

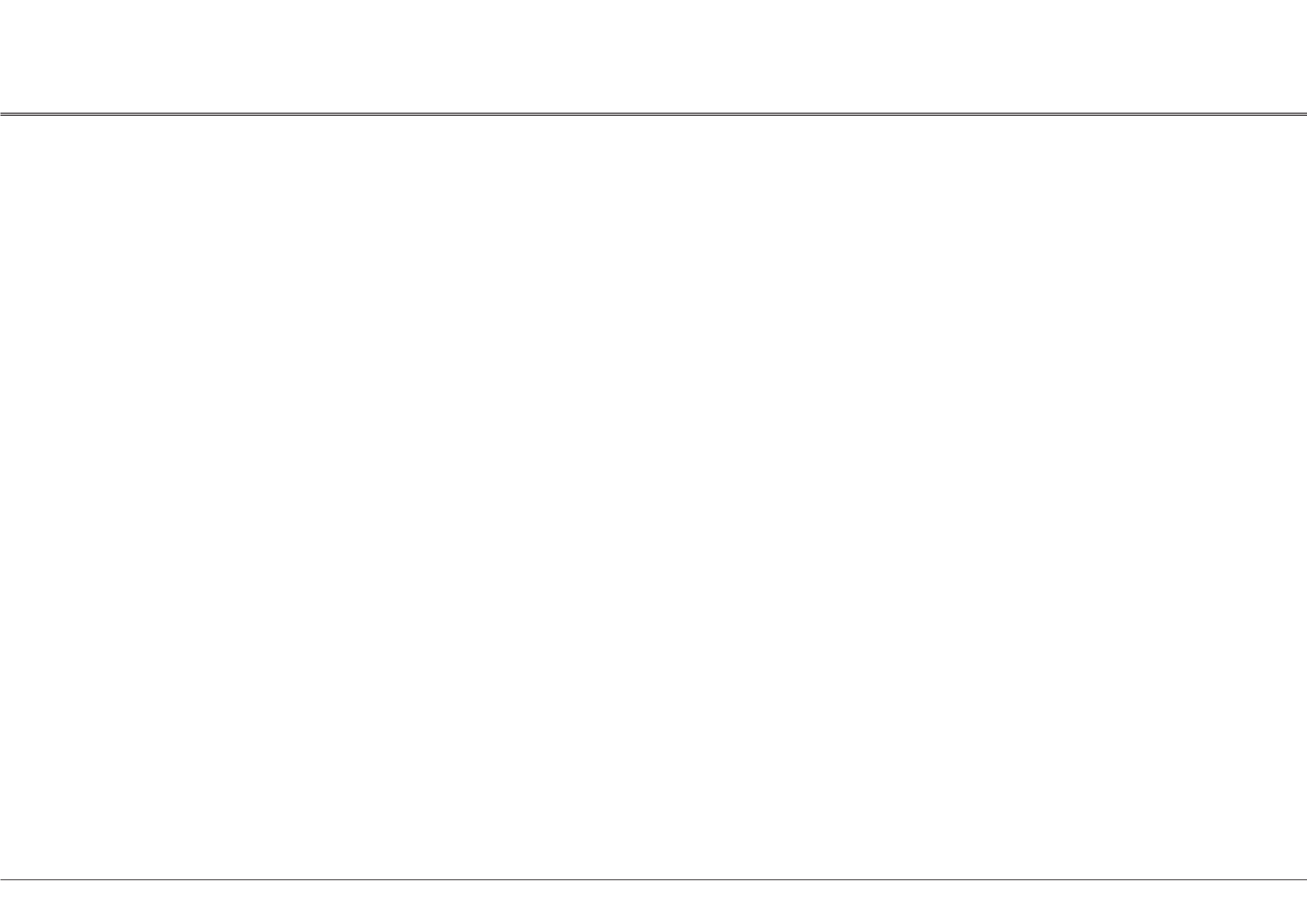


# “On-Site” Evolutionary villages

Rescripting the transformation model of urban villages in Shenzhen, China

Thesis Plan ( P2 Report )  
Urbanism TUDelft  
Complex Cities Studio

Zhang Fanying ( 4182596 )  
zhangfanying62006@gmail.com



Title: "On-Site" Evolutionary villages

Sub-title: Rescripting the transformation model of urban villages in  
Shenzhen, China

Primary Thesis Plan

Name : Zhang Fanying

Student number : 4182596

zhangfanying62006@gmail.com

1st mentor: Dr. Lei Qu

L.Qu@tudelft.nl

Date : 02-11-2012

Msc3 Urbanism

Thesis Plan ( AR3U012)

Graduation Lab Urbansim (AR3U100)

Graduation Studio Complex cities

The thesis plan in this report is for the graduation project in complex cities studio in urbanism department of TU Delft. I will show my intentions and ambitions in relation to the defined problems of urbanism field in this report. The subject I will discuss in this plan presents a synthetic proposal of the dynamics of gentrification in Shenzhen, especially for the transformation of urban villages.

The aim of this project is to discover an on-site evolution program to accommodate the interests and concerns of government, developers, indigenous villager population and rural migrants, and especially to improve the participation rights of the latter two groups in the transformation process. It will be a sustainable guideline for the redevelopment of urban villages in the future. How this will be done is shown in this report.

Due to the high-speed urbanization appeared in China in the past three decades, the urban growth encroached on the natural villages. These villages have become the awkward islands inside the modern cities, which have a new name-urban village. These so-called urban villages (or chengzhongcun in Chinese), which are a prominent and important feature of China's new urbanism.

As the density inside the village increases rapidly, many problems came out, such as high building plot ratio, illegal buildings, lacking of significant areas of open space, and also safety problems. These problems lead to the government's negative view on urban villages and their increasingly stronger determination to eliminate the villages (Hao, 2012). Although urban village redevelopment programs are underway in many cities, such radical elimination might result in more problems than it solves (Wang et al, 2009). Locking of public participation is a part of social problems, which only involves the interests of villagers, government and developers, and totally ignore the low-income migrants.

How do urban villages emerge and develop in terms of Chinese socioeconomic urbanism over space and time? Are there any specific development phases in the evolution of urban villages that are reflected in patterns and trends at the city scale? If so, what are these patterns and trends? For the transformation part, how can the public participation involved in this process, and how to balance the interests between all the participators? At the same time, how will the urban villages present by self-evolution in the future, especially in spatial planning? Questions like these will be defined, research and hopefully answered in the graduation project. For now, the task is how to research and access to the questions.

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| PREFACE .....                  | II  |
| MOTIVATION .....               | III |
| 1. PROBLEM STATEMENT .....     | 01  |
| 2. AIMS OF THE PROJECT .....   | 03  |
| 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....    | 04  |
| 4. SCOPE OF THE PROJECT.....   | 05  |
| 5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ..... | 09  |
| 6. RELEVANCE .....             | 10  |
| 7. METHODOLOGY .....           | 12  |
| 8. TIME SCHEDULE .....         | 13  |
| 9. MAIN REFERENCE .....        | 14  |

# Problem Statement

## "On-site" Evolutionary villages

### 1.1 Background

China is an increasingly industrialized and urbanized country with an estimated 666 million people, or nearly half its population, now living in urban areas, an increase of 13 percentage points over the 2000 figure (Peng, 2011). Its urban built-up area has tripled in two decades, from 12,462 km<sup>2</sup> in 1989 to 38,107 km<sup>2</sup> in 2009 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 1990; 2010). Rapid urban expansion has been a major contributor to the loss of around 124,000 km<sup>2</sup> of arable land (a 10% loss) between 1980 and 2008 (Peng, 2011). Large area of farmland and thousands of villages in mere twenty years disappeared and were replaced by concrete high-rise buildings. The strong urban expansion can instantly swallow the farmland and villages, and quickly make the layout and sight of villages change (Ma, 2006). These so-called urban villages<sup>1</sup> (or chengzhongcun in Chinese), which are a prominent and important feature of China's new urbanism, are the focus of this research (Hao, 2012).

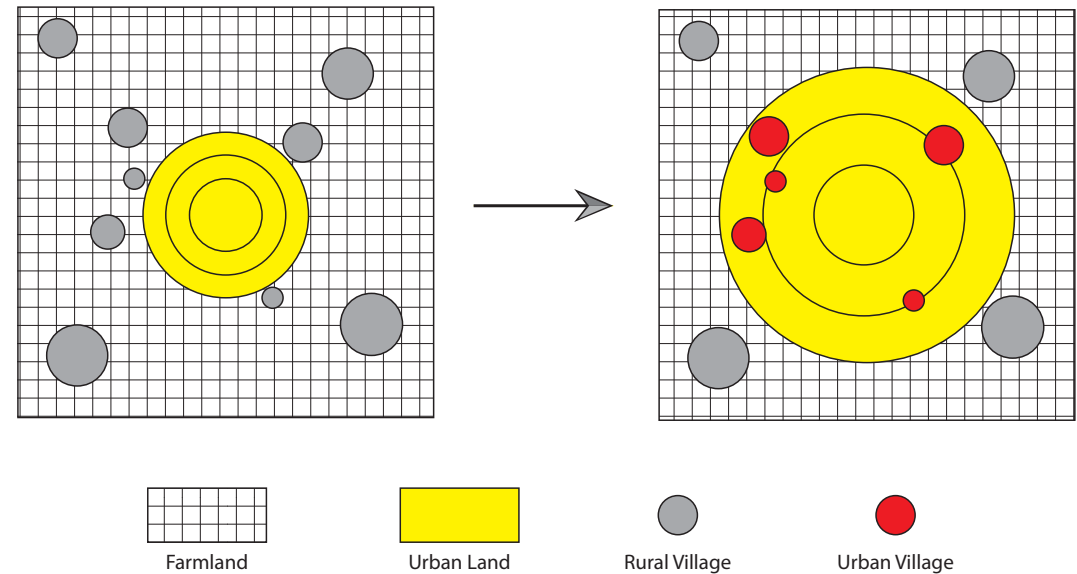


Figure 1. 1 The transformation of traditional villages to urban villages.

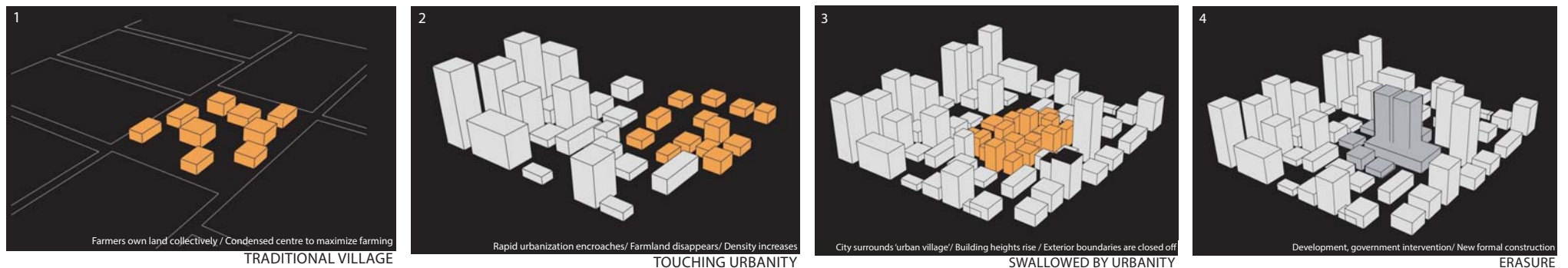


Figure 1. 2 Evolution process of urban villages

### 1.2 Problem Statement

Accompanying with the rapid urbanization process, the number of these "villages" increases in towns and counties where urbanization levels are relatively high, and this phenomenon spread all over the country (Table 1.1). Aesthetically, the "villages" are seen as scar of the city. Politically, it is regarded as a sort of time bomb. These villages have become a seemingly unsolvable problem to those who take serious consideration of the issue.

It is evident that the population density inside the village increases rapidly, many problems came out, such as high building plot ratio, illegal buildings, lacking of significant areas of open space, and also safety problems (Figure 1.2). These problems lead to the government's negative view on urban villages and their increasingly stronger determination to eliminate the villages (Hao, 2012). These villages have to face the problem of transformation. Undeniably, these villages have evolved into low-income communities of migrant population by providing housing with very low rent. But right now, the main method of transformation is mainly focus on the benefits of government, developer and villagers. Also, it seems the tensions between property developers and dispossessed farmers, and between factory bosses and their rural work force, are often flashpoints for social conflict.

So the main problems are mainly relate to the following four aspects:

- (1) Simplification and unsustainable in transformation method
- (2) Locking of public participation
- (3) Rising of social inequity
- (4) Resulting in serious waste of social resources



Figure 1.2 Current situation of Urban village in Shenzhen  
(Source: "Die Stadt der Mädchen" Der Spiegel. 2005, 6:60)

| City          | Location        | Number of "villages" in city |
|---------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| Guangzhou     | South of China  | 139                          |
| Shenzhen      | South of China  | 304                          |
| Hangzhou      | East of China   | 60                           |
| Shaoxing      | East of China   | 45                           |
| Shi Jiazhuang | Middle of China | 45                           |
| Xi'an         | Middle of China | 417                          |
| Taiyuan       | Middle of China | 75                           |

Table 1. 1 The number of "villages" in partial cities in China  
(Source: Persistence and Transformation of an Old Social System in an Emerging Mega City, Draw by Mahang)



There are two parts in my graduation project:

1. Research
2. Design based on the research

The main goal for the 'Research' part consists of the following two key elements:

- *Understanding the concepts of urban villages in Shenzhen*
- *Analysing the existing redevelopment models of urban villages in Shenzhen, and identifying which is the 'good' examples and which is the 'bad' ones.*

The research will consist of literature, case studies and field trip.

The 'Design' part of the project has two aims:

- *Trying to discover a new method for urban village transformation, especially for Hubei Village in Shenzhen.*
- *Improving the spatial quality of Hubei Village, in order to upgrade the living condition inside village, as well as to maintain a culture beneficial to the city.*

### 3.1 Main Research Question

The main research question that should be answered is the following:

***'What is the alternative transformation method for urban village evolution to accommodate the interests and concerns of government, developers, villagers and migrants, and especially to make the village accessible and protect for the latter two groups' benefits in the future?'***

In order to find an answer to this question, the elements that it contains should be researched separately.

### 3.2 Sub-research Questions

Also the following sub-research questions, therefore, represent the in-between steps that will be taken:

1. *How do urban villages emerge and develop in terms of their physical environment and socio-economic status over space and time?*
2. *What is the role of urban village in the development process of the city, especially in Shenzhen?*
3. *Based on the existing redevelopment models, is it really beneficial to Shenzhen's history and culture to remove all existing urban context and city life? And does the existing model embody justice in the distribution of wealth for urban public interest?*
4. *How do the land use functions of urban villages evolve and what drives their functional change?*

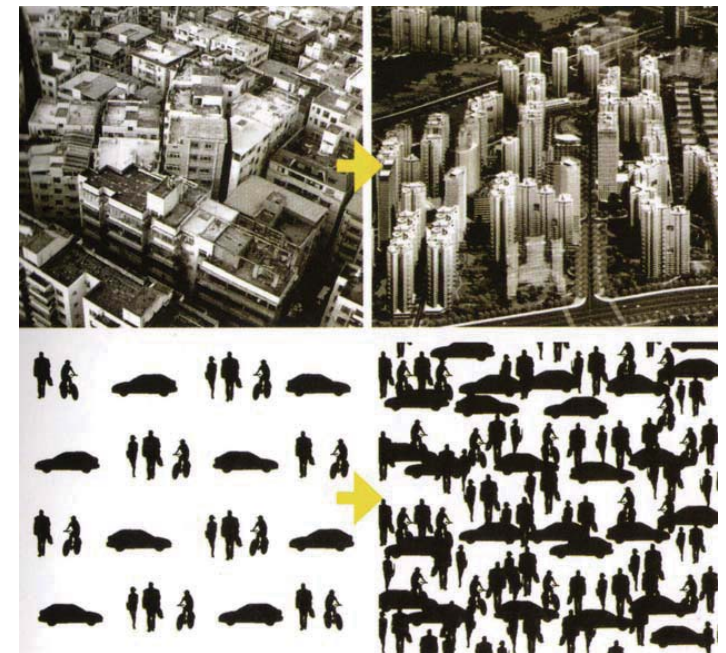


Figure 3.1 The densities of population and traffic increase after demolition on large scale  
(Source: URBANUS Architecture and Design 2006, 13)

# SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

## "On-site" Evolutionary villages

### 4.1 Target City

This project will look at Shenzhen, the fastest growing city in the Pearl River Delta Region concerning economy development. As one of the 14 coastal open cities, Shenzhen has been developed rapidly as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) over the last 30 years, currently being upgraded with new strategic plans.

Shenzhen's national gross product in the year 1980 was no more than 1950 million, and by the year 2003, this number soared to 286 billion, while the urban construction area was predicted to increase from 2 km<sup>2</sup> in the year 1978 to 480 km<sup>2</sup> by the year 2010<sup>(1)</sup>.

In the process of over-speeding expansion of cities, many villages with large population of villagers are quickly surrounded by the ever-expanding cities. Driven by the force of interest maximization, the phenomena of dense "village" buildings that strike for the maximum use of construction space and issues behind these phenomena make "villages" not a so comfortable topic for the government and the public. Instead, it consists of a kind of heaviness and disgrace, maybe even some negativeness and helplessness in such heaviness (Ma, 2006).



<sup>1</sup> (Source: The statistics are from China Statistical Yearbook 2004)

Fig 4.1.1 Map of Shenzhen city  
(Source: Shenzhen Municipal Government)

### 4.2 Current Situation in Shenzhen

By the end of 2005, Shenzhen has 320 "villages" sorted as administrative villages (91 of them locate in the SEZ) (Fig 4.2.1) and a population of 5.02 million (Fig 4.2.2) among which 358,000 are local villagers. Shenzhen had a built-up area of 106 million km<sup>2</sup>, with completed construction area of 93.49km<sup>2</sup>. More specifically, there are 8 km<sup>2</sup> construction areas and 2138 km<sup>2</sup> built-up area inside the SEZ, which reach 1/10 and 1/5 of the total in the city each (Fig 4.2.3).

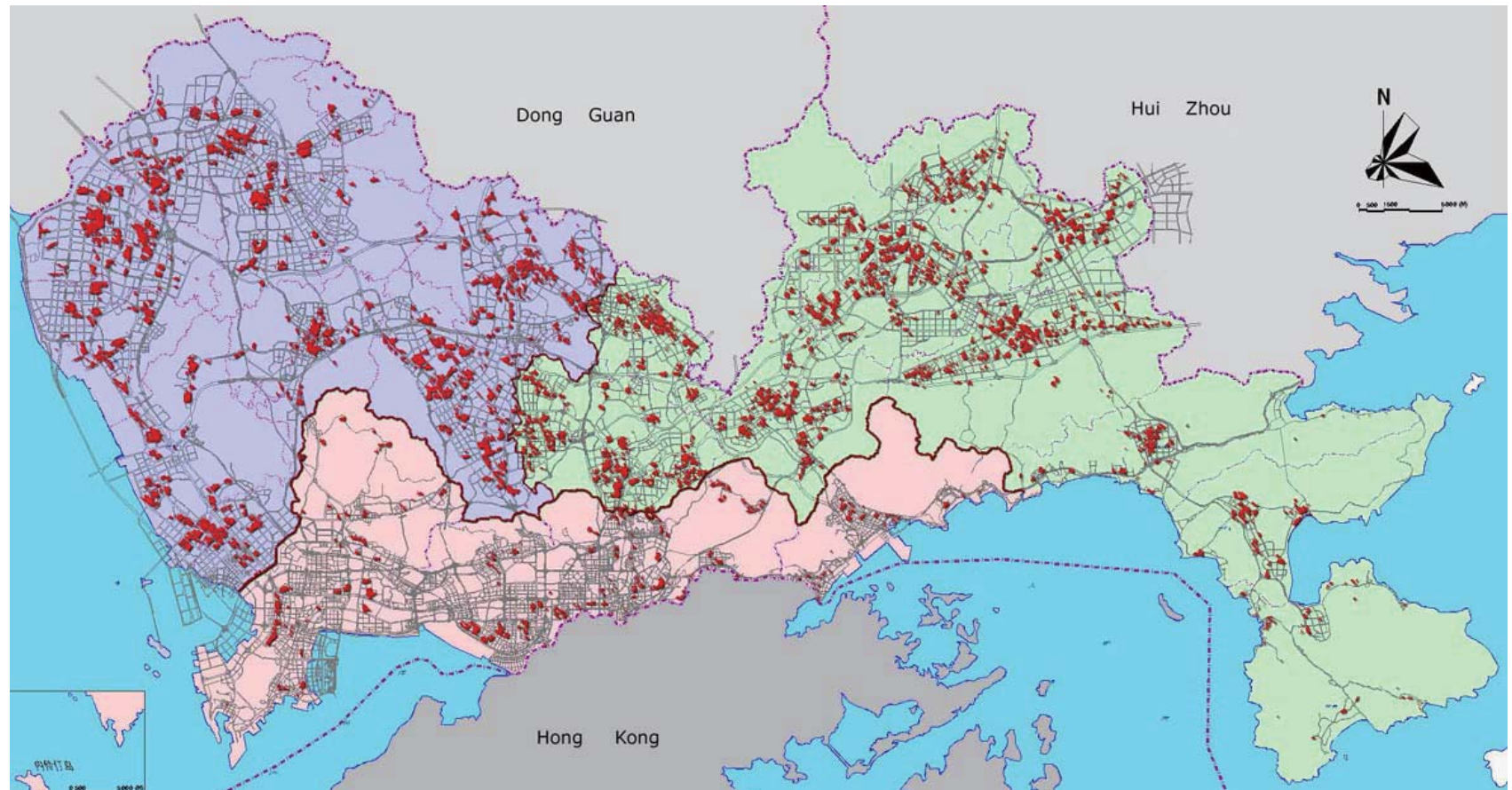


Fig4.2.1 Locations of "villages" in Shenzhen  
(Source: Urban Planning & Design Institute of Shenzhen)

## 4.2 Current Situation in Shenzhen

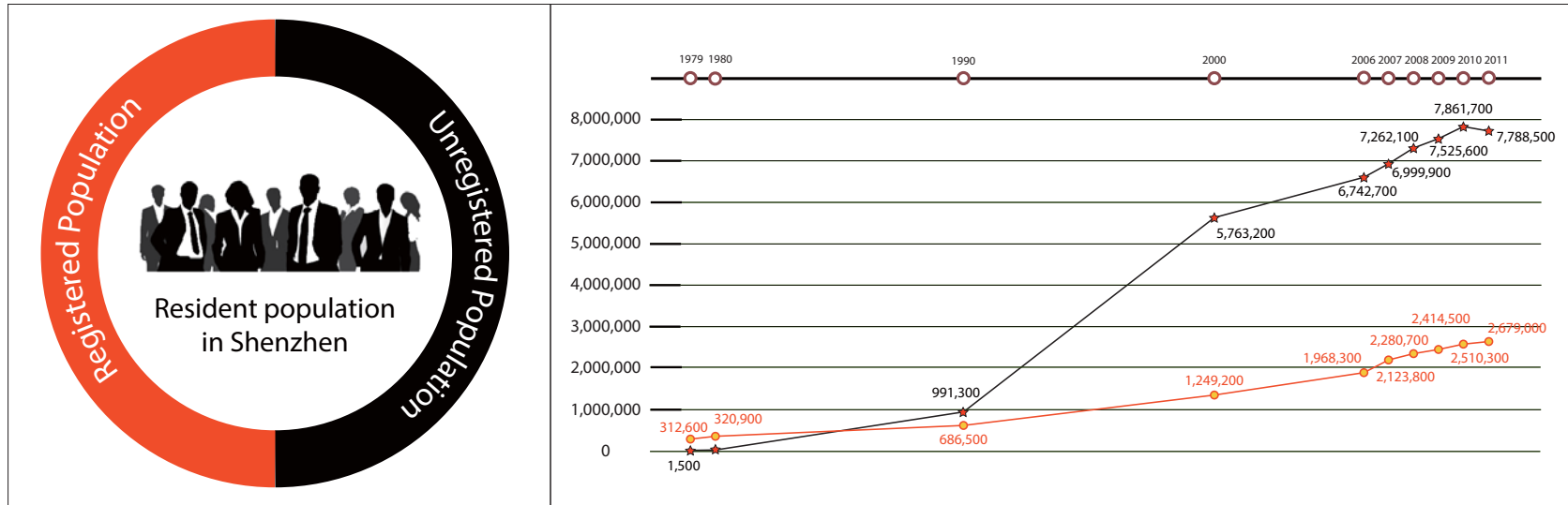


Fig 4.2.2 The population increase in Shenzhen from 1979 - 2011  
(Source: Statistical yearbook of Shenzhen 2011 draw by the author)

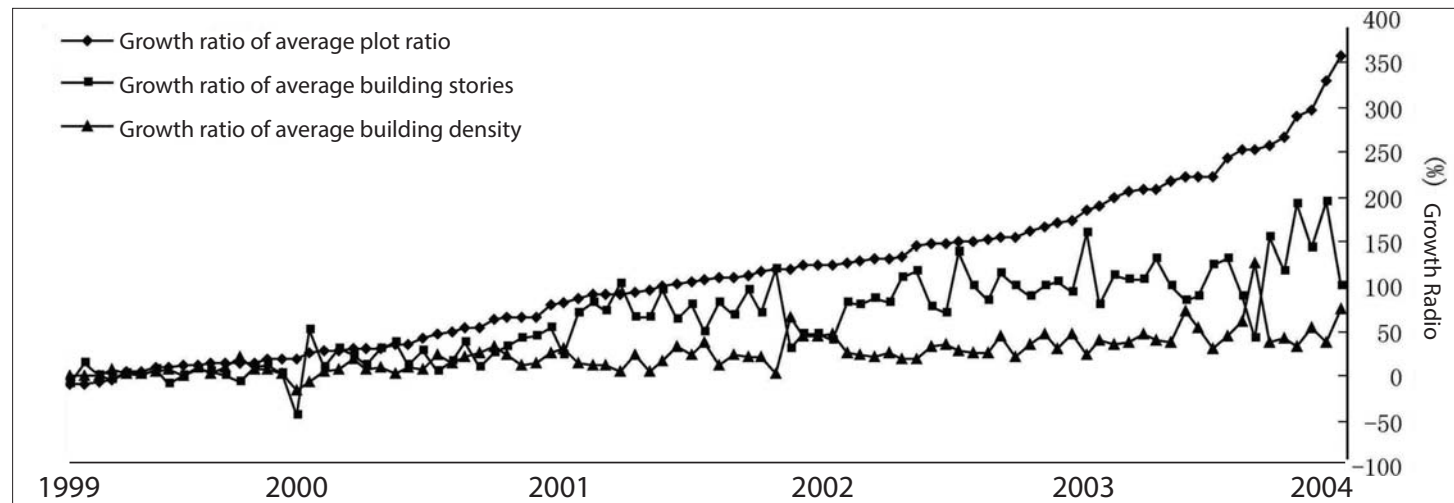


Fig 4.2.3 Increase of construction intensity in urban villages in Shenzhen SEZ (1999~2004)

### 4.3 Selected Scale

There are two main types of VICs in Shenzhen — Urban Fingers and Urban Villages. This project will focus on the type of normal urban village which inside the SEZ (Table 4.1).

On one hand, the urban issues are particular in these villages. High building density, lack of city utilities, fire engine accessibility, and insufficient public space and community service facilities. The houses have very limited sunlight and ventilation. The outdoor spaces are fragmented and tiny; they lack a sense of order and safety. It is also difficult to make full use of the street level commercial space.

On the other side, the current redevelopment models for these villages seem not alternative. The existing planning approaches reflect the lack of visions as platforms for the coproduction of stakeholders, the lack of government financial power, the impotence of traditional planning, the separations (even conflicts) of different actions, the marginalization of migrants, and the fragmentation of space (Lin, Meulder, 2012).

|  | Urban finger   | Urban village   | Comments  |
|--|--|---|---|
| Location                                   | Particularly found in district centres, sub-district centres and near major transportation nodes   | Close to the city center and district center  |   |
| Land use                                   | Except residential area, most of areas are covered by industrial land, some agriculture land   | Except residential area, often mixed with formal urban land use   | Different land use has an impact on the concept of the spatial integration  |
| Community economy and industrial structure | The secondary industry is outstanding, but the tertiary industry is relatively backward. Villagers' income is low, some people are setting out to look for jobs. | The tertiary industry is outstanding, rent of houses and lands become important and steady income source, so some villagers purely rely on rents and have lived leisurely and comfortable life. |   |
| Spatial Pattern                            | Spatial experience is discontinuous. Peccant buildings are relatively rare.  | Spatial experience is discontinuous, and peccant buildings are relatively rare.   | The existing redevelopment policy has limited influence on the urban finger |
| Population composition                     | Villagers, workers work in industrial and small business sectors   | White-collar employees, employees in the service sectors and the university graduates   | All belong to the low-income communities.                                   |
| Development prospect                       | Most of the villages will act as the accommodation for the industrial area.  | Participate in the housing market, and turn into better communities   | Different development prospects have different redevelopment strategies     |

Table 4.1 Comparison between urban finger and typical urban village - the main two types of urban village in Shenzhen

## 5.1 Research approaches

The different elements involved in the urbanization process facilitated the problems of VICs. It is necessary to understand the process of spatial evolution in VIC and other elements in the concepts of VIC. This project will analyse the characteristics and space of VICs as the starting and breakthrough points, to get a more in-depth comprehension on the social and spatial forms of VICs in Shenzhen. Accordingly, this plan will also analyse the factors which influence the development of VICs, current redevelopment models based on the urban renewal theory, to explore a new planning approaches, which are required to deal with the complex stakeholder environment and issues of VICs.

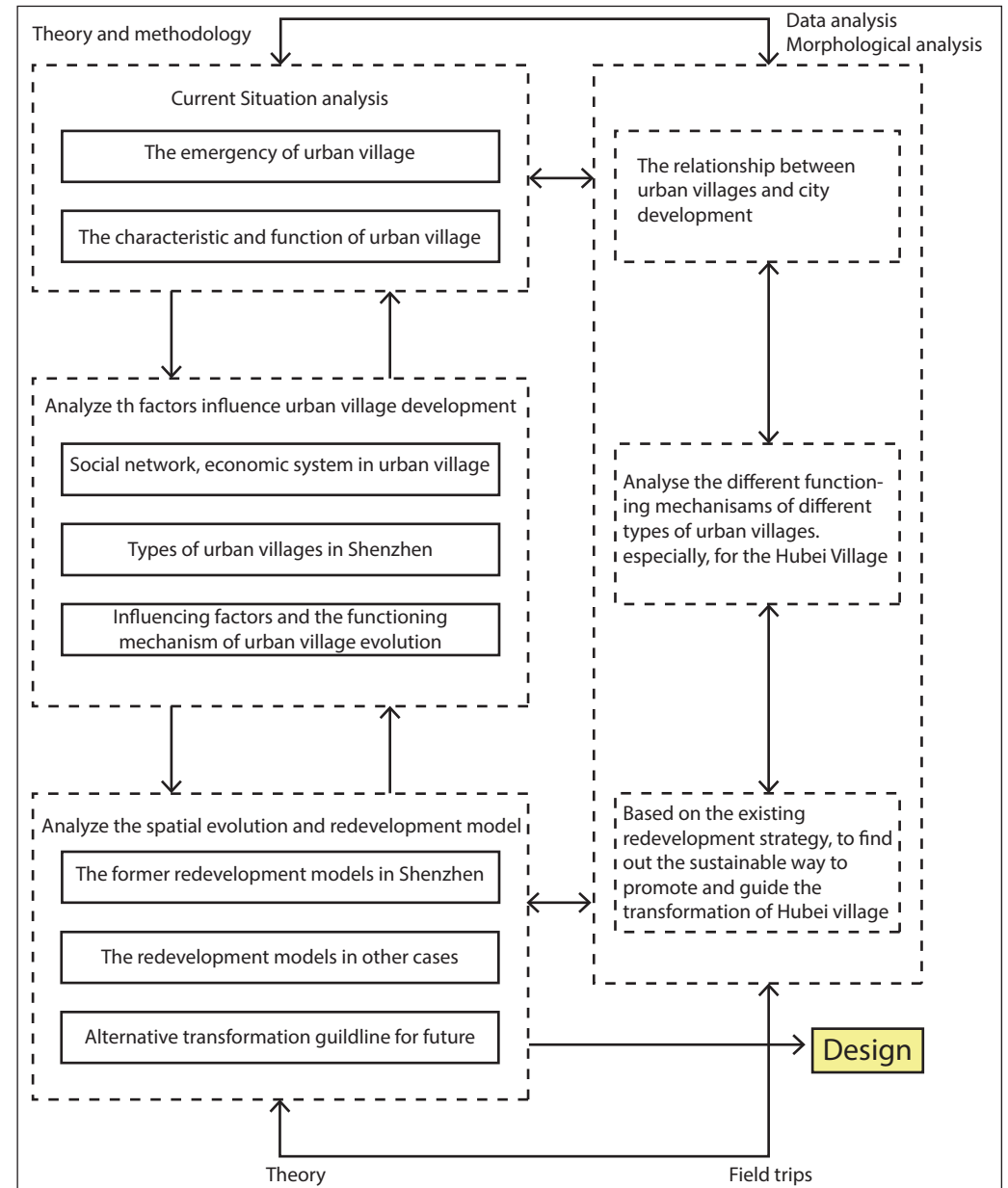


Fig5.1 Research framework

### *6.2 Social relevance*

It is evident that VICs play an important role in urban component, which facilitates a smooth urban transition of the society. To support a better planning practice associated with urban villages, a thorough analysis of the evolution of urban villages which include two aspects.

First, in many cities, the implementation of urban village redevelopment programmes faces incredible barriers and many actions result in social consequences, such as conflicts caused by forced eviction and demolition, relocation of landlords, and large-scale displacement of migrant tenants followed by a housing crisis (Zhang et al., 2003; Zhang, 2005; Hin and Xin, 2011). This research will rethink the current policy which related to the VICs. Further, providing a citywide perspective of the migrant housing market provided by urban villages, the magnitude of the issues and the potential impact of clearance policies are revealed (Hao, 2012).

Second, Public participation refers to, in social economic activities involving public interest, that the public should enjoy more democratic power on the basis of enjoying basic rights (such as Equal Right, Right to Know, Right of Disposal) protected by laws (Ma, 2006). Right now, the transformation of VIC involves too many interests. It is very difficult to harmonize the interests of all parties. Indeed, public participation sometimes will cause delay of the project implementation and directly impact on the profits of real estate developers. Due to this reason, public participation in large scale transformation is very low. On the other hand, it will hurt the interest of local villagers, who will more repellent to the transformation and will easily raise serious disputes and negative social influence.

To sum up, the sustainable development of VICs require a new planning approach with an emphasis on intensive cooperation of various stakeholders, visions, integrated strategies, and specific actions that deal with opportunities and problems in strategic locations.



## 6.2 *Scientific relevance*

Although the urban village phenomenon attracts wide attention, research on VICs has made considerable progress in the past two decades. Development issues and planning approaches have been studied by many scholars. Some literature has either focused on exploring the theoretical mechanisms of their emergence (Zhang et al., 2003; Zhang, 2005; Tian, 2008), and some study specific villages to illustrate their physical and social status (Wang et al., 2009; Bach, 2010; Liu et al., 2010). Chung (2009) studied the “state-led” approach to the planning of VICs in Shenzhen, while Hao, Sliuzas, and Geertman (2011) explored different dimensions of the development and redevelopment of VICs. Lin, De Meulder, and Wang also emphasized the important roles of key stakeholders in the (re) development of VICs.

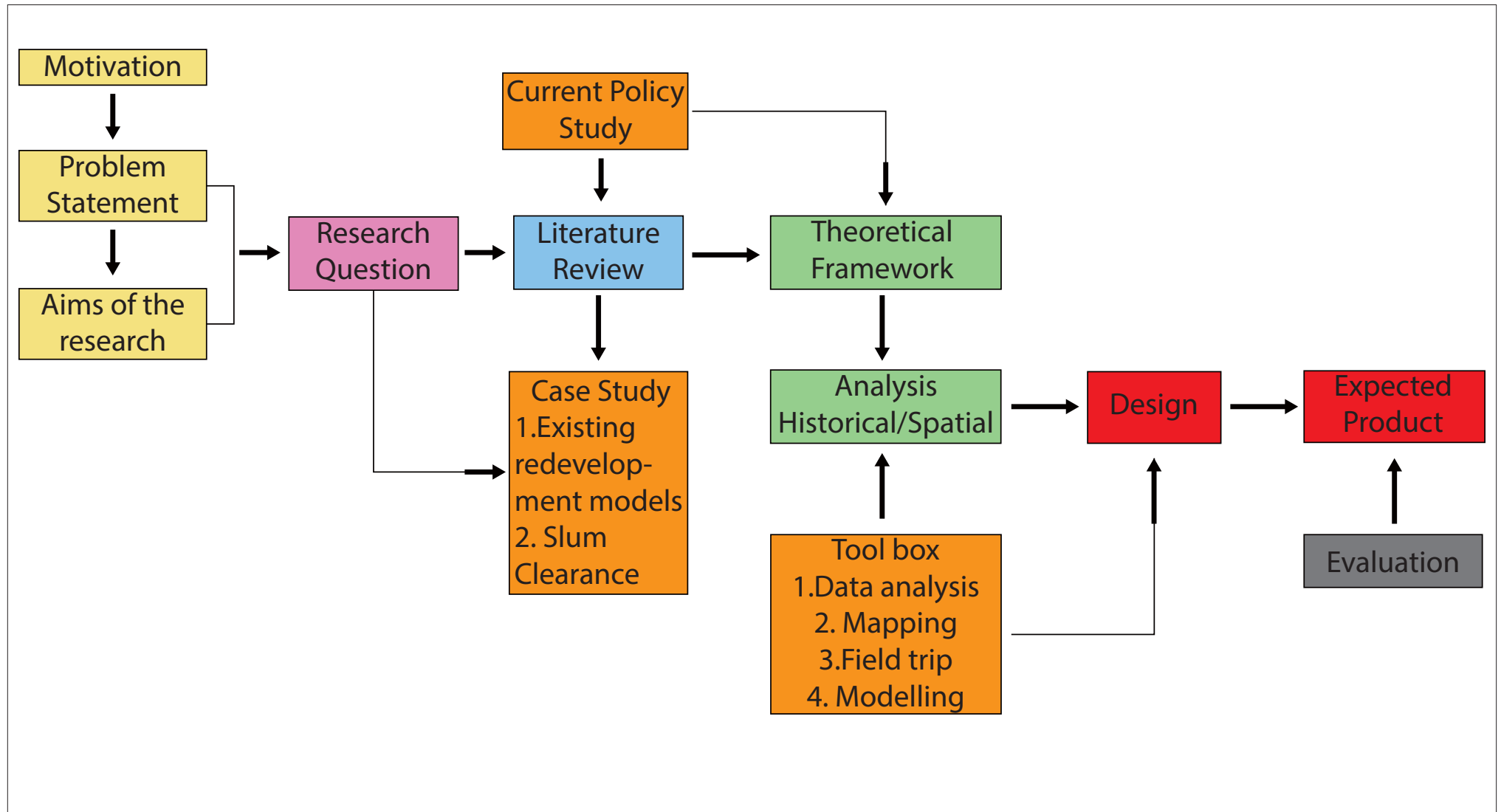
Essentially, past studies have acknowledged the positive role of VICs, suggesting that—at least in the short term—VICs should remain as a realistic and effective solution for the provision of affordable housing.

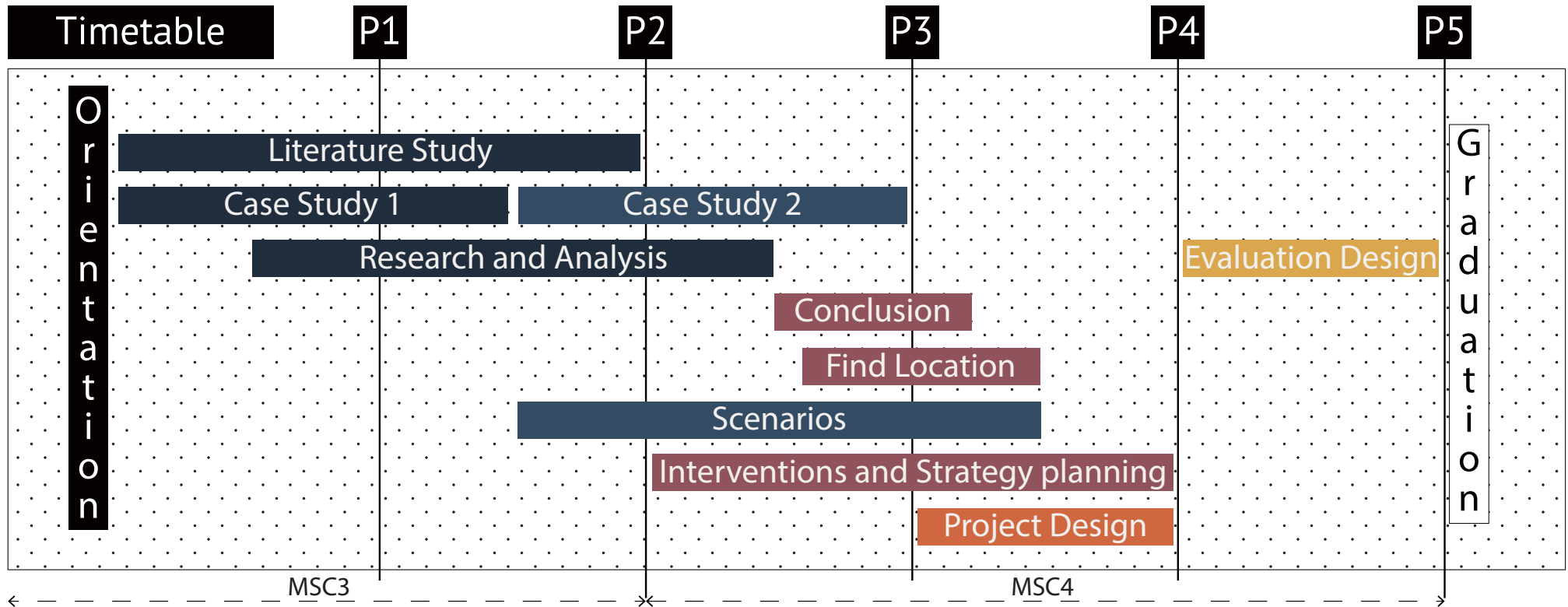
But there is an important limitation that should be noticed. The VICs are usually studied in isolation, and the strong link in-between formal urban environment is disregarded. Especially, the informal sectors and low-income migrants remain excluded from the upgraded communities, though it plays an important role in reshaping space in VICs.

To address the limitation, this research will examine the formal and informal social networks of VICs in the scale of Shenzhen with a time span of 10 years. This analysis enables a deeper understanding of the function of the low-income population, and also to understand VICs are rather complex, dynamic and urban phenomenon. Moreover, the public participation is the part and parcel in this complex system.

# METHODOLOGY

"On-site" Evolutionary villages





### 9.1 Literature

- CHUNG, H. 2009. The Planning of 'Villages-in-the-City' in Shenzhen, China: The Significance of the New State-Led Approach. *International Planning Studies*, 14, 253-273.
- FRAGKIAS, M. & SETO, K. C. 2009. Evolving rank-size distributions of intra-metropolitan urban clusters in South China. *Computers, Environment and Urban Systems*, 33, 189-199.
- FRIEDMANN, J. 2004. Strategic spatial planning and the longer range. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 5, 49-67.
- FRIEDMANN, J. 2005. *China's urban transition*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- FRIEDMANN, J. 2007. Reflections on place and place-making in the cities of China. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 31, 257-279.
- HAO, P. 2012. 'Spatial evolution of urban villages in Shenzhen'. PhD thesis, Utrecht University, NL, <[http://www.itc.nl/library/papers\\_2012/phd/puhao.pdf](http://www.itc.nl/library/papers_2012/phd/puhao.pdf)>.
- HAO, P., SLIUZAS, R. & GEERTMAN, S. 2011. The development and redevelopment of urban villages in Shenzhen. *Habitat International*, 35, 214-224.
- LIHUA WEI, X. Y. 2005. Transformation of 'Urban Village' and Feasible Mode. *Urban Planning*, 29, 9-13 (In Chinese).
- LIN, Y. & DE MEULDER, B. 2011. The role of key stakeholders in the bottom-up planning processes of Guangzhou, China. *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability*, 4, 175-190.
- LIN, Y. & DE MEULDER, B. 2012. A conceptual framework for the strategic urban project approach for the sustainable redevelopment of "villages in the city" in Guangzhou. *Habitat International*, 36, 380-387.

- LIN, Y., DE MEULDER, B. & WANG, S. 2011a. From village to metropolis: A case of morphological transformation in Guangzhou, China. *Urban Morphology*, 15, 5-20.
- LIN, Y., DE MEULDER, B. & WANG, S. 2011b. Understanding the 'village in the city' in Guangzhou: Economic integration and development issue and their implications for the urban migrant. *Urban Studies*, 48, 3583-3598.
- LIN, Y., DE MEULDER, B. & WANG, S. 2012. The interplay of state, market and society in the socio-spatial transformation of "villages in the city" in Guangzhou. *Environment and Urbanization*, 24, 325-343.
- MA, H. 2006. ' "Villages" in Shenzhen Persistence and Transformation of an Old Social System in an Emerging Mega City'. PhD thesis, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, DE, < e-pub.uni-weimar.de/opus4/files/771/MaHang.pdf >.
- WANG, Y. P. 2000. Housing Reform and its Impacts on the Urban Poor in China. *Housing Studies*, 15, 845-864.
- WANG, Y. P. & MURIE, A. 1999. Housing Policy and Practice in China.
- WERLIN, H. 1999. The slum upgrading myth. *Urban Studies*, 36, 1523-1534.
- YU, X. J. & NG, C. N. 2007. Spatial and temporal dynamics of urban sprawl along two urban-rural transects: A case study of Guangzhou, China. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 79, 96-109.
- ZACHARIAS, J. & BLIEK, D. 2008. The Role of Urban Planning in the Spontaneous Redevelopment of Huaqianbei, Shenzhen. *Journal of Urban Design*, 13, 345-360.
- ZACHARIAS, J. & TANG, Y. 2010. Restructuring and repositioning Shenzhen, China's new mega city. *Progress in Planning*, 73, 209-249.

