[Chinese Urban Villages Research]

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ABSTRACT

“Throughout history, expanding cities have always run over villages, hamlets, estates, gardens, and soft elements that constitute the countryside, the domain that hosts agriculture and nature.” Urban Villages, essentially a composite of these “soft” elements, remained as one of the hardest anchors among the residual or by-product in China’s urban development.

Until 1985, the Pearl River Delta region had been mainly dominated by farms and small rural villages. The onset of economic reform and the open-door policy brought an influx of foreign investment which fueled the unstoppable train of urbanization. Rapid urbanization let to the formation of Urban Villages, a contested space between urban and rural land. Conflicts between different constituents of these spaces start to emerge.

In the view of city government, urban villages are illegal constructions rather than a part of the city’s fabric. They are often considered an urban pathology that is incompatible to the city’s modernity. Thus, the complex power structure within the debate of urban villages is often misconstrued and misunderstood as the dichotomy between city government and indigenous villagers. However, the migrant workers, the most vulnerable group who relies heavily on urban villages’ informal housing are often neglected and ignored by planners and architects. Therefore, there is an opportunity to dissect the urban landscape from an alternative point of view: finding spatial agencies for migrant workers.

The project focuses on researching urban villages within the Pearl River Delta region of China. The research strives to identify and understand the constituents at play and their respective spatial agencies and find possible interventions in both conventional and non-conventional design method that would start generating spatial agencies for migrant workers.
BACKGROUND

Pearl River Delta:

The focus of this research is on the Pearl River Delta region of the People’s Republic of China, one of the most economically dynamic regions of the country since the launch of China’s economic reform in 1979.

Over the past 30 years, the PRD has become a megalopolis consist of metropolises such as Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, and Dongguan. According to the World Bank Group, the PRD has become the largest urban area in the world in both size and population.1

Behind the staggering economic achievement is the world’s factory that manufactures products such as electronic devices, textiles, garments, and a wide range of other goods.

Until 1985, the PRD had been mainly dominated by farms and small rural villages. The onset of economic reform and the open door policy brought an influx of foreign investment which fueled the unstoppable train of urbanization. Rapid urbanization let to the formation of Urban Villages, a contested space between urban and rural land. Conflicts between different constituents of these spaces start to emerge. Among them, the most pressing concern is the absence of viable, affordable housing solutions in most major cities. If cities continue on the course of force land expropriation and village gentrification, soon millions of migrant workers and city newcomers face the imminent threat of being homeless.

Urban Population Growth
Major Cities: 1982-2007

- Guangzhou
  - 1982: 63%
  - 2007: 85%

- Dongguan
  - 1982: 12%
  - 2007: 85%

- Foshan
  - 1982: 18%
  - 2007: 91%

- Shenzhen
  - 1982: 91%
  - 2007: 100%

- Zhongshan
  - 1982: 32%
  - 2007: 100%

- Zhuhai
  - 1982: 14%
  - 2007: 85%

- Macau
  - 1982: 41%
  - 2007: 85%
WHAT IS A URBAN VILLAGE?

- Urban villages are the unusual products of rapid urbanization through land expropriation.

Different from the western planning concept of the “urban village”, which refers to a village style neighborhood in the urban context of western countries. These villages are developed from rural settlements and become transitional neighborhoods under rapid urbanization. The urban village is called “chengzhongcun” in Chinese, literally “village encircled by the city”. The rapid expansion of Chinese cities has been encroaching into surrounding villages since the 1990s.
Many observers had regarded the urban villages as the only cosmopolitan spaces in Guangzhou. Immigrants from other parts of the country sell local products and open regional restaurants in urban villages, adding a layer of cultural diversity over the predominant Cantonese culture in the city.

Among this urban hotchpotch, there are three major social groups: landless farmers whose farmland was forcibly expropriated by the city government; rural migrants who provide cheap labor to the city while suffering from institutional discrimination; and employees of small street-run businesses.
Citizens with an urban household register, usually do white-collar work in the city, but can’t afford city rent.

Indigenous villagers with rural household register; landlords of urban village housing or shapowners of small business in the village

Migrant workers with a temporary residence permit; does various work in the city.
Urban Village Evolution

**Stage 1**
**Traditional Village Settlement**

Within these settlements, the land is divided into farmland and housing plots. Both kinds of property belong to the village as a collective, but individual households are entitled to claim a portion of them.

**Stage 2**
**Expropriation of Agricultural Land**

When urban expansion encroaches into rural land, the city government needs to acquire land rights from the rural collective to convert rural land into urban land. In many cases, to avoid the costly compensation to relocate villagers, the city government only expropriates the farmland of the village, and the housing land remains in the hands of the collective.

**Stage 3**
**Beginning of Illegal Developments**

Because the villagers’ rights are not alienable to a third party outside of the collective, they cannot capitalize their assets through land or housing sale, so they redevelop their housing into leasing units to gain profits.

**Stage 4**
**Gradual Expansion of Village Housing**

Village housing, typically low quality and high-density with many closely packed apartment blocks of 2–8 floors, is rented out to migrant workers and also some urban residents.

**Stage 5**
**Complete Eradication of Urban Villages**

When the help from the guidelines of government policy, the Guangzhou Urban Redevelopment Office has set ambitious goals to eliminate nine, eventually all, urban villages in Guangzhou, following the redevelopment paradigm of the “Liede model.”
THE BATTLE OF URBAN VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

The Players:

Who’s the Winner and Who’s the Loser?
**LAND MANAGEMENT LAW**

Separation of the Right to Use and Ownership of the land

In 1967, the state issued the Revised Land Management Law and established the State Land Administration. Second, the land rights system separated the right to use the freehold from the ownership of the land. Hence, any right to use the land becomes heritable until it is changed from free and inheritable use to paid and inheritable use, making the owner as the administrator.

**LAND-USE REFORM IN GUANGDONG PROVINCE**

Enacting the Social Land Market Economy

In 1978, the state issued a new policy of allowing urban private investors to enter the real estate market. The Social Land Market Economy was enacted to facilitate the Social Land Market Economy and real estate development. Under the reform, the state determines supply. Land rights are transferred or leased to investors or developers through negotiation, bidding or auctions. These transactions are recorded by the state, based on record and controlled by the market. Private investors are encouraged to participate in real estate development. The government can only supervise the market through the Social Land Market Economy.

**THE HEART OF CHINA'S REAL ESTATE MARKET BOOM**

In 1980, the State Council of the People's Republic of China allowed businessmen to enter the real estate market. The Social Land Market Economy was enacted and developed to facilitate the Social Land Market Economy and real estate development. Under the reform, the state determines supply. Land rights are transferred to investors or developers through negotiation, bidding or auctions. These transactions are recorded by the state, based on record and controlled by the market. Private investors are encouraged to participate in real estate development.

**THE “THREE REFORMS DEFINE AN EIGHT-FOUR ESTABLISHMENTS” POLICY**

In 1980, the state issued a new policy of separating the right of urban housing system, which defined the fundamental goal of housing reform as to establish a new urban housing system that is compatible with the social market-driven economy and that can be commercialized and regulated. The housing reform is a key nationwide policy for building the new social market-driven economic system. It has three main policies:

1. Establishment of a housing management system to manage urban housing and improve the living conditions of urban residents.
2. Establishment of a comprehensive urban housing supply system to meet the needs of urban residents.
3. Establishment of a comprehensive housing management system to manage urban housing.

**THE THIRD STAGES OF THE HOUSING REFORM**

In 1980, the state issued a new policy of separating the right of urban housing system and promoting housing reform. It measures that from the second half of the year, the physical distribution of housing supply will be completely stopped and the housing distribution will be monetary.

Housing Monetization

The State Council Document No. 20, issued in 1984, legally terminated urban public housing distribution to urban workers, and implemented the right of obtaining housing according to the urban residents. Since then, the state distribution of housing through the urban public housing system is abandoned, and urban residents obtain housing through the following three main means:

1. Public housing with lower housing costs, which is provided by the state to low-income urban residents.
2. Housing with lower housing costs, which is provided by the state to low-income urban residents.
3. Housing with lower housing costs, which is provided by the state to low-income urban residents.

**INTRODUCING FLEXIBILITY IN TRANSFERRING USE RIGHT OF RURAL LAND**

On October 20, 2016, the Third Plenary Session of the Seventh National Committee of the CPC issued the decision on promoting rural real estate development.

**SEIZING MIGRANT WORKERS NEW DEVELOPMENT**

The terms of engagement workers' engagement contracts for their homes in Shenzhen are fluctuating with China's economy, especially the real estate market. The terms of engagement workers' engagement contracts are fluctuating with China's economy, especially the real estate market. The terms of engagement workers' engagement contracts are fluctuating with China's economy, especially the real estate market. The terms of engagement workers' engagement contracts are fluctuating with China's economy, especially the real estate market.

In response to the needs of the labor market, the housing government has issued a total of 366,000 labor contracts to urban residents, with the purpose of encouraging urban residents to return to the labor market. In 2017, the state issued a new policy of allowing urban residents to return to the labor market. In 2017, the state issued a new policy of allowing urban residents to return to the labor market. In 2017, the state issued a new policy of allowing urban residents to return to the labor market.
FINAL ROUND: 2020

Developer

City Government

Villagers

"I made a lot of money!"

"I made the city a better place!"

"I became a millionaire overnight!"

IT’S A TRIPLE WIN!

RIP

Migrant Workers

1985-2020
Migrant Workers in Cities

### Primary Industry

- **0.5%**

### Secondary Industry

- **51.5%**
  - Manufacturing: 29.9%
  - Architecture: 18.9%

### Tertiary Industry

- **48%**
  - Wholesale & Retail: 12.3%
  - Transportation & Storage & Postal Service: 6.6%
  - Hotel & Catering: 6.2%
  - Residential Service & Repair: 11.3%
  - Other: 11.6%

Source: [COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY, 2016 Hope and Opportunity Report](source)

Source: [Chinese National Bureau of Statistics: 2017 Migrant Workers Survey Report](source)
Mr. Zhang

Mr. Zhang is from Hubei. He came to Shipai Village in 2011.

Together with two friends from his hometown, Zhang now runs a small computer screen shop. He rents a single-room unit and uses all the empty space for storing computer components.

After paying for material costs and rents for the shop and his room, Zhang earns over 3,000 RMB (433 USD) per month, but material costs keep rising.

His wife works as a saleswoman in another IT company. She manages to save about 1,200 RMB (173 USD) per month.
Mr. Chen is from Hebei. He has lived in the Sanyuanli Village for three years as a migrant worker, and now runs a hair salon. All of his eight employees are migrants from different provinces in China. The rent of Chen's shop costs 2,000 RMB (290 USD) per month. His shop makes a good profit because there are a lot of young people between 20 to 40 years old living in the village and the demand for hair salons increases progressively year by year. On the other hand, Chen only pays 600 RMB (87 USD) per month to rent his home.
Mr. Wang is from Sichuan.

After graduating from art school, Wang got bored of working as a designer in the advertising industry and sold his business and moved to Dafen Village for a new life.

Wang found a job in an electronics factory with a monthly salary of 900 RMB (130 USD).

After two years, Wang quit his job at the factory and rented a small exhibition area in Dafen Village and became a painter.
THE THREE VILLAGES
Shipai Village

- Total Population: 270,000
- Area: 99 acres
- Area per Person: 61 sqft
- Building Height: 7-9 stories

Stefan Al, Villages in the City: A Guide to South China's Informal Settlements (Hong Kong: Hong Kong U.P., 2014), 127.
Shipai Village: Digital Industry

Primary Retail

Secondary Retail
Sanyuanli Village

Total Population: 85,000
Area: 17 acres
Area per Person: 86 sqft
Building Height: 4-6 stories

Stefan Al, Villages in the City: A Guide to South China’s Informal Settlements (Hong Kong: Hong Kong U.P., 2014), 147.
Sanyuanli Village: Clothing Industry

Primary Retail

Secondary Retail
Dafen Village

- **Total Population:** 10,200
- **Area:** 23 acres
- **Area per Person:** 99 sqft
- **Building Height:** 3-10 stories
Dafen Village: Art Industry

Primary Retail

Secondary Retail
Ten-Thousand Villages Campaign

The “Ten-Thousand Villages Campaign” was an integrated renovation on urban villages in the Shenzhen that Vanke started. They aimed to renovate urban village housing into long-term rental apartments (at affordable price), within a neighborhood of community commercial, community education and industry work. The rent for the renovated apartments would remain in the same range as the original housing units, with a slight increase, in exchange for a more secure and comfortable living environment with basic home appliances.

However, despite the relatively “low” increase in rent that Vanke believed to be reasonable, many tenants still complain about it, and many of them are forced to leave. This is mainly due to the fact many migrant workers have very high price elasticity to their rent; a 10% increase in rent may cause them to go from just getting by to unable to sustain their life.

Despite the generic method of construction, housing typologies among various villages have subtle differences intended to accommodate the specific industries that were integrated into the village’s economy.
In response to the migrant worker housing scarcity in the city of Guangzhou, this intervention proposed three major reforms consisted of a special zoning policy for the urban village area, a reform in the redevelopment model, a reform in the affordable housing tenure policy to help establish a formal rental system for the low-income population.
Three-Reform and Two-Preservation Policy

- Transform existing zoning regulation and impose new building regulations to create a better living condition.
- Transform existing redevelopment method. Introduce a more flexible development model which allows collective-owned enterprises (COEs) and villagers’ share-holding companies to conduct self-redevelopments.
- Transform housing and retail tenure policy to encourage development in the affordable housing sector and local business.
- Preserve cultural heritage and economic ecosystem inherent to the village.
- Preserve and expand the affordable housing sector to accommodate migrant workers and other low-income population.

Zoning Reform and Infrastructural Development

- The government will take the lead to fill the vacancy of basic infrastructures, and generates incentives for self-developments.

Redevelopment Reform and Affordable Housing Retainment

- 30% of the newly developed housing units must be affordable housing, and the rest can be sell in the commercial housing market.

Affordable Housing and Retail Tenure Reform

- 50% of the newly developed housing units must be affordable housing, and the rest can be sell in the commercial housing market.

- New developments must conform to the zoning and building regulations.

- Newly developed affordable housing units will be rented out on a 70 years lease.
- Regardless of the household register status, qualified low-income population are entitled to affordable housing. Local business owner and essential city service industry employee are prioritized in the selection process.
- Tenants are responsible for paying an accumulative fund for covering building maintenance cost and a portion of the land lease renewal fee at the end of the 70-year contract.
Bibliography:


