a place where ex-peasants and lower-strata migrant populations could obtain a certain level of autonomy. For instance, local ex-peasants changed their ways of making a living after losing farmland by building factories and rental apartments on the collective rural land within the ViC. Many migrants established themselves by working as apprentices or starting their businesses as handicraft stallers, street vendors, or shopkeepers in the ViC. The relatively high level of self-organization within the ViC, which evolved from the kinship-based rural social structure within the ViC, allowed the fellow-townsmen network to evolve and expand, which was the most important source of social capital for migrants to support each other, learn skills, and start businesses. In turn, their diverse ways of using spaces within the ViC contributing to the vibrance and uniqueness of the ViC. While these conveniences and affordances conformed with its occupants' values in some ways, it was hardly a place that

occupants used for defining their self-concept. In many cases, it was a strategic choice for its occupants.

Although both local ex-peasants and rural migrants tended to share similarities in heavily relying on social capital in a traditional way, personal agency levels varied among them. Since the urban renewal agenda initiated by the local government in 2004, ViCs have been targeted for demolition and redevelopment, resulting in thousands of ViC occupants being displaced to more peripheral areas. The ViC understudy was selected for the process of upgrading because of its historical value; nonetheless, the improvement of the environment was accompanied, as is often the case, by inflows of emerging middle-class social groups and increased rents. For those ViCs under gentrification, local ex-peasants as quasi-landlords had relatively more power in negotiating with external forces (including the government and developers) in making decisions. In their narratives, they expressed stronger opinions towards redevelopment plans. On the other hand, most migrants expressed their inability to make changes or indifference in making changes in the ViC. Instead, they turned their hope to save money to build better houses back in their hometowns.

Staying in the City. Respondents demonstrated several aspects of the ViC that made them feel good about themselves, including the renovated public parks and the place's promoted historical values. However, there still is a lack of sufficient evidence to support the assumption that improved environmental qualities and promoted cultural values would significantly contribute to occupants' attachment to the place. What followed the environmental upgrading and cultural elevation was the increase in rents. For most ViC occupants who were faced with the loss of job opportunities, the affordability of a living place in the city was the most and only important matter. In many cases, to stay in the city, though they endure hardworking jobs,

tolerating extreme living conditions, and saving money to raise the next generation, this value constituted an essential part of their determination to stay in ViCs. Nevertheless, the upgrades and promotion advertising attracted young people and emerging mid-class workers to move in. These younger generations showed their appreciation of the improved environmental qualities and promoted cultural values.

Overall, the first phase of study challenges the dominant view of the Chinese ViC as a type of settlement that a unitary group of people occupied. It reveals the mixed characteristics and functions of the ViC, as living, working, and marketing places. It also reveals the varying environmental needs of different social groups occupying the ViC and their changing ways of relating themselves to the place. The ongoing changes taking place within the ViC also added to the complexity. For those occupants who came to the city as peasants and experienced the transition from the socialist economy to the market economy, their relationships to the ViC remained connected to its rural characteristics. Those occupants who grew up under conditions of rapid urbanization did not experience a peasant life. These variations add to the understanding of people-place relations in Chinese ViCs.

Result 2-1: Perceived Impacts of the Exhibition-Event

In recent years, an increasing number of architects and urban designers have recognized the cultural, environmental, and social values of the ViCs to the migrant city of Shenzhen. Therefore, they have been advocating for a more sustainable approach to upgrade rather than demolish these ViCs. The Hong Kong/ Shenzhen Bi-City Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism (UABB) has been a prominent example of such attempts (see more in Chapter Four, Agency, and Chapter Five, Project). In particular, the 2017 UABB, for the first time, selected five ViCs in Shenzhen as both exhibition sites and experiment fields of using small-scale design interventions

to upgrade ViCs. After being selected for the international exhibition event, these selected ViCs had been experiencing some environmental upgrading one year before the event, including paving all streets, cleaning-up sites for installations, and restoring public parks surrounding the ViCs. In order to understand the long-term impacts of these design interventions on ViC occupants' place-related experience, I conducted two phases of follow-up interviews at the Nantou ViC, as the main exhibition site.

During the exhibition event, the investigation focused on people's overall perception of the exhibition and its impacts on their personal engagement of "place." Eight people were randomly selected and interviewed at the four intervention sites, which occupants marked in the first phase of research as important outdoor places, including South-gate Park (4), South Street (2), the plaza at the intersection (1), and Zhongshan Park at the North (1) (Figure 6-6). Among the interviewees, seven were migrants, and the one at Zhongshan Park was born in Nantou but with Hong Kong citizenship. In the interview, I asked questions about how the exhibition and intervention projects changed the place and their daily life. The last question was about the overall evaluation of the exhibition event, based on a score scale from 0 to 100. As Table 6-15 shows, eight interviewees' overall evaluation scores of the exhibition-event ranged from 50/100 to 80/100, with a mean score at 68.75/100. Interviewees at the inner plaza and street tended to give more positive feedback than those interviewed at South-gate park. Nonetheless, these score results did not indicate that interventions in the plaza and inner street were better accepted than those in the parks. A more nuanced analysis of the interviewees' responses indicated a greater range of impacts of exhibition interventions on occupants' place experience.

Seven themes emerged through coding interviewees' responses regarding how they evaluated exhibition-interventions concerning their living and working experience at *Nantou*.

The seven themes included impacts on living conditions, working conditions, physical environment, everyday activities, place accessibility, social equity, and cultural preservation. Table 6-16 displays how often interviewees mentioned these aspects in their narratives when they were asked about the intervention projects' impacts. Among the seven aspects, impacts on social equity, everyday activities, and physical environment were the three most frequently mentioned aspects. Impacts on working conditions, physical environment, and everyday activities were the three most widely mentioned by 5 out of 8 respondents; in contrast, impacts on social equity were mentioned by fewer respondents but quite extensively discussed by two particular interviewees.

Overall, interviewees tended to give more positive feedback on impacts on the physical environment and daily activities, while predominantly negative feedback on impacts on working conditions and social equity. As Table 6-17 shows, interviewees recognized the improvement of the physical environment, especially cleaner streets and more beautiful appearances of buildings. Similarly, they also expressed their appreciation of more sitting places, a more vibrant atmosphere, and better communications and interactions among people. At the same time, interviewees complained about the increased access fees to some facilities, insufficient playgrounds for children, and the amount of money wasted in having the festival (exhibition) (Table 6-18). Similarly, Table 6-19 demonstrates some perceived negative impacts of the exhibition event on working conditions within the ViC. As mentioned by several interviewees, a year before the exhibition event, in preparation for indoor exhibitions, village-based factories were evacuated, resulting in a large number of factory workers evicted and unemployed. Whereas exhibition curators kept referring to those factory buildings as “empty” and “unused,” ViC occupants nonetheless tended to tell a different story. In addition, while respondents

recognized those informal flea markets and grocery stores surrounding the plaza as important places that provided convenience for their daily life, these facilities were also demolished and replaced by modern exhibition halls, resulting in the eviction of many vendors. Evicted workers and vendors, without any contract protection, were faced with the challenges of changing jobs, including relocation, advanced age, lower-income, and incapacity to take care of kids.

Finally, interviewees also expressed strong opinions around widening gaps among different social groups that were exacerbated by the exhibition-event. As Table 6-20 shows, the most prominent issue was increasing social stratification, where interviewees saw exhibition projects appealing to rich and powerful outsiders while excluding the lower-strata groups living and working within the village. According to them, these intervention projects were more a showcase of political achievements than meaningful improvements in people's quality of life. Also, they tended to see these projects appealing to younger generations living modern lifestyles while replacing older groups living traditional lifestyles. Older generation interviewees tended to compare social conditions with those during Mao's socialist regime and the era after the reform (1979). Mao's completely egalitarian social system (even in poverty) in their memory provided better protection than the increasingly stratified society after Deng's market reform. The interviewees who identified themselves as migrants also saw local landlords as the potential beneficiaries of the exhibition-event. In contrast, migrants were left with increased surveillance from the security guards and increased rents.

These results from interviews during the exhibition-event echoed the results from pre-exhibition fieldwork. The first-phase fieldwork reveals that occupants perceived the ViC beyond a type of settlement; instead, they valued the mixed characteristics and multiple functions of the ViC as living, working, and marketing places. As reflected in the second phase of the

investigation, although occupant-interviewees tended to show higher satisfaction with impacts on the physical environment and their daily activities, they expressed their increased concerns over shrinking working opportunities, restrictions on older, low-strata migrant workers, and unevenly distributed social resources. These concerns overrode their appreciation of the environmental upgrading, resulting in a negative perceived impact of the exhibition-event on their relation to place.

Table 6-15 Interviewees' evaluation scores

Cases	50 out of 100	70 out of 100	80 out of 100	Total
Plaza 01	0	0	1	1
South Street 01	0	0	2	2
South Street 02	0	0	0	0
South-gate Park 01	0	1	0	1
South-gate Park 02	0	1	0	1
South-gate Park 03	2	0	0	2
South-gate Park 04	0	0	0	0
Zhongshan Park 01	0	1	0	1
Total	2	3	3	8

Table 6-16 Seven aspects of impacts based on interviewees' coded references

Cases	Impacts on living conditions	Impacts on working conditions	Impacts on physical environment	Impacts on daily activities	Impacts on place accessibility	Impacts on social equity	Impacts on cultural promotion	Total
Plaza 01	3	1	7	7	0	0	0	18
South Street 01	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
South Street 02	2	8	4	4	0	11	0	29
South-gate Park 01	0	2	0	8	0	1	0	11
South-gate Park 02	0	4	2	7	0	0	0	13
South-gate Park 03	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
South-gate Park 04	3	1	0	2	0	23	2	31
Zhongshan Park 01	0	0	7	8	3	5	6	29
Total	8	16	22	39	3	40	8	136

Table 6-17 Perceived impacts on the physical environment based on interviewees' coded references

Cases	Cleaner streets	More beautiful	More greenery	Paved roads	Reduced crowdedness	Better management	Increased security	Too dark	Total
Plaza 01	1	3	0	0	2	1	1	0	8
South Street 01	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Street 02	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
South-gate Park 01	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South-gate Park 02	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
South-gate Park 03	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
South-gate Park 04	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Zhongshan Park 01	2	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	7
Total	6	8	1	1	2	2	1	2	23

Table 6-18 Perceived impacts on daily activities based on interviewees' coded references

Cases	Better communications	Increased vibrancy	Increased visiting frequency	More places for children playing	More sitting places	Providing reading places	Increased access fees	Insufficient playground	Less convenient	Wasting money	Little impact on everyday life	Total
Plaza 01	0	2	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
South Street 01	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
South Street 02	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
South-gate Park 01	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	3	0	0	0	6
South-gate Park 02	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
South-gate Park 03	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
South-gate Park 04	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Zhongshan Park 01	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	1	9
Total	5	7	1	3	6	2	2	3	1	4	1	35

Table 6-19 Perceived impacts on working conditions based on interviewees' coded references

Cases	Evicting factory workers	Losing income flows	No contract protection	Resulting in changing jobs	Total
Plaza 01	0	0	0	1	1
South Street 01	0	0	0	0	0
South Street 02	0	2	1	4	7
South-gate Park 01	0	0	0	2	2
South-gate Park 02	0	0	0	4	4
South-gate Park 03	0	0	0	0	0
South-gate Park 04	2	0	0	0	2
Zhongshan Park 01	1	0	0	0	1
Total	3	2	1	11	17

Table 6-20 Perceived impacts on social equity based on interviewees' coded references

Cases	Increased gaps between generations	Increased social stratification	Increased surveillance and restrictions	Increased conflicts between local and migrant status	Good intention	Total
Plaza 01	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Street 01	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Street 02	0	7	5	4	1	17
South-gate Park 01	0	1	0	0	0	1
South-gate Park 02	0	0	0	0	0	0
South-gate Park 03	0	0	0	0	0	0
South-gate Park 04	3	13	1	7	0	24
Zhongshan Park 01	1	4	2	0	0	7
Total	4	25	8	11	1	49

Result 2-2: Sorting Intervention Projects

There was an increase in the negative perception of the exhibition-event's impacts among ViC occupants over time. Seven months after the exhibition intervention, I returned to the ViC and conducted the third-phase research, a post-exhibition investigation. During the fieldwork, I designed a multiple-sorting tactic to reveal perceptions and evaluations of 28 selected exhibition/intervention projects. The 28 intervention projects included outdoor installations, murals on buildings, and building renovations. Twelve participants were recruited, including two who had also participated in the pre-exhibition interviews, eight newly recruited interviewees, and two professionals working for the curatorial/intervention team (Table 6-21). During the multiple-sorting task, participants were presented with photos of the 28 projects and asked to sort the 28 photos based on their own criteria (Figure 6-8). The criteria that participants chose and the categories they created were to show their values and their perceptions of the changes associated with the exhibition-event. Within each category, participants were further asked to rank the projects based on their preferences.

Table 6-21 Constitution of respondents in Phase 3

	Occupants who also participated in Phase 1	Occupants newly recruited	Professionals from the curatorial team	Total
Female	1	7	2	10
Male	1	1	0	2
Total	2	8	2	12



Figure 6-8. Selected intervention projects for sorting task

(Photo by author and UABB)

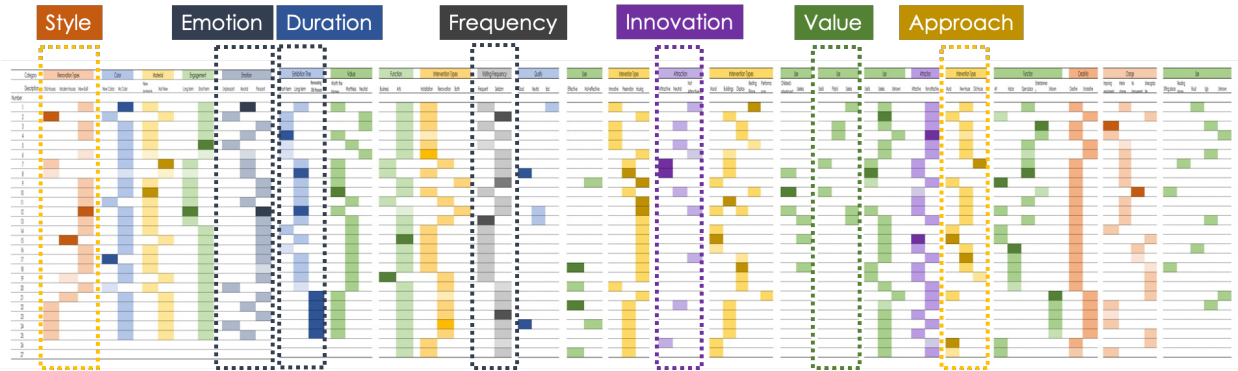


Figure 6-9. A sample of sorting task results

The sorting task results demonstrate that the “use” value of intervention projects appeared as the most frequently used criterion by non-professional respondents. A sample of the sorting results is presented in Figure 6-10, where the criteria brought up by respondents were marked by different colors. Other criteria used by non-professional participants included the intervention approach (murals, installations, renovations, or new buildings), style (modern versus traditional), innovation (innovative, educational, or outdated), duration (kept or removed after the exhibition), emotion (engaging or not engaging), and frequency (how often they visited the project). Based on each criterion, the photos of 28 projects were sorted into different categories (shown in columns), with the dark-colored cells in each column representing the most preferred projects while the light-colored ones represented the least preferred ones.

Under the most used criterion “value,” intervention projects were further grouped into the following categories, including how the spaces were reused (for housing, market, service, etc.), how projects provided functional spaces for occupants (for reading, sitting, playing, etc.), and how they promoted the value of the place (history and traditional culture). Respondents selected one prominent project as the favorite project under multiple categories. It was a renovated traditional house, which was reprogrammed as a new bookstore (Figure 6-10). Reasons provided

by participants included 1) providing reading rooms for children on weekdays, complementary to the local library, which was far away and only accessible on weekends, and 2) contributing to the overall cultural ambiance of the place by putting the old house into a new use. In contrast, the least preferred project that appeared under the criterion of “value” was the newly built exhibition hall, sitting on the site of a demolished, informal grocery store (Figure 6-11). Reasons provided by participants included that 1) the exhibition hall cost millions and was left empty and unused after the exhibition, which was both a waste of government finance and space and 2) the demolition of the previous grocery store caused many inconveniences to people living in the ViC.



Figure 6-10. A renovated bookstore
(Photo by UABB)



Figure 6-11. A newly built exhibition hall on the site of a demolished informal grocery store
(Photo by author)

An interesting contrast emerged when juxtaposing ViC occupants’ responses with the two female professionals’ sorting results from the local curatorial team. In addition to criteria such as the intervention approach and duration, they also used “color” and “material used” as sorting criteria. The ranking results also turned out to be quite the opposite of those of the occupant-respondents. One of them selected the new twin building of the exhibition hall on the site of a demolished informal flea market as the favorite one under categories including renovation buildings, long-term engagement, and generating pleasant emotion (Figure 6-12).

Under the category of artist intervention, she selected a large mural of Chinese characters (tradition and development) on a factory building that was converted into an indoor exhibition hall as her favorite (Figure 6-13). Interestingly, she selected the renovated bookstore as her least preferred project under the previously mentioned categories (Figure 6-10). In her explanation, the newly built exhibition hall had remade the plaza into a vibrant space within the village, and those stairs provided interactive spaces for residents, especially children. As for the large mural, she thought it was the most eye-catching piece of work and became an iconic representation of this entire exhibition event. As for her least preferred project, she assumed that the bookstore was for middle-class citizens, not ViC occupants; therefore, it was useless there. The other respondent selected the large mural as her favorite one under the category of artist intervention (Figure 6-13). She thought that the superimposed two words, tradition and development (in Chinese characters), pointed to the exhibition's key topic.



Figure 6-12. A new building on the site of a demolished informal flea market

(Photo by author)



Figure 6-13. A mural on a factory building that was converted to an indoor exhibition hall

(Photo by UABB)

The contrasting results of the ViC occupant-respondents and designer-respondents suggest perceptual differences between the two groups. ViC occupant-respondents evaluated these projects based on how the projects could meet the occupants' daily needs and benefit the place. In contrast, designer-respondents tended to focus on intervention projects' physical

appearance through the new spatial features or the created visual prominence. To some degree, it is more the symbolic value than the use-value of these intervention projects that curators and designers tended to emphasize. Although curators and participating designers intended to engage with ViC occupants, their presumptions about the ViC as a backward place had inevitably led them to make some misjudgments of what the occupants really need. The very opposite attitudes towards the bookstore were such cases.

Discussion 2: Impacts of the Design Interventions on ViC Occupants' Relations to Place

The results of this post-exhibition sorting task confirmed a pattern that was emerging in the second-phase investigation during the exhibition. In the second phase, occupant-interviewees showed some satisfaction with the exhibition's positive impacts on the physical environment and the vibrant atmosphere. Still, they expressed their increased concerns over shrinking working opportunities and restrictions on older, low-strata migrant workers. Several months after the exhibition, despite the increasing attraction of the location, the busy inflow of visitors and increased vibrancy within the ViC were not sustained. The post-exhibition interviewees witnessed the loss of tenants, vendors, and customers and the emptiness and darkness of streets and those spaces occupied by exhibition halls. That was part of why many respondents gave the lowest rating to the plaza's exhibition hall. Simultaneously, the cognitive gap between exhibitors and occupants led to the mismatch between intervention intentions and consequences, which added to the hardships faced by ViC occupants. The highly-rated bookstore indicated ViC occupants' under-supported need for knowledge and skills; however, such kinds of need were not well received by exhibitors and designers. The most controversial consequence of the exhibition for ViC occupants was the increased rents and cruel eviction requests from landlords,

which respondents blamed on the exhibitors and proactive real-estate developers who inspired local landlords.

The first-phase investigation identified four factors related to aspects of place identity, 1) boundary and scale, 2) peasant life and social capital, 3) environmental affordance and manageability, and 4) ambition to stay in the city, that play key roles in shaping ViC occupants' relations to the place. ViC occupants described and sorted intervention projects in the second and third phases. They indicated some contradictory impacts of the exhibition-event and intervention projects related to these four factors.

The physical boundary between the ViC and the city had a significant meaning for ViC occupants, especially local ex-farmers who used the boundaries to protect their collective ownership of the land from urban encroachment. The exhibition that promoted the unique history and culture of the ViC contributed to raising the public recognition of the value of preserving ViCs in Chinese cities. That is why occupants-respondents widely accepted those renovation projects that put old, abandoned houses into use. Even for migrant tenants who wished to integrate themselves into the city, a perceptual change of ViCs from segregated, backward places to culturally unique and valuable places was praised.

The preserved physical fabric nonetheless did not necessarily mean the preservation of hybrid lifestyles and social fabric. Instead, the improved environment and promoted cultural and historic value drew real-estate developers' and investors' attention. Through the exhibition-event, the uniqueness of ViCs soon became the selling point of real-estate developers to attract middle-class tenants and customers with nostalgia for rural life. Driven by profits, local landlords were inclined to cooperate with developers rather than maintain affordable housing. As a result, the operations of developers inevitably resulted in a more uniform built environment. If pre-

exhibition interviews suggested the rural-urban hybrid lifestyles and traditional social values remained as significant factors that sustained ViC occupants' relations with 'place' (in addition to economic factors), these aspects were weakened rather than enhanced by the exhibition.

The restored physical environment and upgraded facilities had improved the quality of life of ViC occupants immediately. However, no further intervention efforts were followed to prevent the low-income population from being priced out of the housing market. The removed informal markets and grocery stores, replaced by empty exhibition halls, not only caused inconveniences for occupants but also forced out many occupant-vendors. Although the exhibition event brought in a large number of national and international visitors to the ViC, which reinvigorated some small businesses, it did not last long. As indicated by real-estate developers, who were also sponsors of the exhibition event, the Nantou ViC was surrounded by high-tech industrial parks, which made it an attractive living location for young technicians. The improved environmental qualities and promoted cultural and historic values promulgated through the exhibition event appealed to these young technicians much more than lower-strata migrant workers. The exhibition event facilitated the speed of evicting low-strata migrant workers from the ViC. The long-term impacts of the exhibition event on current occupants' environmental manageability were reduced.

Whereas ViC occupants expressed their pride by being part of Shenzhen's in the first phase of research, the exhibition-event and intervention projects partially contributed to that pride by representing the ViC and migrant workers as an essential part of Shenzhen's development. However, the aftermath of the event headed in the opposite direction. Instead of supporting ViC occupants' ambition to stay in the city, the unleashed gentrification forces had forced many of its occupants to leave. The eviction of village-based factory workers and the

vendors who were forced out in preparation for the exhibition resulted in a decrease in the ViC population. The loss of the ViC population affected not only the businesses within the ViC but also businesses in the nearby urban areas. Original small businesses and vendors that lost potential customers were faced with increased pressure to make a living in the city. Consequently, these people had to either go back to their hometowns or find another ViC in a more peripheral area.

It can be said that, although the exhibition-event and its component intervention projects had some positive impacts on the four factors in enhancing occupants' place identity during the event, in the long term, these impacts turned out to be negative. From the perspective of ViC occupants, the preserved uniqueness of the ViCs' physical fabric and improved environmental qualities were overshadowed by the weakened aspects of hybrid lifestyles, environmental manageability, and affordability.

Conclusion

Urbanization and urban reconstruction processes have brought tremendous social and economic changes to ViC occupants, and produced various struggles regarding mental health, capability, and agency. Over a century ago, the German sociologist Georg Simmel already observed the contradiction of urban life in metropolises: whereas the crowdedness generated innumerable fascinations and bodily proximity, the growing division resulted in the personal incapability to react to new sensations and increase mental distance.³⁵⁷ Over the past four decades, people in China, and especially in coastal cities such as Shenzhen, have experienced the contradictory processes of urbanization and urban renewal with new intensity. This chapter moves away from institutions and figures with top-down power and focuses on bottom-up spatial

³⁵⁷ Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," 1903.

practices and spatial experiences by looking at people's perception, movement, and construction of place identity on the ground.

Discussions about the concept of place identity are not new in areas where people have experienced a lifestyle of high geographic mobility and a loss of sense of placeness during industrialization and post-industrialization processes. Yet, my study shows that the mentality and place identity of ViC occupants are very different from previous findings in the context of North America or in Europe (and the UK). In North America, place identity has been primarily discussed concerning settlement and community types. David Hummon identified that individual identity with the place was established by constructing a tie to the community and appropriating community imagery for self-imagery, in addition to home places.³⁵⁸ Hummon's notion of "community ideology" describes the ways in which "people appropriate varied social, moral, and other qualities of communities and their inhabitants for self-characterization."³⁵⁹ The "community ideology" may be reasonable when people have settled in an urban neighborhood or have lived a stable life in a rural village. However, ViCs, faced with demolition or gentrification, can hardly be considered as places with distinctive "social, moral, and other qualities" for ViC occupants to appropriate. Also, for ViC occupants who have experienced changes brought by the earlier urbanization processes and more recent gentrification forces, their self-characterization has been largely contingent on the extent to which they could be integrated into the city.

In Europe and the UK, studies have focused on a wider range of indicators beyond settlement and community types. Maria Lewicka's study identified five types of place identity and attachment, based on people's social and cultural capital: 1) the traditionally attached people who restrict their social capital primarily to families and close friends, 2) the actively connected

³⁵⁸ Hummon: 143.

³⁵⁹ Hummon: 143.

people who possess high social capital both bridging and bonding, 3) the alienated people who are alienated from both residence place and social surroundings, 4) the placeless individuals who have high family ties and high cultural capital, and 5) the place-relative individuals who are similar to the alienated but have stronger emotional bonds with the residence place.³⁶⁰ While local villagers seem to fall into the fifth type of being alienated but with stronger bonds, migrant workers tend to fit into the third type of alienation. However, Lewicka's category based on post-industrial European cities did not include the economic conditions, which often determine people's relations to places in Chinese cities.

From Hummon's community ideology to Lewicka's five types of place attachment, these prior studies have identified a wide range of environmental and social factors that could affect residents' relationships to place, but are not yet sufficient to grasp the mentality of ViC occupants. Considering the sociodemographic ranges of ViC occupants and their different political and economic situations, it would be problematic to assume ViC inhabitants belong to fixed social classes, not to mention the new incoming college students, technocrats, and young entrepreneurs that are replacing local villagers, rural-to-urban migrants, and street-vendors. This chapter presents these disparities and changes through the two parts: the first part reveals a shifting pattern of people-place relationships in the ViC by identifying four prominent aspects of place identity; the second part investigates the impacts of design interventions related to the previous four aspects, based on ViC occupants' evaluations.

This study's first phase reveals a complex pattern of people-place relationships beyond the dichotomy of attached and non-attached relationships, based on grounded investigations into

³⁶⁰ Maria Lewicka, "Localism and Activity as Two Dimensions of People-Place Bonding: The Role of Cultural Capital," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 36 (2013): 43-53.

occupants' cognitive maps and in-depth interviews. Instead, this section identifies four prominent socio-spatial factors affecting ViC occupants' association with the place. These are 1) the walkable scale and defined boundaries, 2) the reserved traditional culture and available social capital, 3) the affordability and manageability of the living environment, and 4) the proximity to urban facilities and the possibility of staying in the city. The ViC as a place had different meanings for different social groups. The physical boundary between the ViC and the city had a significant meaning for local ex-farmers, who intended to protect their collective ownership of the land from urban encroachment by defining the village's boundaries as a rural terrain. In contrast, scale turned out to be an important element for migrant worker-tenants, who expressed a stronger desire to integrate themselves into the category of urban residents both socially and administratively, instead of associating themselves with the ViC as a particular type of settlement.

For those occupants who grew up in or came to the city as peasants, their relationships to the ViC were based on the place's connections to the collective memory of the rural past. They tended to associate their collective social identities (former peasants or migrant workers) with the ViC as a rural village or a migrant enclave that was differentiated from urban places. Those occupants who grew up under rapid urbanization conditions tended to disconnect themselves from peasant memories and lifestyles. They perceived the ViC as part of the city, as a more affordable urban neighborhood. In terms of environmental affordance and manageability, both local ex-farmers and migrant worker-tenants identified the ViC's closeness to nature (public parks), vibrant street life, and convenience to various goods and informal businesses, as the most salient environmental features supporting their needs, in comparison to those gated communities. Nevertheless, they showed their pride in enduring hardworking jobs, tolerating extreme living

conditions, saving money to raise the next generation, and most importantly, staying in the city, which the ViC made possible.

The second and third phases of the study examined the impacts of emerging design interventions on ViC occupants' place experiences based on their evaluations. The results reveal a gap between how designers projected ViC occupants' needs and the real needs in occupants' own words. Whereas occupants showed some satisfaction with improvements in the physical environment and the vibrant urban atmosphere, they expressed increased concerns over shrinking work opportunities and restrictions on older, low-strata migrant workers. Based on the four factors identified in the first part, compared to environmental qualities, for ViC occupants, the affordable rents, the supportive facilities to help them improve skills and get education opportunities, and the pathways to escape poverty and stay in the city were much more critical. Whereas architects couldn't address all these issues through intervention projects, occupants' evaluation results suggested that renovating abandoned houses and converting them into accessible support facilities, such as village-based libraries, would respond to existing occupants' needs. However, such supportive facilities remained very rare; instead, more and more hotels and apartments replaced affordable units. It can be said that the preserved uniqueness of the ViCs' physical fabric and improved environmental qualities for ViC occupants were at the price of the weakened aspects of hybrid lifestyles, environmental manageability, and affordability.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

In the past few decades, the rapid urbanization in the Global South has generated new forms of urbanism at ever-increasing speeds and geographic scales, resulting in reproduced social struggles with local specificities. Shenzhen and its component villages-in-the-city (ViC) are among those emerging contested terrains of both free opportunities and massive inequalities, amplified by the globalized manner of spatial production. Two paradigms in urban studies have emerged to comprehend the ongoing urbanization processes and social consequences in the new century: 1) under the paradigm of neoliberalism, Shenzhen and its ViCs are spaces of exception, where market forces dominated in its housing production and land sales, exempt from government controls or regulations;³⁶¹ 2) under the paradigm of state entrepreneurialism, Shenzhen and its ViCs are designated sites for state-led industrialization through a deliberate strategy of urban planning, in which the state remains as the dominant agent and retaining its power and control.³⁶² The two seemingly contradictory perspectives on Shenzhen and ViCs indicate the complexity of urbanization processes in a more authoritarian regime.

³⁶¹ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*; Murray, *The Urbanism of Exception : The Dynamics of Global City Building in the Twenty-First Century*; Schmid et al., "Towards a New Vocabulary of Urbanisation Processes: A Comparative Approach."

³⁶² Wu, *Planning for Growth: Urban and Regional Planning in China*; Wu, "Emerging Chinese Cities: Implications for Global Urban Studies"; Wu, "State Dominance in Urban Redevelopment: Beyond Gentrification in Urban China"; He and Wang, "State-Led Creative/Cultural City Making and Its Contestations in East Asia: A Multi-Scalar Analysis of the Entrepreneurial State and the Creative Class."

The antagonistic yet symbiotic relationship between state control and free-market forces sets the foundation of understanding urban processes in Shenzhen and most cities in China. In the framework of “urbanism of exception,” ViCs appeared as miniature “spaces of exemption” within Shenzhen, created as a larger space of exception (the special economic zone). In such spaces of exception, land-use regulations were eased to promote pro-growth strategies.³⁶³

Likewise, in recent attempts to seek new vocabularies for urbanization processes around the world, Shenzhen and its component ViCs were often juxtaposed with emerging metropolises, such as Lagos, Istanbul, and Kolkata, as manifestations of “plotting urbanism,” where land ownership regimes and market mechanisms dominated in shaping urban landscapes due to the lack of overarching planning.³⁶⁴ Both terms echo a set of studies that assume a neoliberal region-state in Shenzhen, China, in the globalization of neoliberalism, where state controls are relaxed to create a free market.³⁶⁵

The other set of studies emphasize state dominance in shaping Chinese urban processes instead of assuming the dominance of the market forces. In a specific form of so-called state entrepreneurialism, the central state retains the power to make key policies (such as the *hukou* registration and land policies) and appointing local officials. Municipal-level governments establish market-based developmental institutions, such as land sales and housing commodities,

³⁶³ Murray, *The Urbanism of Exception: The Dynamics of Global City Building in the Twenty-First Century*: 268-269.

³⁶⁴ The study proposed four types of emerging urbanism: 1) the popular urbanism was shared by Lagos, Mexico City, Istanbul, and Kolkata, evolving from low-income peripheral neighborhoods featuring accumulative self-production and collective appropriation led by strong political organizations; 2) the plotting urbanism shared by Shenzhen, Lagos, Istanbul, and Kolkata, featured the lack of overarching planning and the dominance of land ownership regimes and market mechanisms in shaping urban landscapes; 3) the multilayered patchwork urbanization emerged in the “suburban areas” in Paris, Los Angeles, Tokyo, and Hong Kong, as a result of the massive urban expansion and the superimposition of different patterns of urbanization over time; 4) the incorporation of urban differences primarily took place in developed urban areas in almost all eight cities, featuring the commodification and domestication of urban spaces through their specific social, cultural, material, and symbolic elements. In Schmid et al., “Towards a New Vocabulary of Urbanisation Processes: A Comparative Approach.”, “Towards a New Vocabulary of Urbanisation Processes: A Comparative Approach.”

³⁶⁵ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*; Alvin Y. So and Yin-wah Chu, “The Transition from Neoliberalism to State Neoliberalism in China in the Turn of the Twenty-First Century.”, in *Developmental Politics in Transition: The Neoliberal Era and Beyond*, ed. C. Kyung-Sup, B. Fine, and L. Weiss (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 166–87, <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137028303>.

which became essential sources of local revenues.³⁶⁶ ViCs, from such perspectives, are not “spaces of exception” but products of local government corporatism.³⁶⁷ In the 1980s and early 1990s, local governments subsidized manufacturing investments by supplying cheaper land in rural villages through village cadres’ (local-level Chinese Communist Party leaders) participation in township and village enterprises. Based on such explanations, these village cadres, representing the state, are key actors in transforming these rural villages into the initial sites of Chinese market transition, and later, ViCs coexisting with the city. Related research on more recent gentrification or urban redevelopment processes has further identified the return of state dominance in initiating and promoting urban renewal projects.³⁶⁸ In these projects, local market agents in the Chinese context are associated with or representing the state.

This study contributes to current debates over the globalized spatial production process by moving beyond the dominant narrative of the state-market relationship. This dissertation presents an evolving process that engages a set of agents, including urban planners, architects, and inhabitants. Instead of supporting either market or state dominance, this study reveals a complex system of top-down strategies, bottom-up reactions, and multiple adaptations through the transformation of Shenzhen’s ViCs. In this complex system, the roles of urban planners, architects, and inhabitants have shifted or expanded. Urban planners, who used to represent centralized power in making top-down planning decisions, have taken a step back and given way to local governments’ development strategies favoring land sales, housing commodification, and more recent urban renewal projects (removing old industrial sites and villages-in-the-city)

³⁶⁶ Wu, “State Dominance in Urban Redevelopment: Beyond Gentrification in Urban China”; Wu, “Emerging Chinese Cities: Implications for Global Urban Studies”; Ang, *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap*.

³⁶⁷ Wu, “Emerging Chinese Cities: Implications for Global Urban Studies.”

³⁶⁸ Wu, “State Dominance in Urban Redevelopment: Beyond Gentrification in Urban China”; He and Wang, “State-Led Creative/Cultural City Making and Its Contestations in East Asia: A Multi-Scalar Analysis of the Entrepreneurial State and the Creative Class”; He, “The Creative Spatio-Temporal Fix: Creative and Cultural Industries Development in Shanghai, China.”

(Chapters II and III). Architects have moved beyond the role of producers in the material and cultural senses. By acting as global activists, value broadcasters, brokers, or even developers, architects have expanded their agency in engaging with both the state power and market forces during the urban process (Chapter IV and V). Inhabitants, who used to be peasants, have proactively participated in the process of urban production, especially in the case of ViCs where local peasants partnered with the local government and foreign investors in developing small-scale industries in rural villages; nevertheless, due to the legacy of the central state's policy that intended to perpetuate rural populations and villages, ViC occupants (despite the central location of ViCs) have remained marginalized and segregated from urban systems, in terms of social identity, networks, and resources (Chapter VI).

Combining Different Methodologies

One objective of this dissertation is to combine methodologies across disciplines to tell a comprehensive story of the urbanization process in China through the transformation of Shenzhen's ViCs. The French philosopher Henri Lefebvre has already set up a model for such an interdisciplinary approach in his book *The Production of Space*.³⁶⁹ In his concept of "social space," space is neither a simply fixed geographic location nor an empty container; instead, human beings produce "space" over time. Lefebvre saw spatial relations changing and continuously reconstructed by three forms of human actions: representations of space, spatial practice, and representational space.³⁷⁰ The representations of space come from the policies, plans, drawings, and paintings by governments, planners, architects, and artists, who conceive, imagine, and even regulate spatial relations. In the production of ViCs, the role of planning and

³⁶⁹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

³⁷⁰ Lefebvre; White, "What Is Spatial History?"

regulation was never absent but shifted and changed. Spatial practice refers to how people on the ground actually perceive, use, and move around spaces in their daily life; it takes place at different scales, from different rooms within a house to different cities through infrastructures. The difference between the exhibition map (as the representation of space) created by architects and the cognitive maps (based on spatial practice) of ViC occupants revealed the gap between architects and residents. Representational space moves to the cultural and symbolic sense of space; that is, people experience and associate themselves with living places through a set of symbolic meanings, in addition to the housing function and physical movement. For ViC communities, places such as shrines, old houses, street corners, and even seats under trees have different meanings that outsiders (architects, exhibitors, and visitors) can hardly grasp.

Although Lefebvre's triad does not always lead to a consistent narrative of space, it nonetheless offers a comprehensive framework to approach the complex network of actors involved in producing ViC spaces, especially the unique role taken by local villagers. While Lefebvre's work has tremendously influenced Marxist geographers, such as Castells, Harvey, and Brenner, in creating a spatial turn in critical urban history, the focus has remained mainly on the language of representing spatial changes or the history of spatial changes in Marxist structural terms.³⁷¹ Recent studies of global urbanism highlight that capital accumulation continues to find its new territories of "spatial fix" through transnational flows and networks in globalization yet often neglect local people's spatial practice and spatial experience that also shape the production of space on the ground. On the contrary, anthropologists in social ethnography who also built their work on Lefebvre's theories tend to confine the research scope to describing exhaustive details of bodily practice and experience in space, which often results in

³⁷¹ White, "What Is Spatial History?" 3.

oversight of the power of external conceivers (the nation-state, planners, and architects) in guiding how people create, use, and move around space, and hence, the transformation of social structure or infrastructure. Further, the lack of generalizability is often considered as the limitation of ethnographic research and writing.

Despite the disparate focuses, the historical (structural) analysis and ethnographic research are not necessarily confrontational. Lefebvre's triad of space has offered us a framework for the much-needed methodological conversation. This study engages with critical urban theories in global urbanism and approaches Shenzhen SEZ's ViCs as emerging locations for the "spatial fix" of capital accumulation at the global scale. That said, Shenzhen SEZ and its ViC phenomenon is not a singular case but one of the many emerging territories in the Global South undergoing capitalist urbanization processes. However, the production mechanism of Shenzhen SEZ's ViCs is unique. As my findings show, the uniqueness is largely rooted in the local villagers' existing networks to Hong Kong industrialists and developers and the local citizenship that empowers them to accumulate collective capital. Whereas these conditions allow local villagers to become collective rich landlords and developers, another group of ViCs occupants, migrant workers, remain extremely poor and largely excluded from social welfares in the host city. These localized differences have to be learned and grasped by "being there," in an ethnographic term. As critical urban theories provide lexicons for me to interpret archives and documents, my body, my "self," provides agency for me to interpret social practices and experiences on the ground. My experience of using ViC spaces, moving around them, and working with architects, local villagers, and migrant workers become my additional instrument of knowing in complementary to existing theories.

The combination of historical (structural) analysis and ethnographic research allows this study to identify the shifting power of forces that transform ViC spaces at different stages and across multiple scales. China's transition from Mao's socialist regime to Deng's pro-development strategy was among the most important examples of the global diffusion of capitalist industrialization and urbanization. Planning documents and reports show that, in this transition, the role of urban planners shifted from controlling urban growth to facilitating economic development, using planning techniques to guide Shenzhen SEZ's rural villages to transform into small-scale manufacturing sites and later major affordable housing sites. My participant-observations on a redevelopment project of a ViC further show that, in the Shenzhen SEZ post-industrial stage in the new century, architects have become increasingly influential figures in redefining the cultural and real-estate values of ViCs through the engagement with global creative forces and the partnership with the local government. On the ground, the transformation of ViC spaces is the expression of social stratification, shifting from the gap between rural and urban residents to the gap between local villagers and migrant workers, both of whom were former peasants. My engagement with local villagers and migrant workers from 2017 to 2019 allowed me to observe that the continuing redevelopment and gentrification processes affected ViC occupants differently. The localized capitalist production based on China's specific dual land ownership and dual citizenship regimes has empowered local villagers to become developers or partners of developers at the price of excluding migrant laborers from accessing social resources and displacing them from one ViC to another one.

Summary of Findings

The dissertation comprises three parts; each part explores the role taken by a prominent actor, urban planners, architects, and former peasants (including local villagers and migrant

workers), in engaging with global forces and the state in shaping ViCs' transformation. The contemporary form of ViCs and their juxtaposition with urban structures were not mere results of unleashed urbanization forces in the 1980s; they were intentionally designed and reserved as defensive fortresses in pre-modern China, self-contained agricultural production sites in socialist China, and potential industrial sites in reform-era China. Chapter II, "**Ideology**," identified a fundamental spatial organization pattern in Chinese cities, shared by both villages in the countryside and neighborhoods in the city, despite the administrative divide. This shared pattern of controllable, inward-facing, walled-off, and mixed units made villages incorporate into the urban fabric possible. This chapter further reviewed central planning ideas under Chairman Mao's Communist ideologies in the 1950s, intended to prevent existing cities from sprawling by perpetuating rural villages as production sites. These ideas, reflected in a set of planning atlases directed and implemented by Mao, showed his ambition to remove the long-existing Confucian ideologies and to differentiate from Western urban experiences. In the communist ideology, cities and villages were equally important sites of production; whereas cities were major industrial production sites, rural villages were major agricultural production sites.³⁷² As a balance between industrial and agricultural production, the socialist top-down planning treated rural villages as self-contained units (equal to work units in the city) by socializing agricultural production and implementing two separate systems of household registration (*hukou*) and land ownership in rural and urban areas.

Simultaneously, CCP's socialization of rural villages allowed the party's cadres to penetrate deeply into the clan-based social structure within rural villages. Later these clan-based social structures developed into strong village-based organizations leading peasants to partner

³⁷² Mao, "On the Ten Major Relationships (Lun Shi Da Guan Xi)."

with foreign investors in industrial production. Whereas many studies have emphasized villages-in-the-city as products of the rapid urbanization that began in the 1980s, I argue in this chapter that the emergence of ViCs has to be attributed to the unique socialist planning ideology that aimed to perpetuate the rural villages. On the surface, the ViCs emerged because of the housing and land market; however, the hidden effects of the central state's earlier planning ideas and resulting policies contributed to the formation of bottom-up forces in rural villages.

Nevertheless, in 1979, the central state's decision of economic reform, primarily led by Deng Xiaoping, resulted in a significant change in the urban planning system to match the new goal of economic growth. Chapter III, "**Strategy**," traced the industrialization and urbanization processes of Shenzhen SEZ in the reform era. This chapter revisited the central state's policies and the Shenzhen municipal government's master plans and land regulations between 1979 and 2004 and researched the responsive building activities within rural villages within the delimited Shenzhen Special Economic Zone through historical documents, photos, and villagers' oral narratives. In particular, this chapter charted the shifting relationship between the municipal government and local villagers in the two stages of ViC-based capitalist production: the localized industrialization in the 1980s and the building boom of housing in the 1990s. It highlighted the local villagers' proactive role in the land economy and constant land "battles" between the local government and peasant-landlords of ViCs. This chapter demonstrated that the government and its component urban planning institutions did not give up or lose control over ViCs; instead of enforcing the regulations, they took a strategic step back by mobilizing peasant-landlords to build factories on the cheaper collective rural land to attract foreign investors and to provide rental housing units for lower-strata migrant workers.

A planning atlas of rural villages and towns, made by a group of national planning experts, provided suggestions for each village to build factories, improve infrastructure, and build new houses. The success of this process relied heavily on those party cadres who were leaders in village organizations. In this way, the local government fulfilled its economic development goal without paying for it, which was in line with Deng Xiaoping's broad goal of getting the country out of poverty. This chapter revealed a shift from a cooperative relationship between the local government and peasant-landlords of ViCs to a contentious one. It supports one of the central arguments of this dissertation: In the complex city-building process, top-down planning does not necessarily neglect, contradict, or suppress bottom-up productive activities.

The second part, consisting of Chapter IV and Chapter V, examined the role of architects who have emerged as increasingly important actors during China's goal of the new century to build modern and innovative cities. In Shenzhen, the modernization process started with an urban renewal plan removing old industrial sites and ViCs and replacing them with hypermodern architectural and urban design projects. Chapter IV, "**Agency**," examined the expanding capability of architects in negotiating and collaborating with local governments in large-scale urban renewal projects, through a case of the recurring Shenzhen/Hong-Kong Bi-city Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture (UABB) initiated and led by a group of local planners in partnership with internationally well-known architects. This chapter first tracked the changing ways that architect-curators and international exhibitors represented the urban conditions of Shenzhen and ViCs; it revealed that, over the seven editions of UABB (2005-2017), the architectural engagement of ViCs had shifted from seeking upgraded solutions to promoting its unique urban values, connecting to globalized circuits of architectural activism.

At the same time, supported by the local government, the UABB has opened up new channels for architects to collaborate with large real-estate developers in implementing the exhibited ideas. The 2017 UABB, located in five ViCs, was an example of the large-scale exhibition being part of the overall redevelopment plan of ViCs. As a result, the rediscovered values of ViCs via the promotion of the architecture exhibition-event helped preserve the physical fabric of the ViC; however, the historical and cultural values were quickly translated into real-estate values, resulting in a gentrification process. This chapter argued that, by partnering with the local government, the architect-curators have built up their capacity to implement their values at urban scales, however, at the price of losing their initial activist intentions.

Chapter V, “**Project**,” examined architects’ role as practitioners in a global context and focused on the negotiation processes and power relations between international architects and local occupants. In contrast to an increasing number of architects flying across continents to build iconic buildings, architectural activists intended to work with local communities to counter some of the negative impacts of urbanization. Many international exhibitors who participated in the 2107 UABB in ViCs appeared to take such an architectural activism position. By participating in the negotiation and implementation processes of a renovation/exhibition project, *House 17*, at the Nantou ViC, this chapter revealed a paradox of preserving local differences while applying architecture’s globalized practice. The project *House 17* invested in community participation by recruiting local contractors and construction workers. Yet, it turned out that architects’ pursuits of visual representations and symbolic values still took precedence over considerations of local life patterns and social realities. While the international architects intended to preserve the heterogeneity of urban circumstances by encouraging ordinary people to

participate in the production of spaces, the implementation of a set of abstract values of participation and heterogeneity nonetheless tended to neglect the local translation and meaning of such deals. In the end, the intervention projects of the 2017 UABB either served for commercial activities or became short-lived performances due to a lack of understanding, financial support, and long-term commitment. Whereas globalization expands architects' agency in identifying, preserving, and creating urban heterogeneity, lacking sufficient knowledge of local culture and politics, these values and actions may only speed up the homogenization processes.

The third part, Chapter VI, "**Identity**," moved away from institutions and figures with top-down power and focused on bottom-up spatial practices and spatial experiences by looking at people's perception, movement, and construction of place identity on the ground. Engaging with recent discussions on citizenship, displacement, and trans-locality, it identified the shifting social struggles around the ViC housing from the divide between rural and urban residents to the various gaps between local citizens and migrant workers. Based on ethnographic observations and interview data, this chapter showed different ways in which ViC occupants associate themselves to the place in the age of high geographic mobility and the transformed meaning of locality. The first part of the chapter revealed an intricate pattern of people-place relationships beyond the dichotomy of attached and non-attached relationships based on occupants' cognitive maps and in-depth interviews. The ViC as a place had different meanings for different social groups. Four socio-economic factors appealed to help shape ViC occupants' identities. These are 1) the pedestrian scale and defined boundaries, 2) the reserved traditional culture and available social capital, 3) the affordability and manageability of the living environment, and 4) the proximity to urban facilities and a possibility to stay in the city. The four aspects echoed the

spatial pattern of human habitation identified in the second chapter, which included walkable, inward-facing, mixed, controllable, and walled-off elements.

This chapter further examined the impacts of design interventions based on ViC occupants' evaluations concerning the previous four aspects of place identity. The results revealed a gap between how designers projected ViC occupants' needs and the actual needs in occupants' own words. Whereas occupants showed some satisfaction with improvements in the physical environment and the vibrant urban atmosphere, they expressed increased concerns over shrinking work opportunities and restrictions on older, low-strata migrant workers. Based on the four factors identified in the first part, compared to environmental qualities, for ViC occupants, the affordable rents, the supportive facilities to help them improve skills and get education opportunities, and the pathways to escape poverty and stay in the city were much more critical. Whereas architects couldn't address all these issues through intervention projects, occupants' evaluation results suggested that renovating abandoned houses and converting them into accessible support facilities, such as village-based libraries, would respond to existing occupants' needs. However, such supportive facilities remained very rare; instead, more and more hotels and apartments replaced affordable units. Consequently, the preserved uniqueness of the ViCs' physical fabric and improved environmental qualities for ViC occupants were at the price of the weakened aspects of hybrid lifestyles, environmental manageability, and affordability.

Through the changing roles of urban planners, architects, and inhabitants, this work shows that the state-market relationship impacts the general direction of Chinese cities (anti-growth or pro-growth); however, the retreat of top-down urban planning, the shift of architectural values, and the mobilization of local peasant organizations impact operations on the ground, shaping the eventual form of the built environment and resulting social relations. This

study of Shenzhen's village in the city demonstrates a complex spatial production model, which is that the top-down planning does not necessarily oppose or suppress bottom-up activities but instead selectively supports and adopts them to fulfill a strategic goal. In Shenzhen, this strategic goal has shifted from economic development to building an innovative global city.

Implications for Design Agency

This dissertation presented a complex spatial production model in Shenzhen, which adds local complexities to the general discourse of globalization and urbanization. It explains an adaptive process of how local bottom-up actors reshape the interplay between global market agents and state institutions. In the complex model, the state remains the most potent agent; nevertheless, bottom-up activities, including village-organized construction of a factory and infrastructure, and architects-led intervention projects, are selectively supported by the state. That is to say that, from the dominant urban renewal approach of demolition to the emergence of alternative approaches, there existed channels for bottom-up actions to inform urban decision-makers. However, this was not enough. The preservation of the physical fabric of the ViCs did not prevent the eviction and displacement of ViC occupants; the only difference was that they were not forced out by demolition forces but priced out by individual landlords in contract with developers. For practical purposes, this research suggests more effective design interventions through engagement with both top-down decision-makers and bottom-up possibilities in the continuing urban renewal projects.

Push for negotiating power with the state. We cannot imagine an entirely bottom-up approach in urban projects in the Chinese context, but it is essential to acknowledge the bottom-up capabilities. Lessons from ViCs show that bottom-up creativity can inform and change top-down operations through negotiations. However, places of such capacity are often marginalized

and concealed. This project raises the concern by showing the conflicts, negotiations, and collaborations in ViC construction. Planners and architects played a vital yet contradictory role in the process. The UABB (Shenzhen) worked as such an interface between architects (as bottom-up creative forces) and policymakers (as the state agents). As the sole organizer, Shenzhen's municipal government mainly provided financial support by offering start-up money and raising funds from large corporations. However, there was a censorship process through which curators had to present their ideas to a group of government officials to obtain approval. Those presentations were also opportunities for architect-curators to negotiate alternative urban renewal approaches with decision-makers. The architect-curators maintained a high level of autonomy in selecting exhibition topics and intervention sites. The UABB (Shenzhen) served as an exemplar of a channel for designers to push for bottom-up actions. Yet, the unsatisfactory outcomes called for more critical and activist inputs.

Raise the awareness of social significance. The environmental upgrading within the exhibited ViCs was at the price of evicting factory workers, street vendors, and tenants. The urban renewal experience in New York taught us the importance of “close-grained diversity.”³⁷³ However, when the architect-curators called for preserving Shenzhen's urban heterogeneity, it turned out that they only meant the heterogeneity of the built environment, not including social heterogeneity.

Inspired by exhibited design projects, new real estate operations emerged, featuring a one-plot-by-one-plot redevelopment approach. This approach did not demolish the entire village but allowed real-estate developers to redevelop individual buildings by signing leasing contracts (usually ten years) with individual property owners (local former villagers). Individual property

³⁷³ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York, NY: Modern Library, 2011), 196.

owners could receive a one-off rental payment. With subsidies from the local government, developers reinforced the structures, renovated necessary facilities, and refurbished rooms within the village building. They converted those “handshake” buildings into elegant hotels or standard rental apartments to attract middle-class professionals, the “creative class.”³⁷⁴ The rents of these refurbished apartments were two times higher than the regular rents within the ViC. Whereas these operations upgraded the built environment within the ViC, the ViC nonetheless lost its fundamental social function as the place that provided affordable housing units and resources for upward mobility. With architects’ rising power to negotiate with decision-makers and intervene at urban scales, it is their responsibility to acknowledge design interventions’ social consequences. In architects’ intervention program packages, there could be a set of complementary policy suggestions to either subsidize the most affected groups or regulate the unleashed gentrification forces.

Design with the occupants’ needs in mind. An investigation into the basic needs of existing occupants is urgent. Chapter VI revealed the gap between how designers projected ViC occupants’ needs and the actual conditions in occupants’ own words. Compared to environmental qualities, for ViC occupants, the affordable rents, the supportive facilities to help them improve skills and get education opportunities, and the pathways to escape poverty and stay in the city were much more critical. Whereas architects couldn’t address all these issues through intervention projects, occupants’ evaluation results suggested that renovating abandoned houses and converting them into accessible support facilities, such as village-based libraries, would respond to existing occupants’ needs. However, such supportive facilities remained very rare; instead, more and more hotels and apartments replaced those affordable units.

³⁷⁴ Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life*.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Shenzhen SEZ's ViCs are at a turning point as of the completion of this dissertation. In 2020, Shenzhen Housing and Construction Bureau claimed to learn from Singapore in order to relocate 60% of the city's population into government-subsidized public housing units in the next ten years.³⁷⁵ However, the reality is that 70% of the city's population currently living in ViCs is faced with eviction due to a new ViC redevelopment mode dominated by the biggest real estate company in the region, *Vanke*. Soon after the exhibition events, *Vanke* announced the ambitious plan, "A Proposal for Ten Thousand ViCs" (*Wan Cun Ji Hua*), which aimed to take over the redevelopment of ten thousand ViCs in China, starting from Shenzhen. In my last chapter, I showed how migrant workers were enraged at the rising rents and the hasty eviction required by local villager-landlords, following *Vanke*'s new operations by signing leasing contracts (of ten years) with individual villager-landlords building by building. It seems that *Vanke*'s operations and outcomes contradict the plan of the Shenzhen Housing and Construction Bureau. Yet, such operations would not be possible without the endorsement of the municipal government.

The question of how these new operations in ViCs contribute to or hinder the alleged goal of housing 60% of the city's population in government-subsidized public housing units needs further investigation, considering the different roles taken by the municipal government, village landlords, migrant workers, and the incoming creative class. Another critical factor is the changing population structure in Shenzhen SEZ. Between 1979 and 2019, the percentage of talents (earned education degrees above junior college) among the SEZ's entire population

³⁷⁵ Jiao, "Shēnzhèn Chāo 70% Rénkǒu Réng Zhù Chéng Zhōngcūn Fùzhì Xīnjiāpō Móshì Néng Fǒu 'Jū Zhě Yǒu Qì Wū'? [Over 70% of Shenzhen's Population Still Live in Villages-in-the-City; Can Copying Singapore's Model Be Able to Fulfill 'Home Ownership'?.]"

jumped from 1% to 45%.³⁷⁶ The government subsidizes these talents with housing allowance (up to 30,000RMB) and public housing units based on the level of their degrees and sometimes grants them Shenzhen *hukou*. We could reframe the earlier question of how the changing population structure reshapes the relationship between housing and urban production in Shenzhen.

Future work is also needed to understand the gentrification process and to track displaced ViC occupants, especially the labor forces who came to the city as peasants when they were young. As the first generation of migrant workers after the economic reform, they came to Shenzhen to work in parts-processing factories or construction sites but now are priced out of the ViC tenements. Where are they relocate themselves, and what do they do for a living? Will there be any programs to assist the relocation and the daily commute of such a large body of labor in service sectors and building industries? Meanwhile, with the local government's revised plans to encourage the preservation of ViCs' physical environment, new approaches to urban renewal in ViCs are emerging. How these new operations incorporate innovative techniques to affordable housing and services needs to be examined.

Another direction for future research will extend the case study of UABB to comparative studies of the effect of these increasingly scaled-up exhibition events on other types of urban places. These urban-scale events suggest a shift in making urban changes via media events rather than material practices. In combination with the rapid development of media technologies, exhibition events will have new implications for architecture and urban design disciplines in their capacity to engage with state power and globalized market forces.

³⁷⁶ Yufang Liang and Bing Wang, "Shenzhen Renkou Tujian (Shenzhen Illustrated Book)" (Shenzhen, 2020). In 1979, only 1.27% of Shenzhen population had attended middle school or high school, but in 2008, about 10% of the entire population had earned education degrees above junior college, which went up to 22.67% in 2015.

Future research developing from the dissertation can also expand the study's scope to investigate Shenzhen's new imagined role in an ambitious infrastructure project, The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, also known as the New Silk Road). In addition to investing in physical infrastructures such as railways, highways, and pipelines, the BRI aims to build fifty special economic zones modeled after Shenzhen in Central Asia. As I show in this study, Shenzhen SEZ's economic development and job creation have hinged upon the transformation of the two thousand ViCs, due to the strange top-down and bottom-up dynamism and even improvisations. How would the specific combination of political and economic circumstances be replicated or exported, and what does that replication or exportation mean for local places and communities? A future research project can examine the spatial effects of implementing the Shenzhen "model" in those local places along the BRI. It will identify key actors, including the state and its component urban planning institutions, local bottom-up agents, and international market (creative) forces in shaping the globalized process of urbanization. The study will diversify the body of research work and deepen the understanding of the implication of globalization in city-building processes.

Appendices

Appendix A Sociodemographic Measures

Name(姓名)	Age(年龄)								
	<20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	>60			
Name Code	Hometown(家乡)								
	Local (当地人)	Guangdong (广东 0)	Jiangxi (江西 0)	Hunan (湖南)	Hubei (湖北)	Sichuan (四川)	Henan (河南)		Other (其他)
Contact (联系方式)	Hukou Registration(户口信息)								
WeChat (微信):	Shenzhen (深圳户口)		Non-Shenzhen (非深圳户口)		Resident Permit (居住证)		Hong Kong Citizenship (香港户口)		
Tel(电话):	Agrarian (农业)	Non-Agrarian (非农业)	Agrarian 农业	Non-Agrarian 非农业					
Gender (性别)	Identity(具体身份)								
Female(女)	Villager(村民) :								

Male (男)	Farmer (农民)	Fisher (渔民)	Oyster-hunter (蚝民)	Worker (单位工人)	Urban Resident (居民)	Hong-Konger (香港居民)	Other (其他)			
Occupation (工作)	<i>Migrant (外来人口)</i>									
	Shopkeeper (店主)	Vendor (摊贩)	Craftsman (手工艺人)	Worker (工厂工人)	Contractor (建筑工人)	Employee (雇员)	Entrepreneur (创业者)	Professional 专职	Student (学生)	Other (其他)

Appendix B Sticker Mapping Tactic

INSTRUCTIONS:

The purpose of this study is to explore how places in the Nantou Old Town impact your living experience. During our previous conversations, you talked about changes in your lives and places important to you. In this task, you will be given three plans of the Nantou Old Town and asked to use stickers to show the locations of different places that are relevant to your living experience. There are no right or wrong answers – You are just conveying your own unique experience. Please read through all the instructions below before beginning the task.

PROMPT: Thinking about your typical everyday behaviors, use the provided stickers to mark the locations of features of the places that support the following categories of living experience, which are indicated below with different colored stickers. As you place the stickers, label the feature with 1-2 words to the side of the sticker. You may use as many or as few stickers as you like for each category.

- The locations of the places in which you've ever lived (red on MAP1 or MAP2) (please use the larger sticker to indicate the one you currently live in)
- The locations of the places in which you've ever worked (yellow on MAP1 or MAP2) (please use the larger sticker to indicate the one you currently live in)
- The locations of the places in which you've ever engaged in collective or community activities (pink on MAP1 or MAP2)
- The locations of the places in which you like to spend time with your families or friends (purple on MAP1 or MAP2)
- The locations of the places in which you like to spend your time alone (purple/pink on MAP1 or MAP2)
- The locations of transportation which you use to travel to the city (green on MAP2)
- Use this color sticker to indicate places that are important for your other everyday activities. (blue on MAP1 or MPA2)
- Please draw a path (on MAP3) that shows your everyday movement.

When you are finished with the task, place all the materials back into the large envelope and return it to me.

Thank you for sharing your views. It is very much appreciated.

贴纸图示

这个研究主要是为了探寻南头城的场所特点是如何影响你的日常生活的。回想一下你在南头城的日常生活和那些对你有意义的地方。在这个任务中，你将看到 3 个有关南头城的平面图。你可以用不同颜色的贴纸标识这些地方对你来说不同的意义。你只要表达你真实的想法就可以了，没有答案对错之分。请阅读下面的提示。

提示：请根据你不同的生活需求，在地图上用不同颜色的贴纸标识出这些地方。在这个过程中，我会问一些问题关于你这样标识的原因。每个地方，你可以用一个或多个不同的贴纸。你也可以用一个或多个贴纸来表达程度的区别。

- 请用红色贴纸标出你曾经居（租）住过的地方（地图 1 或者地图 2，用最大的贴纸标识你当前的居住位置）
- 请用黄色贴纸标出你曾经工作过（或者经营店铺）的地方（地图 1 或者地图 2，用最大的贴纸标识你当前的工作的位置）
- 请用粉色贴纸标出你曾经参加过集体活动或者社区活动的地方（地图 1 或者地图 2）
- 请用紫色贴纸标出你和朋友、家人经常一起去的地方（地图 1 或者地图 2）
- 请用紫粉色贴纸标出你有空时单独一个人喜欢去的地方（地图 1 或者地图 2）
- 请用蓝色贴纸标出你因为生活中的其他需要而经常去的地方（地图 1 或地图 2）
- 请用绿色贴纸标出你经常使用到的公共交通站点（地图 2）
- 请在地图 3上简单地画出你每天行走的路径

非常感谢！

Appendix C Semi-Structured Interview Questions

- What brought you to Shenzhen? And Nantou?
- The locations of the places in which you've ever lived (red)
 1. Have you changed your living places at Nantou? If so, what are possible reasons for your choice?
 2. When did you start to live in the apartment?
 3. Do you like the location of your apartment? Why?
 4. How big is your apartment (size, configuration, etc.)?
 5. Who do you live within your apartment?
 6. Could you draw the plan of your apartment?
 7. What facilities do you have in your apartment?
 8. How much did/do you pay for rent?
 9. How do you think of the changes in your rent?
 10. Could you talk a little bit about your renting experience with the landlord?
 11. What are the good features that you like about your apartment (prompt: landlord, rent, location, size, noise, ventilation, light, facilities...)?
 12. What are the less good features of your apartment?
 13. How long are you going to stay in the current apartment? And why?
 14. What do you expect to see different?
- The locations of the places in which you've ever worked (Yellow)
 15. When did you start to work at this place?
 16. What was/is the specific work you do at this place?
 17. How did you find this job (Anyone introduced you to this job)?
 18. How many days do you work each week?
 19. When did/do you start your work every day, and when did/do you finish your work?
 20. What is good about your work?
 21. What is less good about your work?
 22. What changes do you see in your work? And how do you think these changes affect your life?
 23. What do you expect to see different?
- The locations (within the neighborhood, within Nantou, or outside of Nantou) of the places in which you've ever engaged in collective activities or community activities (Pink)
 24. Could you describe these activities (when, who, and for what purpose)?
 25. What brought you to the activities?
 26. How important are these activities to you?

27. Do you think the quality of places is suitable for these activities? Why?
28. What has been changed to the activities and to the places?
29. How do you feel about the changes? What do you expect to see different?
- The locations (within the neighborhood, within Nantou, or outside of Nantou) of the places in which you like to spend time with your families or friends (Purple)
 30. Who do you usually go with (family, friends, co-workers)?
 31. How many of you usually go together? Do you know them all?
 32. How and when do you usually go there?
 33. How often do you go there?
 34. What do you usually do at these places?
 35. What is good about these places (prompt: people, location, noise, ventilation, light, facilities, service...)?
 36. What is less good about these places?
 37. What changes do you see in the places? And how do you feel about the changes?
 38. What do you expect to see different?
- The locations (within the neighborhood, within Nantou, or outside of Nantou) of the places in which you like to spend your time alone (Purple-pink)
 39. When and how often do you go to these places?
 40. What do you usually do when you are there?
 41. What is good about these places (prompt: people, location, noise, ventilation, light, facilities, service...)?
 42. What is less good about these places?
 43. What changes do you see in the places? And how do you feel about the changes?
 44. What do you expect to see different?
- The locations of transportation which you use to travel to the city (Green)
 45. When and how often do you usually travel outside the village?
 46. What are your purposes when you travel outside the village?
 47. What kinds of transportation do you usually choose?
 48. Why do you choose these means?
 49. What has been changed? And how do you feel about the changes?
 50. What do you expect to see different?
- Use this color sticker to indicate places that are important for your other everyday activities. (Blue)
 51. In everyday lifestyle, are there any other activities or places that are important to you?
 52. What types of activity (i.e., shopping) would you like to do within Nantou?
 53. What types of activity (i.e., shopping) would you like to do outside of Nantou?
 54. What is good about the place for your activity (shopping)?
 55. What is less good about the place?
 56. What has been changed? And how do you feel about the changes?
 57. What do you expect to see different?
- Please draw a path (on map3) that shows your everyday movement.
 58. Could you describe the different types of your paths: by car? By bus? by subway? by bike? Walking?
 59. Could you explain why do choose different means?
 60. Why do you prefer to walk through these streets?
 61. Do you enjoy your walk? What is good about your walking experience?

62. What is less good about your walking experience?

63. What do you expect to see different?

○ About Zhongshan Park

64. How important is Zhongshan Park to you?

65. How often do you use the park? For what purposes?

66. What do you usually do at Zhongshan Park?

67. What is good about Zhongshan Park?

采访问题 - 南头城租户

- 你为什么来到深圳？为什么选择南头城居住？
- 请用红色贴纸标出你曾经居（租）住过的地方（地图 1 或者地图 2）
 1. 你有搬过地方吗？如果有，是什么原因让你离开原来的地方，又为什么选择现在住的地方？
 2. 你是什么时候搬到现在住的地方的？
 3. 你对现在住的地方的位置满意吗？能解释一下原因吗？
 4. 你现在住的地方有多大（几室几厅？每个房间面积大概多少？）
 5. 你能简单画一下你住的地方的平面图吗？（参考下图）
 6. 你是一个人住吗？
 7. 你住的地方有哪些配套设施（独立厨房，独立卫生间，空调，无线网，电话，电视…）？
 8. 你每个月的房租大概多少？
 9. 你的房租有变化过吗？如何变化的？
 10. 能讲一讲你是如何跟房东交流和租房的经历吗？
 11. 你觉得你现在住的地方有哪些你喜欢的地方（比如房东、邻居、租金、位置、大小、噪声、采光、通风、配套设施等）？
 12. 有哪些地方你不太喜欢？
 13. 你觉得有哪些地方是可以提高的？
- 请用黄色贴纸标出你曾经工作过（或者经营店铺）的地方（地图 1 或者地图 2）
 14. 请问你在这里的主要工作是什么？
 15. 你大概什么时候开始在这里工作的？
 16. 你是如何找到这个工作的（自己找还是有人介绍）？
 17. 方便讲一下你的大概工资范围吗？
 18. 你一周工作几天？
 19. 你每天大概几点上班，几点下班？
 20. 你觉得你目前的工作有哪些好的方面？有哪些不好的方面？
 21. 你工作的地方经历哪些变化？这些变化对你的生活有什么影响吗？
 22. 你觉得你的工作环境有什么可以提高的吗？
- 请用粉色贴纸标出你曾经参加过集体活动或者社区活动的地方（地图 1 或者地图 2）
 23. 你能简单描述一下这些集体活动吗（有谁组织，有谁参加，做了些什么）？
 24. 你是和谁一起参加的？
 25. 这些集体活动对你有重要的意义吗？
 26. 你觉得这些活动的场所对你重要吗？
 27. 这些活动和地方还有吗？发生了什么变化？
 28. 你期待这些活动和地方能有什么不同吗？
- 请用紫色贴纸标出你和朋友、家人经常一起去的地方（地图 1 或者地图 2）
 29. 你经常和谁一起去这些地方（家人，朋友，同事？）
 30. 你们会有一些什么活动？
 31. 你们经常几个人一起活动？大家都是彼此认识的吗？

32. 你们怎么去到这些地方（走路，骑车，坐车？）
33. 你们多久去一次？大概什么时候？
34. 你去的这些地方，你觉得哪些方面比较好（比如人、位置、可达性、噪声、采光、通风、配套设施、服务等）？
35. 你觉得又有哪些不好的地方？
36. 这些地方经历什么变化吗？这些变化有影响到你的生活吗？
37. 你期待这些地方有什么不同吗？
- 请用紫粉色贴纸标出你有空时单独一个人喜欢去的地方（地图 1 或者地图 2）
38. 你多久回去一次这些地方？大概什么时候？
39. 你在这些地方会做些什么？
40. 你去的这些地方，有比较好的哪些方面（比如人、位置、可达性、噪声、采光、通风、配套设施、服务等）？
41. 有哪些不好的地方？
42. 这些地方经历什么变化吗？这些变化有影响到你的生活吗？
43. 你期待这些地方有什么不同吗？
- 请用蓝色贴纸标出你因为生活中的其他需要而经常去的地方（地图 1 或地图 2）
44. 这些活动和地方对你每天的生活重要吗？
45. 你觉得南头城里面可以满足你哪一类的活动（以购物为例）？
46. 你觉得还有哪些必须的日常活动南头城里面是满足不了的？
47. 你觉得这些地方对满足你的需要而言有哪些好的方面？
48. 有哪些不好的方面？
49. 这些地方经历什么变化吗？这些变化有影响到你的生活吗？
50. 你期待这些地方有什么不同吗？
- 请用绿色贴纸标出你经常使用到的公共交通站点（地图 2）
51. 你大概多久会出去一次南头（除了去公园）？
52. 你一般出去南头都是干什么（除了去公园）？
53. 你一般从南头去其他地方都用什么交通工具（走路，骑车，公交，地铁，出租，自己开车）？
54. 是什么原因让你选择这些交通工具而不是其他？
55. 你觉得这些交通站点对满足你的需要而言有哪些好的方面？
56. 有哪些不好的方面？
57. 这些站点经历什么变化吗？这些变化有影响到你的生活吗？
58. 你期待这些地方有什么不同吗？
- 请在地图 3上简单地画出你每天行走的路径
59. 在这个路径中，你走路的方式有变化吗？（快速穿过，散步，闲逛等）
60. 你为什么选择走这几条街而不是其他？
61. 你享受走路的过程吗？你觉得这个过程对你有哪些好处？
62. 你路过的地方有什么不好的方面吗？
63. 你期待这些地方有什么不同吗？
- 关于中山公园
64. 你觉得中山公园对你来说有多重要？

- 65. 你多久去一次公园？一般在什么时候？
- 66. 你一般去公园会做些什么？
- 67. 你觉得中山公园有哪些好的方面？
- 68. 你觉得中山公园有哪些不好的地方？
- 69. 你期待中山公园在今后有什么不一样的吗？

○ 能简单描述一下你正常一天的安排吗？

06:00 AM

08:00 AM

10:00 AM

12:00 PM

14:00 PM

16:00 PM

18:00 PM

20:00 PM

- 70. 对你来说，选择或者留在南头的最重要的3个原因是什么？
- 71. 就目前南头正在经历的一些变化来说，你觉得哪3点最会影响你今后的生活？
- 72. 如果你有能力改变，你最希望改变南头城的哪些方面？
- 73. 如果你有能力改变，你最希望改变你生活的哪些方面？

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