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Chapter 3

Toward Inclusive, Vital and Livable City Scenarios: The Transformation of Urban Villages in Shenzhen

Lei Qu

Abstract

Currently Shenzhen is experiencing industrial upgrading and city reprofiling, transforming from a world factory to a world city. It is a crucial moment to rethink the future of urban villages in the city, informal settlements that emerged extensively along with rapid industrialization and urban development in the past three decades, and played essential roles as "arrival cities" for migrants. This chapter investigates the formation process of urban villages as well as planning strategies for future development, from the perspective of urban form and governance. Urban vitality, livability, and inclusiveness are addressed as multidimensional urban values that could generate common interests among stakeholders, which therefore could be considered desirable and possible future scenarios for such neighborhoods in Shenzhen.

Keywords

Migration, urban regeneration, livability, urban vitality, inclusive development

Introduction

The development of Shenzhen started in the late 1970s. It was the first special economic zone in China, a "lab" of economic reform and the opening-up of the country to foreign investment. A rapid process of industrialization started ever since, and it became a "world factory" attracting foreign investments for export-oriented labor-intensive manufactory industries, which led to a huge influx of migrants. After more than three decades of development, the city grew from a town of 300,000 people to a big metropolis with a population of more than 10 million. Nowadays Shenzhen is very often mentioned as a city of migrants, with a floating population of 7.46 million, according to statistics from 2014. Although this number is not as high as Beijing (8.03 million floating population in 2013) and Shanghai (9.96 million floating population in 2014), the proportion of migrants in Shenzhen (69.2% of the total population in 2014) is much higher than in Beijing (38% of the total population in 2013) and in Shanghai

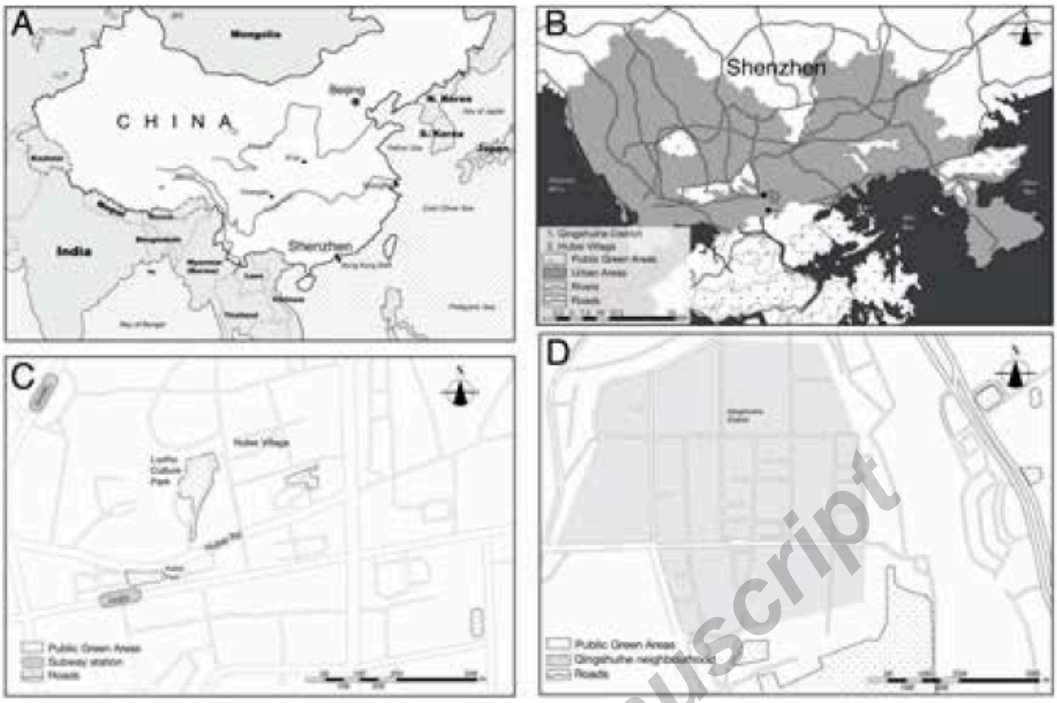
(41% of the total population in 2014).[1] These numbers imply challenges for the future urban development of Shenzhen in the context of migration, namely, accommodating newcomers and integrating them in the city socially and spatially.

In the past three decades, urban villages have contributed greatly in meeting such challenges. This is a special type of informal settlement, which emerged during the rapid industrialization and urbanization processes in Shenzhen, also seen in other cities in the Pearl River Delta (such as Guangzhou). Built by former villagers whose farmland was transformed into urban use, these urban villages are accommodating large numbers of migrants (the so-called "floating population") who need affordable rental housing. Unlike informal settlements in other Asian countries, urban villages in Shenzhen are not "slums," but collectively planned and managed human settlements. Although most of the people living in urban villages are low-income migrant workers, there are also increasing numbers of young professionals living in these neighborhoods, especially in central urban districts. One could say that urban villages have been playing essential roles as "arrival cities" for young starters, providing affordable solutions for accommodation, daily commuting and consumption. The ways urban villages were formed and transformed have had a great impact on the sociospatial transformation of Shenzhen, such as changes in land use, urban form, property ownership, and social relations.

Currently Shenzhen is in a transition period, reprofiling itself from a "world factory" to a "world city." The city is undergoing an industrial upgrading process. Knowledge-based service industries are increasing while the labor-intensive manufacturing industries are gradually moving out. This is more visible in central urban districts (the former special economic zone along the border of Hong Kong) than in peripheral areas. As shown in Figure 3.2, industrial areas are mostly found in peripheral districts according to the Shenzhen Comprehensive Plan for 2007-2020, which coincide with locations of urban villages (Shenzhen Planning Bureau 2007). This indicates the sociospatial distribution of migrant workers in Shenzhen, and their living-working environment. Along with the industrial upgrading process, changes in the social structure of Shenzhen are foreseeable, with more highly educated migrants working for the new knowledge-based economy. New demands related to livability and urbanity will be generated.

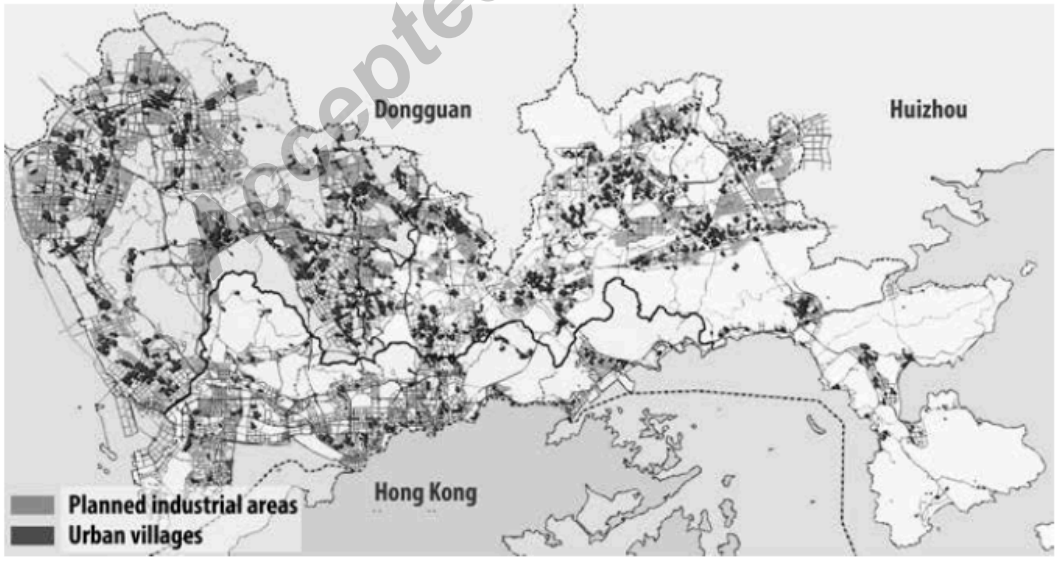
[1] http://www.sz.gov.cn/tjj/tjj/xxgk/tjsj/tjnj/; http://www.bjstats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/; http://www.stats-sh.gov.cn/html/sjfb/tjnj/. Data taken from websites on Accessed on 24 March 2019.

Figure 3.1 Maps of (A) China, (B) Shenzhen, (C) Hubei Village, and (D) Qingshuihe District



Maps drawn by Ariel Shepherd

Figure 3.2 Locations of urban villages and planned industrial areas in Shenzhen



Source: Shenzhen Comprehensive Planning on Industrial Distribution 2007-2020, Shenzhen Planning Bureau, redrawn by the author

After more than three decades of rapid development, there is very limited land for further urban expansion. Spatial development in Shenzhen is focusing more and more on existing built-up areas. Urban regeneration is therefore playing a crucial role in

reshaping the spatial structure at the city-regional level and urban form at the neighborhood level. In this sense, the future of the city lies within its existing urban fabric. Urban villages, as one type of the "old urban fabric" in Shenzhen, have been at the center of discussion and practice in recent years, especially those located in central urban areas. Driven by market forces, Tabula Rasa approaches were adopted in the renewal of urban villages in central locations. For example, the site of KK 100 (also called Kingkey Finance Tower, the highest building in the city before 2015) used to be part of the urban village Caiwuwei. This model of financing large-scale urban renewal with densification and gentrification on site was favored by developers and villagers, not only in Shenzhen, but also in other cities in the region, such as the case of Liede village in Guangzhou. What's more, local authorities are also experimenting with neoliberal approaches that embrace market forces in such pilot projects (Li et al. 2014), to explore feasible models for urban regeneration. As a consequence, issues related to the decrease of affordable housing for migrants in central urban areas emerged, which have generated enormous debate in society. This is also the starting point of this chapter, to explore alternative ways of development that may lead to a more inclusive future scenario. Besides, considering urban regeneration and migration as long-term processes related to the future development of Shenzhen, livability and urban vitality are also values to be enhanced for all social groups. Lefebvre stated in *The Production of Space* (1991, 59) that "new social relations demand a new space, and vice-versa." This chapter will not only give special concern to the migrant workers who are vulnerable, but also pay attention to social relations that involve various groups and stakeholders. Therefore "inclusive, vital and livable city scenarios" indicating multidimensional values are emphasized in this chapter as the framework for a discussion about urban regeneration in Shenzhen.

Theoretical framework and methodology

These abovementioned three values have different sets of indicators for assessment, although some of these indicators overlap. "Inclusive city" is emphasized by the World Bank, in response to the rising inequality and exclusion within cities, propelled by the global economy and rapid urbanization. It is about social justice reflected in sharing of the benefits of urbanization by people (World Bank n.d.). Different to such a city scale discourse, the "livable city" emphasizes livability at the neighborhood scale, which "reflects the wellbeing of a community and represents the many characteristics that make a location a place where people want to live now and in the future" (Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission 2008, xxi). The appreciation by an individual of the environment depends upon the needs of individuals, resulting from daily physical interactions with the urban environment and from social interaction (Gifford 1997). Perceived livability is partially explained by a social structure (Van Dorst 2010). It therefore differs when the social structure changes. As for "vital city," it refers to the socioeconomic and cultural liveliness of cities. Key indicators of urban vitality are the copresence of people as well as the social, cultural, and economic activities in public spaces (Zhou 2012).

What are effective planning and design strategies that could reshape the urban form and social relations in Shenzhen, toward these desirable scenarios? In order to answer this question, a better understanding of the current status is needed: how is the city functioning in regard to inclusiveness, livability, and urban vitality? This leads to the

focus of this chapter – urban villages. They are currently functioning as "arrival cities" for migrants and are considered as vital places to be, although spatial conditions in urban villages regarding housing typology, infrastructure, and public space still need to be improved. Currently, there is a policy concern of incorporating informal settlements like urban villages into the affordable housing system. However, strategies are needed to implement such ideas. At this moment, there are still no feasible approaches to improve public spaces and housing conditions in urban villages, due to the complex land and property ownership situation.

This chapter is based on qualitative research, with empirical studies on the morphology of urban villages, the changing social demands on living and working conditions, and interests of stakeholders involved in urban regeneration. Methods that were used to conduct the research include a morphological study of urban villages in combination with an analysis of governance models and a stakeholder analysis based on semi-structured interviews with migrant workers, district government, and village collectives. Last but not least, the research is embedded in the contextual framework of industrial upgrading, migration, and urban development. Special attention is paid to new planning and design strategies that are more effective than the traditional ones, with regard to regeneration of existing neighborhoods, facilitating the formation of positive social relations.

The research questions that guided this chapter include the following: How were urban villages formed and managed in the urbanization process in Shenzhen? What are the roles of urban villages in the transitional period? And to what extent do the public, private and third sectors share development interests in improving the public domain in urban villages?

Morphological study on urban villages in Shenzhen

The formation process

The formation of urban villages is the spatial consequence of land requisition during the fast urbanization process. China has a dual land tenure system, with urban land owned by the state and rural land owned by rural collectives. Rural land includes farmland, homesteads, and land for construction. Land requisition for farmland is usually much easier compared to homesteads and land for construction when it comes to compensation and social consequences. Therefore, in many cases, rapid urban expansion was made possible by requisitioning farmland (Liu et al. 2010), with the spatial consequence of village enclaves inside the newly built urban areas (see Figure 3.3). In this case, farmland is converted into urban land, owned by the state, while the urban villages retain their rural collective ownership (Zhang et al. 2003).

Figure 3.3 The formation process of urban villages in Shenzhen and the image of Hubei village

Source: Drawings from Zhang, F., 2013: P.24, P.25
Photograph taken by the author

However, Shenzhen has followed a slightly different path, because of two periods of land reform in 1992 (for areas within the former special economic zone) and 2004 (for areas outside the former special economic zone), when the collective land of villages was transformed into state-owned land. Village collectives became joint stock companies, managing public domains and collectively owned properties of their villages. Instead of having land ownership, these villages only have land use rights (Yan and Liu 2013). Furthermore, along with land reform, the rural population in these villages became an urban population. Since then, the urbanization rate of Shenzhen reached 100%, which means that all farmers in Shenzhen had obtained citizenship.

But these were just changes in the paperwork. Urban villages are still "gray zones" where planning policies and regulations are not functioning effectively. In reality, the joint stock companies manage urban villages in a similar way as village collectives. As for individual villagers, without further policy support, their skills and social networks also remain unchanged. Instead of planting crops, the villagers are now relying on rental revenues from their self-built houses for most of their family income. This has contributed to the spatial form of urban villages in Shenzhen, with highly densified buildings constructed on plots of homestead (see Figure 3.3). The density is reflected in the average number of floors of buildings in urban villages, which is higher in central urban areas than in peripheral districts. The traditional form of rural villages has been largely transformed. Only in some villages are the old village houses still partly maintained, for example, in Hubei village in the central district of Luohu (see Figure 3.3). In principle, further construction in urban villages is not permitted anymore, after the two periods of land reform. However, the informal development process never stopped. On the contrary, there have been waves of construction in urban villages since 1990s, representing informal development in Shenzhen.

Spatial form and social relations

Although daily lives inside urban villages are not related to agriculture anymore, the villagelike living environment and sociocultural traditions still endure to a large extent. Therefore, the spatial form and functions in urban villages contrast greatly with the surrounding urban areas (Yan et al. 2004).

The spatial structure of so called "new" urban villages (other than the inherited traditional villages) is mainly based on the 10 m x 10 m homestead plot that each family received during land requisition. Stimulated by rental income, most of the families tried to make the most out of their homestead land, by maximizing the floor area ratio on the plot, which has resulted in densely built apartment forests, without much room left for infrastructure and public spaces. Except for main roads, small alleys between buildings are usually very narrow, therefore these buildings are called "handshake buildings." Although such urban forms do not meet official planning regulations and building standards, they are still functioning as a preferred – and in most cases the only – affordable choice for the low-income migrants (Du and Li 2010). These self-built apartment buildings are mostly for rent, with only a small portion occupied by the villagers themselves. Compared with the large number of migrants, the proportion of indigenous villagers is very low (Yan et al. 2004).

Besides housing, there are also other urban functions inside urban villages. The ground floors of the buildings along main streets and some of the inner alleys are used for groceries, snack bars, and daily services like hairdressing, massage, and dental clinics, etc. (see Figure 3.4). Although, as mentioned above, physical conditions inside urban villages are problematic, they are still functioning as mixed-use neighborhoods where the daily lives of migrants can be accommodated. Many urban villages are even seen as vibrant places to be by citizens in Shenzhen (see Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4a, b, and c Urban vitality perceived in streets/alleys in Hubei Village

Photographs by the author

One can notice that changes in social relations, or in other words, from rural to urban communities, happen much slower than the spatial transformation of urban villages. While physical changes in urban villages brought about by urbanization have been dramatic, the inherited social networks and cultural foundations have not been changing at the same pace. The tradition of clans/families based on kinship determines the historical identity, management model, and social-interaction pattern among people in urban villages, which are quite different compared to anonymous neighborhoods in cities, such as gated communities. Nevertheless, the rural identity of urban villages is fading away, partly due to the changing missions of village collectives and joint stock companies – from facilitating agricultural production to managing collectively owned properties. In short, urban villages provide interim spaces where modern urban identity and traditional rural identity coexist (Liu et al. 2010).

Currently, joint stock companies play a major role in managing public domains in urban villages, which allow for inherited village-style self-organization and informality. For example, the open market in Hubei village (see Figure 3.4a) is a well-known informal market for seafood, using public spaces inside the old village. The joint stock company of Hubei village is managing the market, thereby facilitating an informal economy. The market has been very successful until now, attracting huge numbers of visitors from outside. In this case, informality contributes to the local economy, as well as to street vitality. However, not all urban villages have succeeded in the same way in self-management. Some of the urban villages are not able to provide public facilities and maintain public spaces without the support of the public sector. The physical conditions inside many urban villages seem problematic, with poorly constructed infrastructure, which leads to an unhealthy and unsafe living environment (Liu et al. 2010; Hao 2012).

"Arrival cities" and housing affordability

Saunders (2010) refers to informal settlements built by rural-urban migrants as "arrival cities," or in other words functioning integration machines, where the postagriculture population can integrate into city life. In the current context of Shenzhen, urban villages are accommodating large numbers of migrants moving from rural to urban areas in search of better lives (Guo and Zhang 2006), as well as young professionals who are just starting their careers in the city. On the one hand, these urban villages can be considered as semi-urbanized neighborhoods for rural migrants that will be gradually integrated into urban society (Liu et al. 2010); on the other, some of these neighborhoods have also become temporary housing solutions for highly educated young professionals. In both cases, urban villages are functioning as affordable housing neighborhoods for a floating population and contributing to the creation of prosperous middle classes, which is the social value of successful arrival cities, as Saunders (2010) pointed out.

Ever since the nationwide housing privatization in the late 1990s, there has been a large disparity in housing conditions between urban and migrant households, and a new type of housing poverty has emerged among migrant households (Sato 2006). In response to the shortage of affordable housing, various types of welfare-oriented housing schemes were implemented by the national government in the past decade. This has led to an unprecedented magnitude of construction of affordable housing in peripheral areas of Chinese cities, where land is available. The issue of sociospatial

segregation thus started to emerge, even though these projects were mainly targeting registered local residents and did not include the floating population. The housing affordability issue of migrants has not yet been tackled by the official housing system. Therefore, informal settlements like urban villages in Shenzhen could emerge and develop rapidly in the past decades.

Recently, nationwide discussions have begun to address migrants and their rights to cities, in which housing affordability is one of the major concerns. It was already announced in the Twelfth Five-Year Plan of China (2011-2015) that the state would build an affordable housing system and provide public rental housing for middle-to-low income urban residents, including the floating population, with stable jobs in cities. The expected outcome was to increase the proportion of affordable housing by up to 20% of the total housing stock. Besides the quantitative goals, there are also other tasks, such as to optimize the spatial distribution of housing resources, improve public facilities, regenerate existing neighborhoods, enhance community development, and eventually improve livability. It has been pointed out that it would be essential to prevent the construction of large-scale affordable housing neighborhoods at the outskirts of cities just for the sake of fast development, especially in big cities. However, in practice, housing developments in peri-urban areas appeared in exactly this way in many cities, driven by land revenues. Not much attention was given to improving old neighborhoods like urban villages, as a source of affordable housing.

Recent urban regeneration practices in Shenzhen have shown a tendency for large-scale redevelopment, replacing urban villages with high-end apartments, offices or commercial buildings. As mentioned earlier, the construction of the high-rise building KK 100 caused the demolition of part of Caiwuwei village in Luohu district. Motivated by the extremely high compensation, the joint stock company of Caiwuwei village is currently seeking new development opportunities for the rest of the village. Migrants who lived there however did not benefit from such spatial transformation. On the contrary, they had to find new places to stay. Due to the visible upgrading of the city's image and urban functions, such an approach has been considered a preferred model for urban regeneration in Shenzhen from the perspective of the planning sector, especially for central urban districts. The planning concern in this model is mainly about making space for infrastructure and public facilities that are urgently needed. This is usually not possible in small-scale renovation projects. Nevertheless, the planning sector is aware of the fact that such a model will lead to the process of gentrification, with the consequence that tens of thousands of low-income migrants might lose affordable places to stay in the same neighborhood. Therefore, new policies are emerging that would maintain selected urban villages as affordable housing neighborhoods for migrants. Effective approaches to mediate the differentiated interests among stakeholders and eventually formulate a collaborative planning approach are still lacking.

The changing planning strategies and social demands

To explore new planning and development approaches that are more inclusive, it is essential to understand the driving forces behind the abovementioned large-scale urban redevelopment projects: Who are the stakeholders involved, and what are their interests?

Planning concerns and development strategies

Since Shenzhen is currently reprofiling itself from the "world factory" to a "world city," large urban projects are being used strategically as engines for industrial upgrading and spatial restructuring. For example, the redevelopment of the Sungang-qingshuihe area in Luohu district is one of the ongoing large projects in Shenzhen. The area used to be the first logistics park of Shenzhen, however, its current functions and spatial conditions do not match the future vision from the perspective of the municipal government, i.e., to enhance global city functions. The idea behind this urban redevelopment project is therefore to upgrade the derelict logistics park into a new center for global fashion and consumption and as a new headquarters location for creative industries. In 2011, the Sungang-qingshuihe area was designated as one of the five top urban development units in Shenzhen, which were expected to be implemented in three to five years, and to contribute to the upgrading of urban functions and the city's image. The total area of the site is 5.2 km^2, with a population of 155,200, in which the potential area for redevelopment is 200 ha. The planning aims in this project include: to stimulate sustainable economic development; to achieve more compact land uses by implementing the transit-oriented development (TOD) model; to provide public facilities and affordable housing; and to upgrade the environmental quality by encouraging low carbon redevelopment (UPLRC 2012). These concepts reflect clearly the interests of the public sector, and its preoccupation with potential areas for redevelopment. Urban villages are not among the potential areas for redevelopment, and therefore they were not addressed specifically. It was just indicated that urban villages would be integrated in the overall spatial composition.

The changing social demands

The economic shift from labor-intensive industries to knowledge-based industries will inevitably cause changes in the social structure in Shenzhen. As new social groups associated with the knowledge economy emerge, new demands will be generated, calling for new urban forms. Here these demands are mainly referring to those related to urbanity and livability, which are still lacking in areas that have experienced decades of industrialization and spontaneous development. The urban fabric in these areas shows common characteristics of fragmented spatial composition, with the coexistence of various forms of compounds – urban villages, factories, warehouses, and industrial parks, etc. Spatial fragmentation, namely, a disconnect within the social fabric caused by physical barriers or unattractive spatial conditions – has resulted in "leftover" spaces that are not contributing to social interaction. Such issues exist within the central urban districts, but are less visible compared to peripheral districts. This is mainly because urban transformation driven by industrial upgrading started much earlier in central urban districts. This part of the city already has global city functions and could accommodate the lifestyles of the creative class. However, this process is just starting in the peripheral districts, where manufacturing industries are still concentrated (see Figure 3.2).

Besides the emerging creative class, demands from rural-urban migrants are also changing. The first generation of migrant workers, who came to work in manufacturing industries in the 1980s and 1990s, were mainly seeking money to

support their families in their hometowns. However, the current generation of young migrant workers has very different expectations. According to a survey done by the author and students of TU Delft in Dalang district in 2014, the young migrant workers show strong expectations of career development. Around 100 questionnaires were sent out, and 96 were collected, of which 92 are valid. In response to the question about their plans for the future, 34 people (37% of the total) expressed a willingness to stay in Shenzhen, while among the rest, 12 people (13% of the total) mentioned that they could not stay in Shenzhen because of the high living cost. With regard to desirable jobs in the future, 38 people (41.3% of the total) indicated jobs that fit their own interests and provide more freedom than their current ones (most of them are working on production lines); 9 people (9.8% of the total) mentioned the aim of becoming managers; and 31 people (33.7% of the total) expressed a wish to start their own businesses or become freelancers. Seventy-seven people (83.7% of the total) said that they would like to learn new skills to develop their career and to achieve a better life. The results of the survey reaffirmed the importance of "arrival cities" in the era of industrial upgrading, by facilitating the personal development of young migrant workers and ensuring affordable spaces for living and starting businesses.

Collaborative planning and adaptive design

Differentiated interests among stakeholders

In short, the challenges of reshaping the urban fabric in Shenzhen that began during the industrialization period in the past decades are multifold: (1) maintaining the role of urban villages as arrival cities for young starters, and adapting housing typologies to meet diversified demands for living across social groups, from rural-urban migrants to young professionals; (2) dealing with spatial fragmentation at the neighborhood scale, so that new urban forms could facilitate interaction between various social groups and eventually lead to positive social relations. Both challenges relate to a fundamental question of planning: What are the incentives for stakeholders involved, especially the private sector, in providing affordable housing and public spaces, which seem to be the role of the public sector? A good understanding of the interests of stakeholders is needed to answer this question. Generally speaking, stakeholders involved in urban regeneration processes in Shenzhen could be categorized into actors from the public sector, the private sector, and the third sector. Here the third sector is used to describe the emerging civil society, including a range of organizations from social enterprises and charitable foundations to nonprofit organizations, NGOs and volunteer groups, which are increasingly involved in social construction and community development in Shenzhen. The nature of these three sectors determines the differentiated concerns of stakeholders with regard to spatial transformation of the city and its neighborhoods.

First of all, the local (district) government is the key actor of the public sector, whose interests regarding urban redevelopment include both economic growth and social construction. From the perspective of the government, creating public spaces and providing affordable housing and public facilities within neighborhoods are among their major concerns. However, these concerns are hard to implement in areas involving complex land ownership. As mentioned earlier, governments of the central urban districts have priorities in upgrading urban functions and the city image. Urban

regeneration in these areas tends to follow the large-scale tabula rasa approach, so that structural changes could be made, and public facilities could be largely placed into local neighborhoods. While in peripheral districts like Dalang, where development pressure is not as high as in central urban districts, and more than 90% of the local population are young migrant workers, the district governments are paying more attention to improving the social environment. In Dalang district, there are ongoing small-scale projects of improving public spaces and public facilities in urban villages, based on collaboration between the local government and villages (see Figure 3.5). Recently, supported by NGOs and social enterprises, community building as a campaign was initiated by the local government to improve social cohesion and enhance self-management in urban villages, starting from self-managing public spaces within neighborhoods. Responsibilities of individuals and groups were defined, with the aim of stimulating participation by people in community development. Combining spatial intervention, urban governance and community development may lead to new ways of planning and urban redevelopment.

Figure 3.5 Collaboration of local government and urban villages in improving public spaces and public facilities in Dalang district

Photographs by the author

The individual villagers and joint stock companies are the main actors of the private sector in urban regeneration processes in Shenzhen when urban villages are involved. Their interests in urban redevelopment are closely related to property ownership, such as rental income increases generated from the renovation of public spaces, or compensation for relocation due to urban renewal. In the central urban districts of Shenzhen, where large-scale urban renewal projects are going on, villagers are expecting extremely high compensation for relocation, which becomes their only interest. In peripheral districts like Dalang, however, where tabula rasa redevelopment

is less likely to happen, urban renovation becomes an option to villagers. If, according to interviews with villagers, joint stock companies or the district government invested in infrastructure improvements or create public spaces property owners would have more of an incentive to renovate their own houses to further enhance the benefit of rental increases. This process would then become a public-private partnership. Besides villagers and joint stock companies, there are also other stakeholders from the private sector, such as local enterprises and private developers. As in the case of villagers, these stakeholders might not have direct interests in the public domain, but would appreciate it if the public domains would be improved. This has to do with the added value that might be generated, such as the attractiveness of the place and higher land values. In areas involving complex land and property ownership, creating public-private partnerships to improve the public domain is strategic. The success of such partnership depends on the balance of economic incentives and social responsibilities on both sides.

As mentioned above, the third sector is playing an increasingly important role in the social construction in Shenzhen, thanks to the support of local district governments. However, the third sector in general is still in the early stages of growth, not yet involved much in urban development processes. Nevertheless, social construction projects like community building could be combined with urban regeneration projects, and in this way, volunteer groups, NGOs, and social enterprises could contribute to the formation of positive social relations at the neighborhood level, where new urban forms are being shaped. Last but not least, migrant workers are the majority of local residents in areas with industries and urban villages, where this group should also be considered as stakeholders in the urban regeneration processes. Generally speaking, this is a vulnerable group (UN 1992), suffering from deteriorating living conditions and lacking tenure security. Their interests and demands may vary as individuals, but their voices could be heard as a group, with the help of the third sector. This could be considered as a form of participatory planning and design.

Creating common interests through collaborative planning and adaptive design

There are differentiated interests among stakeholders regarding urban regeneration, while there are also possibilities of creating common interests by working together on providing public goods. Collaboration and participation of stakeholders in improving the public domain depends very much on strategic spatial interventions and governance models that could bring multiple values to the local level, and ensure balanced costs and benefits among the stakeholders involved. In this sense, the planning and design of the urban fabric could be seen as an effective tool for communication and negotiation, and the process of planning and design as a process of participation.

Achieving multiple values of inclusiveness, livability, and vitality at the neighborhood level could be seen as an aim and strategy at the same time. In line with Jane Jacobs' understanding of the "organized complexity" of cities (Jacobs 1961), spatial conditions contributing to these values – especially urban vitality – are mainly referring to walkability, mixed uses, place identity, and room for self-organization at the neighborhood scale. In the context of Shenzhen, urban villages as informal settlements actually possess such spatial conditions. That is the reason many urban villages are seen as vital places in spite of their deteriorating physical conditions.

Besides, such informality is also a solution to the crisis of affordability during the rapid urbanization process. In a time of economic transition, it is crucial to maintain such characteristics of informality and self-organization in urban villages, as arrival cities of migrants and for social justice reasons.

Nevertheless, the "inward looking" self-organization also turns urban villages into overcrowded compounds, with limited public spaces inside and spatial fragmentation along borders, in the form of fences, walls, or polluted river banks. Such spatial conditions of the public domain have obstructed common interests in further investment. Focusing on the basic needs of people, such as safety, could be a first step for improvement (Maslow 1970), including improving the level of spatial integration toward a better pedestrian-friendly environment and enabling the self-organization of mixed functions for place making, etc. This would be a process of cocreation, involving a wider range of actors than in the normal planning and development models. The incentives of stakeholders for participation and collaboration are mainly related to the aggregate effects of collective efforts in place making and multidimensional values associated with mixed-use characteristics of the place (see Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6 Spatial conditions in urban villages facilitating livability and urban vitality

Photographs by the author

Conclusions

Thirty-five years of development as a special economic zone have brought rapid industrialization and urbanization to Shenzhen, which could be seen as a miracle of urban planning and informal development. Urban villages in Shenzhen contributed

largely to such a rapid development process, as “arrival cities” accommodating the majority of migrant workers and young professionals. Currently Shenzhen is in a transition period, experiencing industrial upgrading and spatial transformation, reprofiling itself from the “world factory” to a “world city.” As new industries, urban functions and social groups emerge, the old urban fabric will be transformed. It is therefore the crucial moment to rethink the future of urban villages, in the light of future developments in the city.

After three decades of extensive urban expansion, the future development of Shenzhen will happen mainly within the existing urban fabric, since all land for construction is almost fully explored. This means that urban development and redevelopment have become one process. A much more sustainable way of transforming the existing built-up areas, compared to the tabula rasa approach that was used and is still in use, is to adapt and reshape the existing urban form for new social relations, using participation and collaboration among stakeholders. This includes the public and private sectors that have power, the emerging third sector that is essential for social construction, as well as the large number of migrant workers whose demands need to be heard. In this way, urban planning and design could be seen as tools for communication and negotiation, whereas the planning and design process would become a process of participation and collaboration.

Following such concepts, potential areas for spatial intervention are mostly associated with multiple urban values that may generate common interests among stakeholders, namely urban vitality, livability, and inclusiveness. Very often these areas for intervention belong to a durable spatial structure of the local neighborhood, contributing to walkability and place making. This, however, does not imply a blueprint plan of imposing a new spatial structure on the existing urban fabric, but instead acknowledges the need for organized complexity and room for self-organization. Strategic thinking on reusing negative spaces, ranging from tiny leftover “pocket” spaces in urban villages to borders of fragmented urban tissues and polluted riverbanks, could be effective in improving spatial integration in the neighborhood scale. Such an incremental development model will not lead to massive replacement of urban functions and populations, and could retain areas within urban villages as affordable places for living and working. Incentives for various stakeholders to participate and collaborate in this model lie in the multidimensional values created along with such urban regeneration processes – in other words, a win-win situation. To achieve this, design toolkits combining possibilities of spatial interventions and governance models are needed to optimize the use of space, balance costs and benefits, and clarify responsibilities among stakeholders for implementation and maintenance.

Last but not least, although this research focuses on the specific case of Shenzhen, the issues at hand, and the proposed new ways of coping with these challenges, are not limited to the Chinese context. The case represents cities with inequalities in the rapid urban development process driven by economic transition. The formation and transformation of urban villages in Shenzhen might be inspiring for cities with informal settlements to rethink their own ways of development, which could lead to inclusive, vital and livable future scenarios.

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