Paths of urbanisation in Shenzhen New Town: Exploring emerging forms of polity, community and economy, towards integral and sustainable development.

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Abstract: The present urban predicament is characterised by two contradictory factors. On the one hand the present city is neoliberal and is marked by an emphasis on extraction of resources, energy demand and exploitation of labour through global, fossil-fuel-consuming 'flows'. On the other hand we face crises of planetary limits in terms of resources, energy availability etc. and in terms of uneven development. At present this results in social injustice, social and environmental unsustainability and unpredictable effects of carbon-related climate change. Our urban future in specific terms is uncertain. What is certain is that in the relatively short term the pressure for change will become overwhelming. The problem will concern not just the reforms of global economies, societies and cities, but a paradigm change in the ways urban societies and economies are organised into equitable and sustainable, global-local relations.

Our economies and societies today are urban and change can be conceived through changes in and to the city. We are concerned with the *transition* from the neoliberal city to another form, at present unknown. We aim to uncover actual and latent political, social and economic structures built into a model neoliberal city set up as a 'special economic zone' and use it to explore paths through the present towards a more sustainable urban future.

We work within a historical perspective which understands the world economy and the urban world progressing through a series of wholesale changes as responses to systemic crises of capitalism. We work also within a 'complexity' perspective, which suggests urban reality is always a coordination of political, social and economic forms locked together by constraints of path-dependency. Neil Smith proposes that the making and remaking of urban built environments has become central to the global economy, marking a "shift from an urban scale defined according to the conditions of social reproduction to one in which the investment of productive capital holds definitive precedence" (Smith 2002: 427). But urbanisation – the production of urban space and reality – also necessarily integrates urban development processes at the level of the global economy with development processes at levels of social production and reproduction. Working cities coordinate these different but interdependent forms and processes in use.

Urbanisation and the production of urban space are therefore not one process but several. Each involves city-building, whether this be 'formal' and planned or not, at global, regional, urban and intra-urban scales, and the simultaneous locked-in emergence of polities, societies, and economies at these scales. We propose first to critically supplement or extend the neoliberal urban model by looking again at urban production and social production and reproduction, through the lens of 'the construction of the city' at different scales. We review descriptions of urban development in the SEZ of Shenzhen in the Pearl River Delta to find both the concrete scopes of particular urban production processes and the interdependencies – especially regarding polities and community organisation – with other adjacent urban production processes. We hope and expect that the 'structure' so obtained will serve to better explain current practice and critique ideology, and coordinate further research on emerging social, political and economic forms towards the ultimate aim of sustainable development in the Pearl River Delta.

Keywords: *Urban futures, Urbanisation, Sustainable development, Urban space, Shenzhen.*

1. Introduction

Today neoliberalisation effectively defines globalisation and vice versa. It is also intrinsic to and embedded in today's global cities (Smith 2002). Previous globalisations, under Genoese or Dutch mercantilism, or British colonialism (Arrighi 1994; Taylor 1999), also produced very particularly defined modes of capitalism and particular global cities. Already in the 17th century a Dutch global system joined up with a proto-industrial system in China to trade porcelain, silk and other luxury consumer goods and to siphon raw materials out of the East Indies. Amsterdam was the entrepot and control centre for these activities as well as the the place where profit was accumulated and an urban middle and consumer class was established, perhaps for the first time. Later, London controlled global flows of raw and worked materials and accumulated the profits of a triangular trans-Atlantic trade in weapons, raw cotton, worked cloth and human slaves. Cities have long been at the centre

of global strategies of accumulation, industrial production and consumption. Present day globalisation and global cities are implicated in a neoliberal 'restructuring' of colonial flows and power relations into a new order characterised by massive increases in flows of materials, components, finished goods, money and people and are another modernisation and intensification of the capitalist and urban processes rather than exceptions to them.

Cities have also long been sites of the production of 'uneven development' and inequalities at global, regional and urban scales. Henri Lefebvre (2003) has emphasised how the production of urban space has been a driver of global capitalism but also of intensive centralising processes and inequalities founded in the simultaneous production of cities and world networks. Today, under an economistic neoliberal hegemony, the contradictions multiply while calls for social and environmental justice have minimal impact, with the media and even academia in the hold of an all too obviously specious consensus that the answers to poverty and environmental degradation lie in the extension of neoliberal logics and private property arrangements everywhere (Smith 2008).

A less blinkered, more critical, ecological economics (Martinez Alier 1987; Hornborg 2001) points out the underlying zero-sum logic of capitalism and the fundamentally different definitions of value in ecology as opposed to Ricardian economics. The neoliberal phase of capitalism is the latest, most focussed and sophisticated version of this mechanism. From the ecological perspective, focussed on the value of working systems for the maintenance of life and human and social productivity, capitalist development is a zero-sum game in which order (negentropy) is concentrated in the core of the economic world system while disorder (entropy) in the form of poverty and environmental degradation is distributed to the periphery. In particular questions are raised about the credibility of 'sustainable' or 'green' growth (see Jackson 2009).

Our aim in this paper is to begin to develop an argument about development and the construction of cities in the context of these contradictions. Change must start where politics and life are played out, not only in the places our neoliberal globalisation has produced but also in its processes. However present-day development is founded in a hegemony that not only promotes a myopic singular view on the world (in terms of economy, accumulation and profit), but also elides some rather obvious alternative forms of development that coexist with the hegemonic form in interesting ways. The means of this elision is often by way of naming – so that discourses of poverty, crime, encroachment and so on may be used to cover important forms and processes that deserve attention as potential pathways to the future.

These alternatives are not particularly hidden but are difficult to integrate with theoretical discourse on urban development, not least because academic discourse itself is implicated in the construction of hegemonic perspectives in several ways: through an emphasis on the city as an economic machine; through the political convictions of the academics themselves and the influence of funding on research legitimacy and directions, but also; through the tendency of over-abstract theorisation to totalise and reduce complex layered and facetted realities to over-abstract, over-coherent, totalising logics and sets of relations. We don't want to suggest any conventional 'postmodern' rejection of 'totalising' rationality because we believe the human world is infused with and ordered by rationalities. What we suggest rather is an alternative vision of a multiplicity of 'rationalities' in non-abstract forms, in the form of geo-technologies, constructed systems of territorial-governmental network-polities (nations, regions, cities, neighbourhoods etc.) which locate human affairs and in which human affairs are conducted. We understand the city not as a theoretical construct, not simply as the postmodern site of conflict either, but as a place in which differences and contradictions are endemic, often complementary and often systematically exploited as synergies in practice.

We work through notions of 'multiplicity', 'practice' and 'complexity' and try to find ways of avoiding theory understood as a singular logic that subsumes the whole in its own rationale. We will try here in a sense to systematise multiplicity and synergies between incommensurable scales and logics in a way we believe the city does this already. We join spatial thinkers who argue for a political agenda in which cities are imagined as more than successful centres for financial accumulation (Jacobs 1961, Massey 2007; Robinson 2002; Smith 2002). Like Lefebvre, Jacobs and Smith we take the city as our starting point and understand it as a human construction. We try to find answers through looking at this construction closely and following its own paths of reason, complexity and contradiction.

Our case is the SEZ of Shenzhen in the Pearl River Delta. The paper is written in the context of the New New Towns research project running for three years now, lead by the International New Town Institute and involving explorations by Urbanism MSc students at the TU Delft. It is also intended to help set the scene for a new three year research project funded by the Urban Knowledge Network Asia.

2. Some method: constructing space, scale and urbanisation

We start by introducing some methodological innovations at the level of space and scale on the one hand, and at the level of urbanisation as a historical process integrating (systematising) multiple different spatialised processes into coherent urban places on the other. Theories of 'systems' view the world and everything in it being interrelated, interdependent, and an integrated whole. We believe that this is broadly correct but will emphasise the specificity, *multiplicity*, historicity, concreteness and constructedness of systems and their interrelations or interarticulations. These systems are non-abstract and constructed, though the nature of this 'construction' needs to be elaborated when it comes to biology (Read 2012). We will be dealing however with man-made systems, which we can also call *technologies* and these elaborations do not apply here.

Firstly, a historically inflected urbanism lets us understand straightforwardly the different ways space and scale are produced as well as the variable characters of modernity and development. Historically and globally there is more than one modernity (Taylor 1999; Said 1979; Wang 1998). Different modernities are associated with historically specific societies, economies and cultures or ways of doing things; they imply new, modern ways of organising (systematising) economies and societies. They are also productive in spatial terms – they *produce* the spaces of those economies and societies. Space is historically produced, but how do we understand this production? We suggest our species has lived through sequences of 'modernities' that have defined particular times in economic, social and technological terms (Taylor 1999; Smith & Marx 1994). But what then do these modernities consist of? First, this is not a Hegelian history, we do not expect that the histories of societies and economies will follow a fixed trajectory of evolutionary 'stages' from primitive to modern. Instead we expect that modernities will be contingent and conditional on particular places and times. They will be constructed and systematised contingently and in relation to the opportunities and potentials of that time and place. There have been a number of conventional candidates for the role of 'producer': society, economy, technology for example. What we say is it is not one thing or the other but the way they fit together (and become systematic) in a timely and spatial logic (Read & Deng forthcoming).

This means we have to understand the organisation or *space* as providing the integrative logic of any society, economy and culture (including the material stuff and material organisation). Modern spaces are constructed along with the modern societies and economies and cultures that belong to them. In addition, various theories of objects (Knorr Cetina 1997; Innis 2002; Coward and Gamble 2010; Knappett 2010) understand them to be conditioned and defined as objects by the way they fit into (are contextualised in) these spaces. But in one time and place there may be more than one society and more than one economy operative. We see this in a negative sense in the divided and 'dual' cities of Castells and others. But we can see it also in historical forms – in the bourgeois and workers classes, spaces and cultures that formed the industrial society and city (Read forthcoming), and in positive forms as multicultural, ethnic divisions that distinguish and give colour to different parts of cities, or more mundanely, as reflected in the different situated identities and roles each one of us can take on in urban space.

Because the fact is we appear as different beings against the background of the city depending on what we are doing and where we are situated in it. There is an overlooked essentialism in seeing a city as a singular objective thing (as constructed on a singular cartographic surface) – or us as singularly us in relation to it, when in fact it and we are multiple objective things. This insight comes from a theory of relations and networks. Conventionally networks are understood as connections between substantive nodes. These nodes transmit and receive 'goods' and 'messages' through these connections. In a relational perspective however what nodes are is given in the networks rather than in the nodes themselves. There is a relational logic, which is also a logic of 'context', in networks. Context works by being the 'whole' against which the 'part' becomes meaningful and what it is. The difference between a lump of scrap metal and a carburettor is the carburettor's context in an internal combustion engine. As the example shows this 'contextuality' is not simply about subjective perception, it is about the reality and functionality of the thing concerned (see Mol 2002).

Again we are not talking postmodernity; we are not talking here about the multiple subjective perceptions multiple different subjects may have of a city, nor even about the objectively different perspectives and trajectories in which individual perceptions of the city are formed. What we are talking of here is engineering: thinking identity through the network 'systems' through which we perceive things in a city. Amsterdam as a node in a global airline network is evidently something different to Amsterdam as a network of tram stops. When we speak of Amsterdam as a global destination the structure of neighbourhoods (of which the system of tram stops is an systematised analogue) do not even feature; similarly when we are on the tram in Amsterdam, how Amsterdam appears to us from Hong Kong hardly seems relevant. This is clearly a question of perspective

but these perspectives owe nothing to any internalised subjectivity (Read 2013) and a lot to the network engineering of airline and tram systems respectively.

There is a reality and a materiality to the 'subjectivities' and 'perspectives' we refer to, and these have been built into the spatial technological systems through which we access not just the world but also our knowledge of the world.[1] In this sort of network thinking of real constructions we can escape the trap of an essentialist mode of thinking that can only understand multiplicity in terms of internalised subjectivity and obscures the objective multiplicities of our real and relational world (Mol 2002). Our own identities, as neighbourhood people travelling on the tram, or as global people flying between cities, and the identities of the objects we relate to, are tied up with these objective perspectives or *spaces*.

This idea of multiple and mobile identities can then be linked to an idea of 'movement cultures' (Read and Gil 2013) which is close to the 'mobilities' idea in sociology (Urry 2007). What we add and emphasise is the *systems*, 'historical architectures' of movement infrastructures that are a technological and spatial condition of these cultures (see also Coward and Gamble 2010). These 'architectures' are "optics on the world" (Ihde 2009) in the form of historically specific technical 'grids' which support particular 'movement cultures' or ways of urban life. Examples are the tram 'grid' of the early twentieth century, connecting industrial workers neighbourhoods as in Amsterdam, or the metropolitan highway 'grid' of the post-war period connecting commercial centres, city-edge suburbs and Vinex neighbourhoods.

The multiplicity of the city as an object of development starts here. We can use this idea of an objective multiplicity of places, differentiated one from the other by different networks, to divide cities into different realms which indicate fundamentally different societal, economic and cultural perspectives, interests and priorities and fundamentally different modes of city-building. An objective multiplicity of spaces means also a multiplicity of forms of society, economy and culture. It means a multiplicity of ways of life and their rationales or logics. This is then used as the basis of a 'complexity' perspective, in which urban realities are always a spatial and temporal organisation and coordination of different (political, social and economic) forms locked together by constraints of co-evolution and path-dependency. Urbanisation – the production of urban space and reality – necessarily integrates social, economic and urban development processes across different spaces, societies and economies.

How many different spaces? The dominant globalising view sees one space at the level of a globalised society and economy. There is a 'network society' of people ensconced in a 'space of flows' and enabled, particularly through technologies, to participate as producers and consumers in global spaces and economies (Castells 2000).[2] This is not the end of it though: Castells' 'space of places' is a space of the disenabled remainder, an underclass excluded from participation in the new society. As a corrective to this homogenising view, first, there are many different globalisms (Friedman 2000); besides a neoliberal 'market globalism,' there is a 'justice globalism' of the global justice movement, and the 'jihadist globalism' of radical Islamists (Steger 2008). There are also mundane globalisms of origami enthusiasts and of the Boy Scouts movement.

But at another level altogether we find also cultures, societies and economies of the city and neighbourhood that in the days of the industrial city we understood in terms of social reproduction. The modernities of the past produced global spaces, but besides that they produced a space of cargo handling and storage in the high-tech (at the time) canals of seventeenth century Amsterdam (Barthes 1972). They produced the socially reproductive workers neighbourhoods of the industrial city in European cities in the time of social reforms of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Read forthcoming). The small-scale street life and economies of these spaces are a positive feature of these cities to this day.

Part of what these smaller productive and reproductive spaces and economies acknowledge is the fact that global processes are neither automatic nor frictionless. Processes need to be enacted by people who make 'theoretical' and 'global' things happen in very non-abstract ways. The trouble with over-abstract theory (especially theory of global networks and information, see Hanseth 2004) is that it often makes global processes seem as if they are driven by abstract logics of economic theory, or of global capital. In fact these processes must also be constructed and enacted and cities are the places where different processes are enacted, coordinated

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[1] The underlying idea that what we see and know is mediated – and by the hardware we surround ourselves with – was made famous by Marshall McLuhan. It is also part of a 'technoscience' perspective in the philosophy of science and technology (Ihde 2009).
[2] We have argued (Read 2009; Read et al 2013) with some of the points of the 'network society' (Castells 2000) while accepting there is indeed a powerful group of people enabled through technology.

and synchronised and where all the *work* is done to make this real and make it happen. Workers, managers, administrators, office staff, secretaries and assorted bureaucrats, officials and technicians are all involved in the work of coordinating different but interdependent spaces and processes in use.

Our insertion of 'movement cultures' and 'grids' into this gap in the theory will be structured as a layering of spaces, societies and economies (Read forthcoming) at levels of neighbourhoods, cities and regions. This is a historical and empirical rather than a theoretical production. These spaces are all urban but in different ways and at different levels and are interarticulated and co-productive of characteristic forms of the city. Then the historicity of spatial production is much more than a simple historical matter in that historically produced spaces endure and transform, as do their interarticulations. They even remain in place after they are superseded by other spaces so that they 'sediment' over time. They may carry on supporting the forms of economy and society they were originally made for, even after the economy and society that replaced them have declared their own hegemony and the other's obsolescence. Spaces are also appropriated; they may be rediscovered and rearticulated by a later society and economy as 'gentrifications' and 'urban renewals' (Smith 2002). The gentrification of industrial workers districts is one example of such appropriation and the renewal of historical commercial centres as shopping districts is another.

Older spaces are always articulated with new ones because development is a path dependent process and spaces are not produced in the abstract, they are made *from* the spaces dominant before and at the time of new development and their processes have to link with processes that supported previous societies and economies (Read 2009). This inter-spatial articulation is as important a factor of spatial construction and production as are the spaces themselves. It is this interarticulation of spaces that ensures the space of the global city is coterminous with (and carries the same name as) the space of industrial (or gentrified) neighbourhoods. It is this articulation that ensures different viewpoints and different rationales of development interarticulate in place and coexist synergetically in the same city. It is this articulation that ties social reproduction of the neighbourhood with the work done in the city and the work done in the city with global processes. Global processes strictly depend on their interarticulation with minor spaces. The reverse is not as strictly true, though certainly if the link to the global was broken, or strategically dismantled, the form of the city would change.

A change in development practice and urban form has occurred the world over in the second half of the twentieth century. Urban growth and development before this was associated with street grids which distributed on the one hand land parcels for development and on the other the basic functions of the city including the everyday functions of work, school, dwelling, shopping and recreation. The urban streetgrid itself was the medium through which everyday movements took place in public transportation and by walking and cycling and the whole sustained an urban way of life and culture. Since mid century however in many places a suburban way of life and culture on a metropolitan highway grid has taken hold. The energy demand of the second way of life is very substantially higher than the first and although energy efficiencies has offset the increase somewhat, what we see today, in the call for 'compactness' in cities, is an attempt through regeneration to retrofit the city back into its old streetgrid and public transportation form.

We tend in globalisation to understand process through a univalent space whereas increasingly in regional and urban science urbanisation processes are multiple and process through different spaces. An alternative city model is one constructed (built) at multiple levels and to several different rationales whose concrete foundations are the different spaces they invest with life. Our point is first that the society and economy of neoliberal globalism depends on and is interarticulated with other societies and economies, including the social reproductive society and economy of the city. Then that the alternatives we seek for the city of the future are more likely to originate in other spheres than an intrinsically polarising and unsustainable neoliberalism.

3. Hegemonic urbanism and its contradictions

The field in which we work is a dominant hegemony which understands the world in a very particular way and obscures alternatives. We attempt to find ways to look beyond this hegemony and find alternative more equitable and sustainable development paths.

Most urban planning is economic in orientation and urbanisation is seen in the first (and sometimes the only) place as an economic strategy (Harrison & Hoyler 2014). Much planning is coloured by the importance, even the centrality, of urban development for the global economy (Smith 2002) and the role of urban land both as a resource and as a form of capital. Yusuf and Nabeshima (2008) understand Chinese urbanisation in terms of a strategy for growth and make it clear growth is the substantive aim of planning. The economistic approach and the overwhelming pressure for economic development are not simply ideological however, if by that we mean

simplemindedly conceived strategies for gain by corporate players in the world economy. Job creation and a rising median wage has also become a necessary condition of state legitimacy in China and the pressure for growth is real in that while growth rates around 8% continue and so long as money can be diverted through growth strategies for service provision, social contradictions can be held at bay. The hegemon may be ideological but it is also embedded in the necessities of contemporary life and politics. But the ideology obstructs our view: the connections between the products and 'externalities' of development are the first thing obscured by an ideological discourse; the second thing obscured are alternative forms of development that may open alternative paths to social equity and sustainable futures.

In the face of this economistic orientation of urban politics, science and development, the present predicament is characterised by two contradictory factors. On the one hand the neoliberal emphasis on extraction of resources, energy demand and exploitation of labour alongside global, fossil-fuel-dependant 'flows', and on the other hand a crisis we face in relation to planetary limits in terms of resources, entropic effects, carbon-induced climate change etc. And again, today in so far as theory of development orientates itself to the global, it responds to and promotes a global economic competition whose contradictions are a widening polarisation, injustice, increased resource use and unsustainability.

There is clearly some truth to the equation of economy and cities but this truth is limited. Regionalists conflate, according to Harrison & Hoyler, rapid urbanisation and the emergence of megaregions with strategies of competitiveness. The thinking is functionalist and to all appearances towards more megaregions, and assumes what is good for a hyperbolically promoted global economy is good for everything else, including cities and communities on a specious 'trickle down' logic. This is then presented in much of our discourse as the only legitimate position. The global dimension of the dilemma is crucial: while social contradictions are arguably comparatively less in Europe than in China, and while by all appearances Europe is becoming marginally more energy efficient and sustainable while China 'has further to go', this does not mean China can or must 'learn from Europe'. It doesn't mean China is on any development path that can be equated with that of the West and that implies any universality regarding paths of modernisation or development. The differences must first be seen against a background of global inequality and a 'deficit' of development of the global south.[3] There are compelling pressures for growth in China as this development deficit remains, and while reductions in growth come with the threat of social disorder. At the same time the contradictions at the global level are highlighted in the fact that recent gains in real prosperity have been relatively small, especially in the West, and have at the same time come at a disproportionate cost to the environment (Smil 2014), while there is little let-up to the West's own efforts to compete to maintain its dominance as well as the differential.[4]

Beyond the selective and limited truth of the economistic vision the questions start. For example what forms will regions take if basic logistics like food supply, energy and water are to be maintained (Morgan and Sonnino 2010). The questions end with whether all this high-powered growth is appropriate given questions about the sustainability of growth itself (Jackson 2009) and about the need to balance development for global equity. One has to ask whether competitiveness and growth are in any sense the right ethos in which to tackle these contradictions. It seems clear to us from this that while our urban future in specific terms is uncertain, in the relatively short term the pressure for change will become overwhelming and that the direction of change must eventually be in the direction of tackling the contradictions.

Another urbanism?
Development practices to the same aim are themselves not uniform as the work of George Lin shows. There is no single way of making the neoliberal city but there is a consistent aim. This is how hegemony works: creativity is channelled not into a search for alternatives but into this aim, oriented to the global scale and the competition for position in the global city network. It is in the singular *purpose* behind a multiplicity of local practices that urban development strategy is neoliberal. This problematises the 'theory' behind development and directs our approach to prioritise practices and strategies rather than theory. Elided are the multiple other orientations urban strategy may have and the other scales at which urban people survive or prosper (Robinson 2002).

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[3] There is another environmental factor here, of the export of environmental degradation from north to south, accelerated by massive global increases in transportation which is dependent on high yield energies (oil and coal).
[4] Founded still on a global ecological logic of the export of order to the north and disorder to the south (Martinez-Alier; Hornborg).

The rationale of Chinese development differs to Western urban entrepreneurism based around public-private partnerships, city marketing and image, in that economic decision-making has been decentralised to local authorities, while the political system remains centralised and career paths of officials, based on the economic performance of their jurisdictions, are decided by central government rather than through local elections (Chien and Wu 2012). In this context the terms of development remain firmly focussed on growth, practically to the exclusion of overt social concerns and leading to contradictions of rising inequality and environmental degradation. Inevitably and increasingly this dynamic is conditioned though by factors of social stability and political legitimacy as any reduction in growth comes with the threat of social disorder. This creates a complex and self-contradictory practice and discourse field in which development happens.

Solomon Benjamin proposes that the city is more than what planners or global economic strategists see in it. He sees an 'urbanism of occupancy' which incorporates and places a different value on activities which are 'irregular', 'informal' or just pass under the radar of the dominant, authorised view. Dominant perspectives understand territorial processes and politics beyond the plan as 'externalities': 'slums', the 'informal sector', 'poverty', 'crime and a little more positively, 'community'. In fact there is always much going on here which is only irregular in not being absorbed in a global, neoliberal hegemony.

In particular social and economic organisation exists on more levels than the global and are related to different aims and politics of city building with different strategies for constructing the necessary spaces at different levels. A wide range of diverse and often conflicting actors and rationales are involved in these processes including settled communities, migrants, local officials, firms, but also the state and its agents. Benjamin draws attention to the multivalencies and complexities of political practice and helps us think about the multiplicity of strategies of practice and governance in a world of practice. Again these strategies are multiple but they are directed at reasonably clear territorial aims, but at levels other than the global. These aims are best understood as organised as a cluster of concerns occupying particular scales and spaces – involving the politics of neighbourhood for example. Scaled territorialities and everyday practices provide the forms that shape urban societies and economies, and these, as we have seen need to be either constructed or appropriated as forms. Urban societies and economies are not born out of nothing and do not exist in the abstract. They emerge from histories that are coterminous with the spaces they occupy, or they appropriate found spaces that offer appropriate conditions.

Territoriality is not all a product of global capital, it is formed through the 'occupancy' "of plot, factory, neighbourhood, city; the logics that operate in practice, intermixed with (trans)national capital" (Benjamin 2014). It is formed also in the linkages of production, reproduction and work and we can add some organisation or 'system' to Benjamin's political fields. Benjamin's 'porous bureaucracy', allowing "territoriality to happen on different, competing and conflicting logics" (Benjamin 2014) is given clearer scale and space in this organisation, and occupies land not so much 'fluidly' as in networks of practice that are coterminous with the technics and spaces of enabling infrastructures.

Across what boundaries does interarticulaton occur? And across what boundaries do incommensurable logics add up positively to the reality of a functional city? First we see the 'contestation' involved is more relaxed and familiar than our discourses would suppose. It is we who try to fit everything into containers and imagine the outcome of multiplicity as conflict. In networks the world is divided but not always unproductively and complementarity is a possible outcome of difference. Benjamin understands emergent reconstitutive orders across planes of economy land and politics. We suggest these reconstitutions also happen between the spaces of the city as we are articulating them.

We argue there is demonstratively more to the actual city than that which is conceived in our dominant views of the global, the economic, or the creative city. Our method is to take on this 'more' as development process in its own right in relations of functional coordination with the dominant order. This is intended less as a 'critical' view than a 'constructive' method to open up urban logics, which are also logics of polities, collectives and economies at various scales, as pathways to the future. We take the position that people-led 'urbanisation' and economy-led 'urban and regional development', like labour and capital are interdependent and that part of what the city does is facilitate these interdependencies in very concrete ways. We also note that modernisation and industrialisation have been conceived along various 'paths' (Western and an East Asian paths of development for example) and that the Western path has been contrasted with the East Asian in being respectively 'capital' and 'labour' intensive (Pomeranz 2000; Bin Wong 1997; Frank 1998; Arrighi 2004) though neither path has been exclusively the one or the other. We take from this the idea we can view development processes from both 'capital' and from 'labour' led viewpoints.

The formulation of the problem has just been too abstract and monolithic and too blind to the actual mechanics of networks and cities. The processes of development today are understood economistically and ideologically, with much of the 'people' perspective reduced to problematic externalities of economic processes. This 'myopic' view of development has had some obvious blind spots – forms that emerge in development that cannot be explained from the view from the top: the Soho effect, Chinese urban villages and other supposedly 'spontaneous' and 'creative' effects of urbanisation, along with the general tendency to form centralities in irregular and unpredictable ways.

4. The Shenzhen plan

Change must start in the city. We are urban people and inhabit urban societies and economies. We need to research complex processes beyond functionalist economic assumptions regarding global and regional spaces and their 'flexible' governance serving interest groups "who stand to make the largest commercial gains" (Harrison and Hoyler 2014). We need to emphasise instead the interdependencies of cultures and networks of knowledge and the roles of different, minor spaces in the productive logics of cities and regions. Beyond a specious legibility and transparency, complex 'irregular' terrains of 'informal economy' and 'slums' are integral with higher scaled productive processes through the labour they reproduce. But they are productive of much else besides, generating economies that sustain livelihoods and communities, find unforeseeable synergies and contingent solutions to difficult problems, recycle 'useless' materials and waste and offer insights into what an uncertain future might look like. Nowhere is the monolithic vision that devalues these sorts of activities more embedded than in SEZs like Shenzhen and nowhere are the contradictions and surprising disturbances to this vision more apparent.

Theory, formulated in the global North, tells us that a surplus of capital generated in capitalistic profit-making leads to a switch of the circuits of capital towards urbanisation – the 'production of space' (Lefebvre 2003) or a new 'spatial fix' (Harvey 2001). What we see in China is urbanisation as a strategy to mobilise and accumulate original capital (Lin 2009:4). Urbanisation, rather than being an outcome of economic growth is a strategy of dispossession as a precondition of growth. Guangdong's urban expansion has taken place for the most part through urban governments forcefully expanding their jurisdiction into rural hinterlands through annexation and incorporation. This example of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey 2005) has been contentious and has provoked hostile reactions from agricultural land users. It is too simple however to equate 'accumulation by dispossession' with a particular phase of capitalism in that this has played a role in urbanisation and the accumulation process in the past.

Chien and Wu argue there have been two phases of urban entrepreneurialism in China, one from the 1990s till 2005 and another after 2005. The first phase was more market driven while the second saw greater intervention from the state in urban planning and top-down government coordination and regional collaboration. The latest phase of entrepreneurialism and development is not a result of deregulation or the retreat of the state from the market but of reregulation by the municipal government with the goal of territorial consolidation (Chien and Wu 2011). George Lin's study of local development in Guangdong demonstrates the connections between urban expansion and rural land appropriation. Lin's thesis is radical. It is that capital produced elsewhere has not been accumulated in urban circuits, rather that urban development has been the strategy for producing capital. How this is done is by the conversion of agricultural to urban land. Fiscal decentralization pushed development at the beginning of the reform and recentralisation forced it into a strategy for financing local government (Lin 2009). It is the state rather than the market which leads development in a multi-scaled politics and competition between state actors of different ranks. Chien and Wu argue that urban entrepreneurialism in China today involves a politics of state-directed capital expansion across territorial boundaries as local and state leaders must also collaborate and coordinate across territorial boundaries in a process of capital expansion.

The current Shenzhen masterplan (Figure 1) doesn't hide its spatial logic. Major periurban centres, ports and airports, are connected together in a plane which hovers up over the ground below, opening the land for exploitation and the centres and ports for control and extraction. The high-speed links between these points are the infrastructure projects that are part of the land processes highlighted by George Lin. The human work and energies on the streets of Shenzhen and in the urban villages are not part of this vision; 'below' this 'space of flows', 'informality' is dealt with as irregular and related to the threat of disorder. These activities are by no means unexpected or strange at street level as productive work of all sorts goes on.
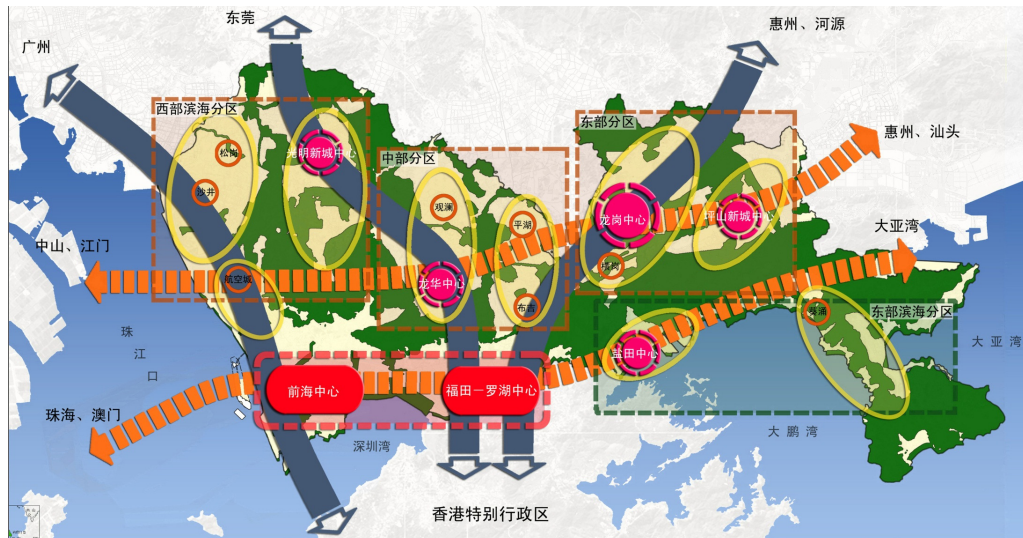
Figure 1: -The comprehensive plan of Shenzhen (2010-2020). Source: Shenzhen municipality

There is, according to much of the literature, less than 30 years history in Shenzhen but in that time development practice has changed radically in scale and scope. The first Shenzhen plan (Figure 2) was a parcelling of land on a large 'Manhattan grid'. A surface on which not just a land market but also a surface for the relational complementarity or 'division of labour' and way of life of the city was established. It is at this scale – of the city – that the sorts of politics Benjamin refers to still play out. Since then the scale of land parcels and of development has changed. This is in line with a 'metropolitanisation' of cities the world over, so that development today has a regional more than an urban character. Robert Fishman draws attention to the profound negative impact on the power of 'public' elements of planning and urban politics over 'private' in these new forms of practice (Fishman 2008). The grid of periurban centres that is the motif of the latest plan establishes a land market at regional scale but also a surface for the relational complementarity and ways of life of a region with high levels of motorcar traffic. This is a scale that is historically specific, relating to post 1990s development practices.
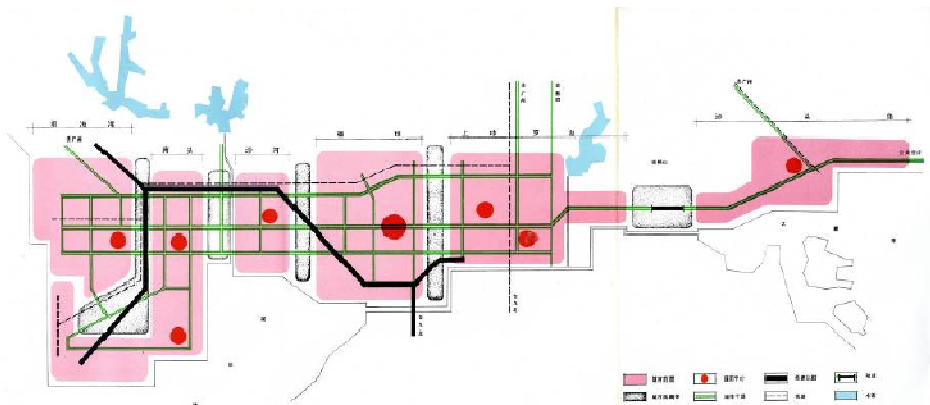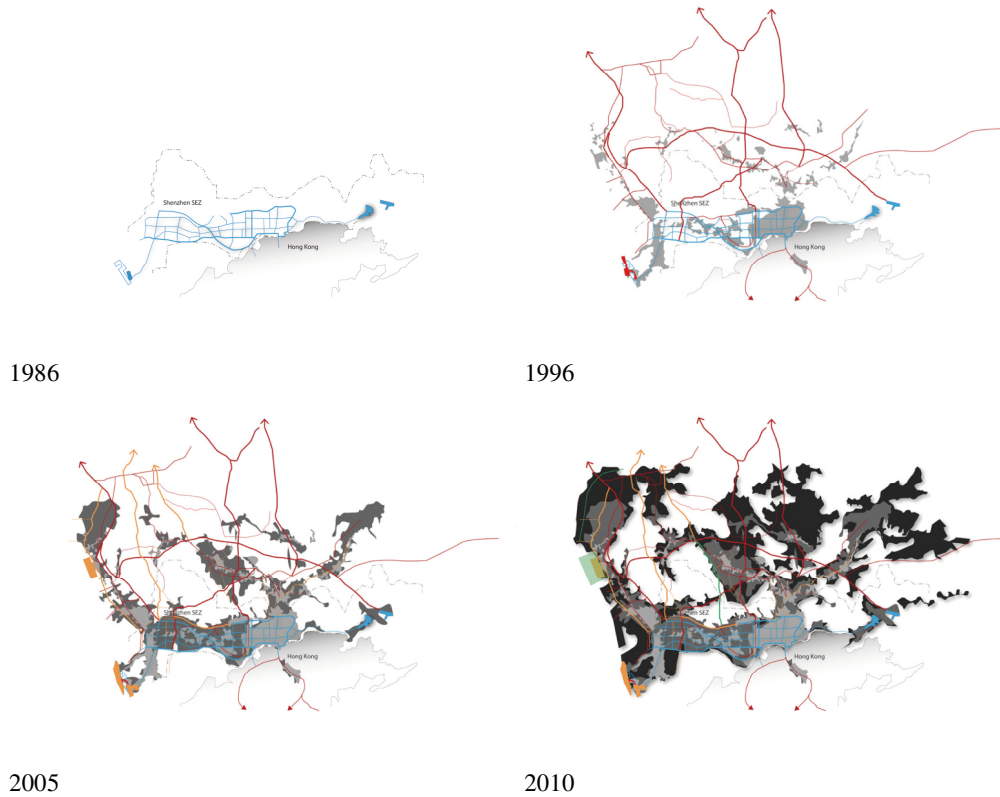

Figure 2: The master plan of Shenzhen (1982). Source: Shenzhen municipality

1986   1996

2005   2010

Figure 3. Historical urbanisation 1979-2010. Source: Ankit Bhargava.

Figure 4: Nantou ancient city, Shenzhen. Source: Juan Du (Du undated).

Juan Du draws our attention to the rather obvious way a sanctioned version of the history of Shenzhen has been used to ideological ends. The 1979 start-up date of the SEZ elides not just the history of Shenzhen but also the role the urban structure of the region, thousands of years old, continues to play in city and region. The urban

villages have been appropriated as affordable housing but continue to play roles in a small-scaled economy that provides employment and exercises real creativity in managing the relationship with global and regional economies. Their irregularity lies in the fact they cannot easily be turned to the purposes of the global financial system which, with the support of governments the world over, reserves the right to set the agenda on economic legitimacy.

Work at street and village levels constructs the relation of these spaces to other spaces. But this work is 'informal' and an externality when seen from the 'legitimate' perspective. The fact this work and the relations it creates has created vibrant urban places is still a puzzle when seen from this perspective. The evidence on the ground though is that what is produced here *is* the city in some of its most vital forms. These sorts of places and their economies and societies continue in the best cases to prosper despite the fact we cannot theorise them. It is in the diversities and complex organisations of these real processes we need to look for more open and sustainable pathways to the future.

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