

**Politecnico di Torino**  
**Architecture for Sustainability**



**The Process of Urban Renewal In China Based On Henri  
Lefebvre's Theories**

**The Case of Urban Village, Nantou City's Spatial Production**

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## Abstract

After the transformation of the economic structure, China embarked on the road of urbanization. Large areas of the old city were demolished and replaced by residential buildings and commercial streets. In the process of urban renewal, urban villages have always been regarded as an indelible part of the city. Negative space has many problems, such as high building density, backward infrastructure, and poor sanitary conditions. But it is also a unique existence in urban transformation, which is reflected in directly displaying the contradiction between urban and rural duality.

The original urban village was replaced by a middle-class community, and the rising land and housing prices could no longer allow the original residents to return to their previous living places. The original community has disappeared, but it cannot be integrated into the community of the bourgeoisie in modern society.

The demands of the residents are difficult to truly resolve and implement, and many existing problems reflect the existence of structural problems in society.

This thesis tries to focus on the issues of the urban villages in China under the process of urban renewal, combining perspectives on Henri Lefebvre's theories. It will start with the introduction of urban renewal in China and urban villages, which is a unique form of existence under urbanization in China. Through realistic cases, the research aimed to figure out the distribution of power in the management and operation of urban village regeneration and the existing problems. By employing the theory of the production of space, the thesis will be able to discover this problem in a new dimension.

The main statements first discuss the formation of the concept of urban renewal, its historical development in the Western world, and the entire process of urban renewal in China. This includes understanding the current operational mechanisms, which encompass the formulation of relevant policies, the power relationships, and how various stakeholders exert their influence. Additionally, a specific search was carried out on practical case studies of different types of urban renewal based on land attributes.

Subsequently, this thesis delves further into a distinctive type of urban renewal in China, known as 'urban villages,' using the case of Shenzhen's urban villages as an example. We will explore the historical origins and economic background of urban villages, along with the development of policies related to them. Our focus will be on studying the transformation process of urban villages within the urban renewal context. Specific case studies of urban villages will be examined to summarize their impact on urbanization and the various issues they present.

Moving forward, the research introduces Henri Lefebvre's theory of spatial production. We will begin by providing the background and content of this theory, particularly its relevance to the production of urban space. Building on the previously introduced case of Shenzhen's urban villages, we will analyze their spatial production model from a fresh perspective. This involves examining the role of power-related entities in the creation of urban villages' spatial production within the context of their transformation, where the reshaping of urban village spaces interconnects with the



transformation of social spaces. Through this analysis, we aim to shed light on the existing issues in contemporary urban renewal.

Subsequent discussions will explore Lefebvre's stance and assertions regarding urban and social spaces. We will also examine his insights into the developmental direction of modern Chinese urban spaces, ultimately attempting to present opinions and recommendations concerning societal development directions within the realm of policy.

## Keyword

Urban renewal, Urban Village, Henri Lefebvre, Production of Space, Social space, Public space

# Introduction

## 1. Research background

In the past 30 years, China's urban population size, urban land area, and urban system structure have undergone great changes. From 1978 to 2013, the permanent urban population increased from 170 million to 730 million, and the urbanization rate increased from 17.9% to 53.7%, with an average annual increase of 1.02 percentage points: the number of cities increased from 193 to 658, and the number of established towns increased from 2,173 to 20,113<sup>1</sup>. (Chen, 2016)

After the explosive urbanization expansion, various urban problems have come along with it, and China's strategy of urban space has changed from physical expansion to built-up area improvement.

The Guidance on Strengthening Ecological Restoration and Urban Repair issued by the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development in March 2017 points out that carrying out ecological restoration and urban repair is an important action to manage "urban diseases," an important action to improve the living environment, an objective need to promote supply-side structural reform and make up for the shortcomings of the city, and an important symbol of the city's transformation of development mode<sup>2</sup>. (Liu, B., 2021)

Urban villages are a special phenomenon in the process of China's modernization and urbanization. In the process of urban expansion, the original rural areas are allocated to the urban area, but due to the contradictions of property rights between urban and rural areas, the villages and towns are unable to be integrated into the newly-formed cities, as well as the local government is unable to carry out the control, and they gradually form the crowded and poorly surviving residential areas in the cities, which is similar to slums. The problem of urban villages is particularly prominent in China's large cities, where migrant workers use the villages as a place to settle in large cities because of the low cost of land.

<sup>1</sup> Chen, Y.(2016).*Study on Spatial Governance of Urban Renewal in China Transformation Period: Mechanism and Model*. [PhD diss., Nanjing University]. 陈易 (2016) *转型期中国城市更新的空间治理研究: 机制与模式*. [博士学位论文, 南京大学].

<sup>2</sup> Liu, B., Liu, J., Cheng, T., et al. (2021). Theory and practice of urban renewal in China. *China's Famous Cities*, 35(7), 1-10. 刘伯霞, 刘杰, 程婷, 等. (2021). 中国城市更新的理论与实践. *中国名城*, 35 (7) : 1-10.

The idea of urban renewal is undoubtedly responsive to current development needs as a major tool for sustainable urban development.

## 2. Main problems

### ● The complexity of land ownership has hindered effective land management

China has a dual land management model of urban and rural areas, and urban villages are rural residential property land in the city. According to the land management law, urban villages are owned by village collectives and managed by the villagers themselves, which is why the government cannot directly manage urban villages. Now, the long-term accumulation of various problems, such as backward infrastructure, substandard health conditions, indiscriminate demolition, and building, etc., the management costs of the government can no longer afford.

### ● Insufficient attention to the mobile population during the transformation process

The large amount of low-cost housing provided in urban villages has absorbed a large amount of non-local cheap labor, and the city has seen an inversion of the local and mobile populations. The problem is that the mobile population, which has undertaken the vast majority of urban construction work and created huge economic effects, cannot enjoy the same civic treatment and the corresponding voice. In the urban transformation, they cannot get effective feedback on their interests.

### ● Overly commercialized urban renewal

In the process of too rapid urban renewal, the government and enterprises tend to pursue economic benefits, and due to local self-interest and short-sightedness, what often occurs is large-scale demolition of the old and construction of the new, bringing about the rapid disappearance of regional culture and social networks and the consequent homogenization of urban space<sup>3</sup>. (Xu, 2018)

## 3. Aims of the thesis

Studying the actual case of Shenzhen urban village by combining multidisciplinary knowledge and re-examining the current situation and existing dilemmas of urban renewal in China from a new perspective. Based on the value of promoting social equality, we try to put forward new proposals to defend the interests of vulnerable groups, especially the people's right to development.

1. Explore and study the history and forms of urban village transformation in China and understand the current relevant policies and existing problems.

<sup>3</sup> Xu, Y. (2018). *A research on construction of place in urban renewal under the guidance of "production of space" ——A case study of Shenzhen Hubei Village*. (Master's Thesis, South China University of Technology). 许永成. (2018). "空间生产"主导下城市更新中的地方建构研究——以深圳湖贝村为例. (硕士学位论文, 华南理工大学).

2. Study the actual case of an urban village in Shenzhen combined with the theory of the production of space, and analyze the issue of the development rights of the original residents, as well as the roles and interests of multiple power subjects in it.

3. Try to explore new possibilities and put forward some implementation directions of urban renewal from the aspects of policies and guidelines.

#### 4. **Research Hypothesis**

The issue of urban renewal and urban villages in China involves a wide range of disciplines, taking into account the complex political system and the interests of multiple parties in the game and cooperative relationship.

This thesis hopes to study and explore the urban renewal process in China in a new dimension by combining the theory of spatial production as an entry point with realistic cases.

### 5. **Methodology**

#### ● **Literature research**

Develop the topic by collecting, reviewing, and analyzing published works related to relative topics and research questions.

Define the problem, object, and purpose of the study, set the scope of the study, and provide sufficient background information for the thesis by organizing relevant literature and writing a literature review in the early stage, and then introduce a critical perspective to follow up the object of the study with further research and discussion. Conclusions are drawn by studying the findings of different scholars and summarizing them.

#### ● **Interdisciplinary research**

Integrating issues related to urban planning with theories of sociology and political economy to generate new insights and solutions.

By delving into the world of literature, it becomes possible to gain insight into the thoughts and opinions of various theorists from different fields of study on the topic of urban development. This thesis focuses on the work of Lefebvre and the Marxist urban theory that surrounds it. Employing a sociological and philosophical approach, this study aims to explore the nuances of urbanization and its development through the lens of Lefebvre's theories.

# Part I. Research Background

## Chapter 1. Literature review

### 1. Related theoretical research in China

#### 1.1 Urban renewal in China

The research has identified representative literature on various aspects of urban renewal in Chinese cities, specifically focusing on the research on the developmental process of urban renewal, policy, and institutional frameworks, the roles of different societal groups in urban renewal, and its integration with spatial production theory. These works contribute to understanding the overall development of urban renewal in Chinese cities under different policy frameworks, its impact on diverse societal groups, and the challenges existing within the current system. This also aids in integrating Henri Lefebvre's research methods into the study of cities.

- Study of the Developmental Process and Current State of Urban Renewal in China

In the article "Development and Review of Urban Renewal in China: 1949-2019," by Yang Jianqiang and Chen Yue, the authors divide the development of urban renewal in China into four crucial stages:

The first stage (1949-1977) focused on socialist industrialization after the establishment of New China.

The second stage (1978-1989) emphasized the urbanization process of small and medium-sized cities while controlling the size of large cities.

The third stage (1990-2011) marked the privatization of land use rights and industrial transformation in China.

The fourth stage (2012-present) saw an emphasis on enhancing urban governance to address issues arising from urbanization.

The authors analyze policies and representative events in each stage.

In the master's thesis "Research on the Evolution of Urban Renewal Development in China Based on Journal Literature Statistics" by Ma Haochen, various papers on different phases of China's urban development are systematically organized and comprehensively introduced from perspectives such as policy, economy, and culture. Additionally, Yang Jianqiang's paper "Current Situation, Characteristics, and Trends of Urban Renewal in China" provides a profound exploration of the background, current status, existing issues, and future prospects of urban renewal in China.

- Analysis of Policy and Institutional Frameworks in Urban Renewal in China

In the doctoral thesis "A Study on the Planning System of Urban Renewal Areas" by Zhou Xiankun, the author analyzes the challenges faced by the urban renewal system in China and systematically

classifies urban renewal projects, providing an analysis of representative cases. Another doctoral thesis, "Spatial Governance Research on Urban Renewal in China during the Transitional Period: Mechanism and Model" by Chen Yi, discusses the internal operational mechanisms of spatial governance in China, categorizing governance models and presenting representative cases.

- **Analysis of Policy and Institutional Frameworks in Urban Renewal in Shenzhen**

Given Shenzhen's role as a pioneer in the development of urban renewal in China, understanding its policies is crucial. In the paper "Evolution Analysis of Urban Renewal Policies Based on Policy Instrument Theory: A Case Study of Shenzhen," Cao Li analyzes 70 urban renewal policy texts in Shenzhen, considering their release times, vertical and horizontal structures, and innovative aspects. Lin Qiang's article "Institutional Arrangements and Policy Reflection on Urban Renewal: A Case Study of Shenzhen" provides a comprehensive analysis of the current institutional advantages and issues in Shenzhen's urban renewal, proposing policy recommendations for improvement.

- **Analysis of Different Stakeholders in Urban Renewal in China**

Understanding the interests and perspectives of various groups in the urban renewal process allows for a better analysis of the challenges faced in the societal network. This knowledge is essential for integrating urban renewal with spatial production theory.

In the doctoral thesis "Study on the Role Relationships of Local Government, Developers, and Residents in the Urban Renewal Process: A Case Study of Han Zheng Street in Wuhan" by Chen Xuan, the author analyzes the interactions between these three stakeholders based on a study of actual urban renewal projects. In Xu Jian's doctoral thesis, "Urban Renewal from the Perspective of Social Exclusion: A Case Study of Shanghai," the author focuses on the perspective of vulnerable groups in urban renewal, analyzing the impact of renewal policies on these groups in Shanghai, exploring the power dynamics and operational mechanisms among the government, market, and individuals in specific projects.

## **1.2 Urban village**

- **Introduction**

The author categorizes the study of urban villages into several aspects based on the research topic. Firstly, there is an exploration of the understanding of urban village issues and related transformations. This primarily encompasses the problems within urban villages, their underlying mechanisms, as well as the strategies, stakeholders, and impacts involved in the process of redevelopment. Additionally, the research delves into the specific case of urban villages in Shenzhen, examining their development context, existing forms, issues, and the status of ongoing transformations.

Following this, the study focuses on the investigation of the research subject, namely Nantou City. This involves acquiring knowledge about its historical background, spatial morphology, and comprehensive insights into its redevelopment processes and current state.

Lastly, the study encompasses a summary of literature directly pertinent to the research topic, specifically examining urban village redevelopment and the intertwining mechanisms of spatial production.

Overall, the research approach involves a comprehensive examination of urban village issues, with a specific focus on Shenzhen and Nantou City, coupled with a synthesis of relevant literature on the amalgamation of urban village redevelopment and spatial production mechanisms.

### ● The issues and reconstruction of urban village

In the article "The Real Issues of Urban Villages<sup>4</sup>" by Jin-kui Li, a precise analysis of the formation, nature, and economic value of urban villages in China is provided. The author identifies various shortcomings in the relevant policies of that time, pointing out issues such as the lack of protection for the survival and development rights of migrant workers and the mobile population in urban areas resulting from urbanization.

In the doctoral thesis, "An Economic Analysis of the Formation, Persistence, and Transformation of Urban Village Issues<sup>5</sup>" by Xin-hong Zhou, a comprehensive economic analysis of the issues surrounding Chinese urban villages and their transformation is conducted. The author examines the interest game mechanism in the formation of urban villages, explaining the economic and institutional reasons behind their formation. Additionally, the author elucidates the necessity of urban village transformation, asserting that the adjustment of interests through such transformations can effectively ensure fair social distribution. Finally, the author provides an optimization control method through a case analysis of Hangzhou.

In the article "Theoretical Framework and Strategies for Stakeholder Governance in Urban Village Transformation<sup>6</sup>," scholars led by Sheng-hua Jia discuss the importance of dynamically balancing the interests of multiple stakeholders. The paper reiterates urban village transformation from the perspective of interest distribution and explores the emergence of conflicts among multiple entities and effective methods for coordinating their interests.

Overall, these works contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the issues and transformation of urban villages in China from economic and governance perspectives.

### ● Urban villages in Shenzhen

In the article "A Study on Urban Village Redevelopment Models and Strategies: A Case Study of Shenzhen<sup>7</sup>," Huang Zhi analyzes various urban village redevelopment models in China, focusing on Shenzhen. The analysis is conducted from the perspectives of economic development, living

<sup>4</sup> Li Jinkui. (2005). Realist Issues in UEVs. *China Opening Herald* Jun, 2005, (3) :43-48 李津逵 (2005) 城中村的真问题. *开放导报*, 2005年7月, 第3期, 43-48

<sup>5</sup> Zhou, X. (2007). *Urban Village Issues: An Economic Analysis of Formation, Persistence, and Redevelopment*. (Doctoral dissertation, Fudan University). 周新宏. 2007. 城中村问题: 形成, 存续与改造的经济学分析. (Doctoral dissertation, 复旦大学).

<sup>6</sup> Jia, S., Zheng, W., & Tian, C. (2011). Theoretical Framework and Strategies for Stakeholder Governance in Urban Village Redevelopment. *Urban Planning*, 5, 7. 贾生华, 郑文娟, & 田传浩. (2011). 城中村改造中利益相关者治理的理论及对策. *城市规划*(5), 7.

<sup>7</sup> Huang, Z. (2013). *The research on the models and strategies in the reconstruction of the urban village illustrated by the case of Shenzhen*. (PhD diss., Wuhan University) 黄治 (2013) 城中村改造模式与策略研究. (博士学位论文, 武汉大学).

environment, and political and institutional reforms within the city. The author then discusses the interplay of interests among residents, village collectives, developers, and the government—the key stakeholders in the redevelopment process. Issues surrounding urban village transformation are interpreted, and an analysis of Shenzhen's redevelopment strategies is provided, along with recommendations.

In Dr. Jing-lei Li's doctoral thesis, "Spatial Value and Renewal of Shenzhen's Urban Villages<sup>8</sup>," the characteristics of Shenzhen's urban villages, including their distribution, architectural features, and constituent groups, are classified. The thesis reflects on the current renewal efforts in Shenzhen's urban villages and proposes systematic renewal strategies and application principles from four aspects: social, cultural, economic, and physical spatial dimensions.

Together, these studies contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and strategies associated with urban village redevelopment in Shenzhen, addressing economic, social, cultural, and spatial dimensions.

### ● Nantou City

In the article "Preservation and Renewal Strategies for Nantou Ancient Town Under the Dual Identity of 'Ancient Town' and 'Urban Village'<sup>9</sup>" by Siqi Chen, the unique dual identity of Nantou Ancient Town as both an ancient town and an urban village serves as the starting point for discussing the distinctive nature of its renewal. The author introduces the development process of Nantou Ancient Town and outlines the strategies employed in its governance and protection.

In the study "Evaluation of Shenzhen Nantou Ancient Town After Renewal from a Public Perspective<sup>10</sup>" by Siming Gu, an analysis of the demands of relevant interest groups in Nantou Ancient Town is conducted. The research explores public evaluations of Nantou Ancient Town across multiple dimensions, summarizing both positive and negative impacts resulting from the transformation based on the evaluation results.

In the article "Exploring Methods for Urban Village Renewal Driven by Urban Events: A Case Study of Nantou Ancient Town<sup>11</sup>," Yilin Lin summarizes the impact and significance of the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture on Nantou Ancient Town. Focusing on event catalysts, the paper elucidates the transformation of Nantou Ancient Town in both material spatial and social dimensions. The author suggests that event catalysts have paved the way for a new trajectory in urban renewal.

<sup>8</sup> Li Jinglei. (2018). *Research on Space Value and Renewal of Shenzhen's Urban Village*. (PhD diss., South China University of Technology) 李景磊. (2018) *深圳城中村空间价值及更新研究*. (博士学位论文, 华南理工大学)

<sup>9</sup> Chen, S. Ideas for the protection and renewal of Nantou city in the context of the dual identities of "ancient city" and "urban village". *2017 China Urban Planning Annual Conference*. 陈思琪. "古城"与"城中村"双重身份背景下的南头古城保护与更新思路. *2017 中国城市规划年会*.

<sup>10</sup> Gu, S. (2021). *Research on the Post-renewal Evaluation of Nantou city in Shenzhen from the Public Perspective*. (Master's Thesis, Harbin Institute of Technology). 顾思明. (2021). 公众视角下深圳市南头古城更新后评价研究. (硕士学位论文, 哈尔滨工业大学)

<sup>11</sup> Lin, Y. (2018). Research on the methods of urban event catalysts to drive the renewal of urban villages—taking the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale in Nantou city as an example. *Sharing and Quality—Proceedings of the 2018 China Urban Planning Annual Conference (02 Cities renew)*. 林怡琳. (2018). 城市事件触媒驱动城中村更新的方法探究——以深港双城双年展入驻南头古城为例. *共享与品质——2018 中国城市规划年会论文集 (02 城市更新)*.

Together, these studies provide insights into the preservation, renewal, and public evaluation of Nantou Ancient Town, shedding light on its dual identity and the transformative influences of urban events.

### ● The study of the reconstruction of urban village and its space production

In the article "Urban Villages Being the Seeds of Future Cities —— Research of Urban Space Based on Lefebvre's Theory of the Production of Space<sup>12</sup>," authors Guo and Li propose that urban villages, characterized by internal chaos and external confrontations, exhibit robust vitality in social relationships, bearing significant implications for urban renewal in Chinese cities through the lens of Henri Lefebvre's spatial production theory.

In the paper "Exploration of Historical Block Micro-renewal from the Perspective of Spatial Rights: A Case Study of Nantou Ancient Town in Shenzhen<sup>13</sup>" by Yang Xiaochuan et al., a comparative analysis is conducted on the original space and the impacts of micro-renewal transformations in Nantou Ancient Town. The authors argue that micro-renewal in Nantou Ancient Town represents a crucial attempt to protect residents' spatial rights, emphasizing the continued importance of addressing spatial rights for vulnerable groups.

In the article "Spatial Transformation of Guangzhou Liren Dong: A Perspective of Spatial Production<sup>14</sup>," by Zhang Jiaxin et al., using Liren Dong Village in Guangzhou as a case study, the authors employ methods such as questionnaire surveys, interviews, and participatory observations to analyze the spatial production process of urban villages from the perspectives of capital accumulation and power relations. The authors contend that studying the spatial transformation of urban villages reveals the process of capital accumulation from the agricultural era to the information age, emphasizing the need to address the crisis of isolating interpersonal relationships during spatial transformation.

Together, these studies contribute to a comprehensive understanding of urban village transformation and spatial production, drawing insights from theories such as Lefebvre's spatial production theory and emphasizing the importance of safeguarding spatial rights in the process of renewal.

<sup>12</sup> Guo, A., & Li, B. (2020). Urban Villages Being the Seeds of Future Cities —— Research of Urban Space Based on Lefebvre's Theory of the Production of Space. *Urbanism and Architecture*, 17(1), 5. 郭岸, & 李冰洁. (2020). 城中村是城市未来的种子——列斐伏尔空间生产理论视角下的城市空间研究. *城市建筑*, 17(1), 5.

<sup>13</sup> Yang, X., Lin, Q., & Li, B. (2022). Research on the Micro-renewal of Historical Districts from the Perspective of Spatial Rights: A Case Study of Nantou Old Town in Shenzhen. *Architecture and Culture*, 1, 3. 杨晓川, 林勤, & 李彬彬. (2022). 空间权利视角下的历史街区微更新探究——以深圳市南头古城为例. *《建筑与文化》*, 1, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Zhang, J., Qian, Q., Chen, Y., & Jiang, Y. (2016). The Spatial Change of TaoBao Village in Lirengdong, Guangzhou in the Perspective of Spatial Production. *Economic Geography*, 1, 7. 张嘉欣, 千庆兰, 陈颖彪, & 姜炎峰. (2016). 空间生产视角下广州里仁洞"淘宝村"的空间变迁. *经济地理*(1), 7.



### 1.3 Henri Lefebvre

#### ● Marxist Urban Theory

In the edited volume "Modernity and the Production of Space"<sup>15</sup> by Bao Yaming, Western urban society research and the understanding of modernity are explored, with a primary focus on the introduction of Henri Lefebvre. This work has played a significant role in disseminating Lefebvre's theories in the Chinese context.

Hu Daping, in his "Introduction to Marxist Urbanism,"<sup>16</sup> extends foundational theories and analyzes specific historical conditions, constructing theoretical frameworks for the contemporary urban development process. He delves into the relationships between spatial reconstruction, the reproduction of production relations, and the analysis of contemporary social contradictions. Moreover, he sheds light on social rights, value demands, and their realization conditions, providing valuable insights for the theoretical construction of China's urbanization path. The discussion also includes an exposition on Lefebvre's theory of spatial production and its limitations, incorporating considerations of China's urbanization in the exploration of issues such as urban-rural dichotomies and urban rights.

In addition, Hu Daping's article "The Spatial Turn of Social Critique Theory and the Spatialization of Historical Materialism"<sup>17</sup> elucidates the influence of Marxist urban theories centered around Lefebvre on modern social critique theory. The term "spatial turn" refers to the shift in the problem consciousness of social critique theory from a focus on time to a consideration of spatial theories.

#### ● Production of space

Regarding Lefebvre's core theory, "The Production of Space,"<sup>18</sup> Zhang Zikai provides a comprehensive review in his article "A Review of Henri Lefebvre's 'The Production of Space'." He systematically dissects the book's content along three dimensions: the history of cognition, ontology, and methodology, offering a progressive interpretation of Lefebvre's spatial dialectics.

In his doctoral thesis, "A Study on the Theoretical Form of Henri Lefebvre's 'Production of Space,'"<sup>19</sup> Sun Quansheng extensively and systematically introduces Lefebvre and the theoretical forms of "The Production of Space." The thesis defines the theory, analyzes the historical evolution of spatial production, introduces the theoretical background, and explores three specific forms of theory:

<sup>15</sup> Bao, Y. M. (Ed.). (2003). *Modernity and the Production of Space*. Shanghai Education Press. 包亚明. (2003). *现代性与空间的生产*. 上海教育出版社.

<sup>16</sup> Hu, D. (2016). Introduction to Marxist Urbanism. *Journal of Southeast University: Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition*, 18(3), 9. 胡大平. (2016). 都市马克思主义导论. *东南大学学报: 哲学社会科学版*, 18(3), 9.

<sup>17</sup> Hu, D. (2007). Spatial Turn in Social Critique Theory and the Spatialization of Historical Materialism. *Jianghai Academic Journal*, 2, 6. 胡大平. (2007). 社会批判理论之空间转向与历史唯物主义的空间化. *江海学刊*(2), 6.

<sup>18</sup> Zhang Z. (2007). Review of Lefebvre's "The Production of Space". *Journal of Jiangsu University: Social Sciences Edition*, 9(5), 5. 张子凯. (2007). 列斐伏尔《空间的生产》述评. *江苏大学学报: 社会科学版*, 9(5),

<sup>19</sup> Sun, Q. (2015). *Study of the theoretical forms of Henri Lefebvre's "The production of space"*. [PhD diss., Southeastern University]. 孙全胜. (2015). 列斐伏尔“空间生产”的理论形态研究. [博士学位论文, 东南大学].

capital critique, political critique, and ecological critique. It concludes with a discussion of the practical significance of the theory. This work contributes to a systematic understanding of Lefebvre's spatial production theory, enriching the research perspective on "the production of space."

In the article "Relationality and Historicity of Social Space: An Interpretation of Henri Lefebvre's 'The Production of Space,'"<sup>20</sup> Zhang Yibing further supplements Lefebvre's concept of "social space" in "The Production of Space." The author discusses the essential nature and historicity of social space, asserting that Lefebvre, by examining the "second nature" of materiality, unveils the historical production and reproduction of social relationships in space, thereby deepening historical materialism in spatial matters.

### ● Henri Lefebvre's theory application in China

In the article "Urban Significance and the Ethical Construction of Contemporary Chinese Urban Order"<sup>21</sup> by Chen Zhong, the author combines the perspectives of Lefebvre and other Marxist urban theorists to explore the issue of urbanization in China and the paths that should be taken. The article emphasizes the importance of urban significance for Chinese cities.

Wu Ning's paper, "Lefebvre's Urban Space Sociology Theory and Its Significance for China,"<sup>22</sup> introduces Lefebvre's theories on urban rights and spatial production. It highlights the inspiration and guidance these theories offer in the face of China's rapid urbanization and globalization challenges.

Liu Huaiyu and Lu Bao, in their article "The Dissemination, Critique, Application, and Possible Production of Lefebvre's Thought in China,"<sup>23</sup> comprehensively reviews the influence of Lefebvre's theory in different fields of Chinese academia across different periods. The authors trace Lefebvre's role in China's academic landscape, evolving from a critic of everyday life to a postmodern urban thinker. They also summarize the Lefebvrian perspectives in Chinese issue studies and discuss the prospects of "Sinicizing" Lefebvre's theory.

<sup>20</sup> Zhang, Y. (2020). Social Spatiality and Historicity: An Interpretation of Lefebvre's "The Production of Space." *Practice and Text, Shandong Social Sciences*, (10), 290. DOI: 10.14112/j.cnki.37-1053/c.2019.10.004 张一兵. (2020). 社会空间的关系性与历史性——列斐伏尔《空间的生产》解读 实践与文本. *山东社会科学*, 2019年第10期总第290期.

<sup>21</sup> Chen, Z. (2011). Urban Significance and the Ethical Construction of Contemporary Chinese Urban Order. *Studies and Exploration*, 02, 7-12. 陈忠. (2011). 城市意义与当代中国城市秩序的伦理建构. *学习与探索*(02), 7-12.

<sup>22</sup> Wu, N. (2008). Lefebvre's Sociological City Space Theory and Its Significance in China[J]. *Chinese Journal of Sociology(in Chinese Version)*, 28(2): 112-127. 吴宁. (2008). 亨利·列斐伏尔的城市空间社会学理论及其中国意义[J]. *社会*, 28(2): 112-127

<sup>23</sup> Liu, H., & Lu, B. (2018). Dissemination, criticism, application and possible production of lefebvre's thoughts in china—from everydaylife philosopher to postmodern urban thinker. *Theoretical Investigation*, (1), 10. 刘怀玉, & 鲁宝. (2018). 列斐伏尔思想在中国的传播, 批评, 运用与可能的生产——从日常生活哲学家到后现代都市思想家. *理论探讨*(1), 10. DOI:10.16354/j.cnki.23-1013/d.2018.01.012

In the paper "Production of Space and Urban Rights: Theory, Application, and Its Significance for China"<sup>24</sup> by Sun Xiaoyi, Lefebvre's theories on spatial production and urban rights are integrated to address China's urbanization issues from the perspective of national space. The article elucidates the crucial insights Lefebvre's theory offers for contemporary urbanization challenges in China.

## 2. International debate of relevant urban theory

### 2.1 Public space and social space

#### ● Ali Madanipour

Ali Madanipour is a well-known scholar in the field of urban design and planning. He is a Professor of Urban Design and the Director of Global Urban Research at Newcastle University in the UK. His work focuses on the design of urban spaces and the social implications of urban planning.

Madanipour has written extensively on the topic of urban design, with numerous books and articles to his name. Some of his most well-known works include "Public and Private Spaces of the City"<sup>25</sup> (2003) and "Design of Urban Space: An Inquiry into a Socio-Spatial Process"<sup>26</sup> (1996). His work has been influential in shaping the field of urban design theory.

#### Understanding of urban space

In his seminal work "Design of Urban Space: An Inquiry into a Socio-Spatial Process," Madanipour Ali engages with critical issues raised by Henri Lefebvre in the context of spatial production. Madanipour contends that urban space should not be simply construed as a composition of physical elements but rather as the multifaceted outcome of various dimensions working in concert. Consequently, urban design necessitates deriving new insights from interdisciplinary studies.

Subsequently, this discussion will delve into two concepts jointly addressed by Madanipour Ali and Henri Lefebvre (Madanipour Ali, 1996).

#### Physical and social space

In his scholarly work, Ali Madanipour delves into the complex relationship between physical and social space, analyzing it through the lens of both function and form. Additionally, he provides a comprehensive overview of the differing perspectives that modernism and post-modernism offer in this regard. Through his research, Madanipour illuminates the intricate interplay between the built environment and the social dynamics that occur within it, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the ways in which our surroundings impact our lives. The post-modern challenge to the modernist formula "form follows function," which oversimplifies the relationship between social and physical space. Post-modernists, instead, try to disengage from this relationship and focus on physical space. However, the text argues that neither the deterministic approach of modernism

<sup>24</sup> Sun, X. (2015). The production of space and the rights of the city: theory, application and its significance in China. *Journal of Public Administration*, 8(3), 17. 孙小逸. (2015). 空间的生产与城市的权利:理论、应用及其中国意义. *公共行政评论*, 8(3), 17.

<sup>25</sup> Madanipour, A. (2003). *Public and private spaces of the city* (1st ed.). Routledge, Oxfordshire, .  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203402856>

<sup>26</sup> Madanipour, A. (1996). *Design of urban space : An inquiry into a socio-spatial process*. Wiley, Hoboken, New Jersey.

nor the political escapism of post-modernism can be maintained in a socially concerned approach to urban environments (Madanipour Ali,1996).

Madanipour Ali advocates that the widening gap between physical and social space has led to a disconnect between architecture and social sciences due to their differing conceptions of space.

### **Discussion on Lefebvre's theory**

Subsequently, the author juxtaposes several theoretical scholars with Henri Lefebvre's theories, particularly the "Production of Space" and the "Critique of Everyday Life," offering comparative and complementary insights. David Harvey, classified as a neo-Kantian, draws inspiration from Lefebvre's "Production of Space." His spatial analysis builds upon Lefebvre's robust examination of urban space as the third spatial form.

Jurgen Habermas delves into the interplay between dimensions of human life and institutional structures, contending that institutions permeate and dominate individuals' daily lives and practical activities. He advocates for the rational construction of communicative activities among people to curb this permeation. Anthony Giddens, addressing the central problem of social theory as the dichotomy between structures and individuals, posits that societal structures and individuals mutually influence each other. He asserts, "We create society at the same time as we are created by it" (Giddens, 1982:14). Urban sociologist Mark Gottdiener advocates for an integrated analysis of the city that combines political economy and human ecology to overcome mutual shortcomings. Urban socio-semiotics (Gottdiener & Lagopoulos, 1986) emerge as a novel interpretive tool combining both, relating semiotics to a concrete context through social processes.

Madanipour Ali, through an analysis of various theorists' research, contends that "There is no simple, deterministic relationship between social, psychological, and physical dimensions of space." Simultaneously, he refutes the mainstream architectural notion of "form follows function" prevalent in modernism. (Madanipour Ali,1996)

### **Public space and private space**

In his 2003 publication, "Public and Private Spaces of the City," Madanipour Ali engages in a comprehensive exploration of the conceptualization of public and private spaces. This book extensively elucidates the interconnections between public and private spaces, human perception, social constructs, and urban design. Furthermore, it undertakes a thorough and nuanced classification study of these two spatial typologies(Madanipour Ali,2003).

### **The public-private division on urban structure**

In the introduction of his work, Madanipour Ali elucidates that the bifurcation of urban living spaces into public and private realms is a societal construct, concurrently shaping daily behaviors and social activities. The design of cities and the composition of physical space adhere to the socially prescribed dichotomy of public and private domains. Madanipour Ali delves into a range of studies addressing city structures, encompassing physical configurations, activity patterns, functional organization, and social and cultural distinctions. Nevertheless, the primary focus of the book is to probe this division's

central role within the context of physical space and its associated social and psychological significance(Madanipour Ali,2003).

The public-private distinction presented also builds upon his prior work, "An Inquiry into a Socio-spatial Process," wherein urban space is examined at the crossroads of political economy and cultural-aesthetic processes.

### **Private sphere**

The author examines the private sphere from multiple perspectives, including the body, law, society, and administrative power. Primarily, the body, as the fundamental unit, is discussed as a protector of private space. Additionally, the author explores the ethical significance of privacy in law, wherein personal privacy is inherently protected as a fundamental human right. At the societal governance level, the private sphere manifests as personal property safeguarded by legal provisions. Boundaries serve as the fundamental symbols distinguishing the private domain from the public domain.

" The boundaries that separate the two realms are the most visible spatial manifestation of this division of social life. Architectural and geographical articulation of the boundary is thus the embodiment of a divide, the signifiers of a social organization. The challenge of boundary setting, i.e., the challenge of city building, is to erect the boundaries between the two realms so that they combine clarity with permeability, acknowledging the interdependence of the two realms, and supporting both sides of the boundary."(Madanipour Ali,2003:P.61)

As the fundamental social unit, the family represents the quintessential manifestation of the private sphere. Such social entities typify the basic structure of society, determining the categorization of private space.

Furthermore, the author critically examines the private domain from Marxist and feminist perspectives. Both frameworks posit that the demarcation between the private and public domains is a product of societal construction, with the private realm serving as a tool employed by the bourgeoisie to dominate and oppress the proletariat. The institution of the family, as a product of private ownership, is argued to warrant abolition. In societies dominated by patriarchal orders, women within the family are often confined to unrewarded physical labor, experiencing the deprivation of sexual resources and personal freedoms. (Madanipour Ali,2003)

### **Public sphere**

Subsequently, Madanipour Ali undertakes a classification and examination of the public sphere, delving into aspects such as interpersonal relationships, neighborhood dynamics, and the broader concept of public space. The author contends that the concept of the public holds multifaceted interpretations, where public spaces are subject to control by state public agencies, and citizens, as a collective entity, possess the right to use and share these public spaces.

Madanipour Ali asserts that interpersonal exchange relationships currently play a dominant role as a form of societal interaction, introducing the concept of the "mask" as a metaphorical device mediating between biological and social forces. This metaphorical "mask" serves as a stabilizing infrastructure for social interactions (Madanipour Ali, 2003).

Furthermore, the author introduces neighborhoods as unique organizational spatial units, playing a role in blurring the lines between public and private domains. On the one hand, private domains expand into broader areas, experiencing a certain degree of intrusion; on the other hand, individuals can establish more stable interpersonal relationships within the community, providing a conducive environment for personal development.

The author also highlights the public sphere as a discursive space, drawing connections to the democratic society of ancient Greece. However, the contemporary interpretation should advance beyond the elitist model of democracy, encouraging widespread public participation in the public sphere.

Madanipour Ali proceeds to contrast the public space of sociability, emphasizing interpersonal relations without a normative political agenda, with the public sphere of politics, which focuses on normative agendas but often neglects the spatial dimension of the public sphere. The author aligns with Charles Taylor's view that the public sphere comprises various public spaces but constitutes a 'meta topical' or 'meta spatial' space. In essence, the public sphere is depicted as an integrated material and institutional common arena that connects individuals, enabling them to regulate exposure and concealment, express differences and identities, assess their own reality, scrutinize the state, and formulate shared opinions. (Madanipour Ali, 2003)

## ● Zygmunt Bauman

### **Background**

Zygmunt Bauman (1925–2017) was a Polish sociologist and philosopher. He was born on November 19, 1925 in Poznań, Poland. Bauman is best known for his analyses of the links between modernity and the Holocaust and of postmodern consumerism.

Bauman's work addressed a range of issues, but he is most famous for his exploration of modernity and postmodernity. In particular, he examined the way in which contemporary society is characterized by a constant state of change and instability, a concept he referred to as "liquid modernity." Bauman's ideas have had a significant impact on contemporary sociology and beyond. His work has been influential in the development of theories and concepts such as the "seduced and repressed" theory of consumerism, the "tourist syndrome" view of identity, and the concept of "adiaphorization" in modern society.

Zygmunt Bauman passed away on January 9, 2017, in Leeds, England. His contributions to the field of sociology continue to be influential and widely studied.

## Liquid Modernity

The term "liquid" in the context of "liquid modernity," as explained by Bauman in the preface, requires clarification through a comparison with "solid." Firstly, the distinction lies in the nature of bonds; liquid molecules exhibit weak order, whereas solid chemical bonds ensure stability and resistance against molecular separation. Additionally, concerning fluidity, the temporal dimension is crucial for liquids, whereas solidity allows for the relative neglect of temporal considerations. Lastly, liquids are often associated with "lightness," embodying greater uncertainty and fluidity compared to solids<sup>27</sup> (Bauman, Z. 2000).

In Michael Hviid Jacobsen's work, "Zygmunt Bauman – An Ambivalent Utopian," the understanding of modernity is elucidated, with liquid modernity posited as the counterpart to what he terms "solid modernity." Bauman designates the modernity represented by modern society and science as solid, embodying structured activities. When contradictions persist within this structured and unavoidable activity, entering a realm beyond the scope of structured or scientific domains, liquid modernity emerges as a coexistence with such contradictions, reflecting postmodernist thought (Hviid Jacobsen, M. 2016).

Bauman characterizes modernity as "rigid, fatal, and sealed off from any freedom of choice." The contemporary spirit aims to break free from the past Fordist, rigid, and doctrinal order. When the term 'modern' was coined by the authors of *The Communist Manifesto*, it referred to liberating reality from the 'dead hand' of its own history. Bauman suggests that this rigidity results not from dictatorial rule or oppression but from the 'radical melting' of constraints that previously limited individual freedom.

The prevalent atomization of contemporary individuals does not signify humanity's entry into a phase of self-liberation but rather an intensified alienation process within capitalism. In the traditional industrial society's large production model, individuals held civic identities within collectives. In the modern deindustrialized consumerist society, detachment from groups leads to existence marked by instability, uncertainty, and fluidity, defining the characteristics of this era<sup>28</sup>(Ren, R. 2023).

## Liquid City

In Bauman's portrayal of an atomized society, public spaces within urban settings no longer serve collective activities, and the delineation of boundaries among different spaces ceases to exist. Edyta Barańska, in her review titled "A City in Liquid Modernity: A Sociological Perspective" (2019), argues that the definition of cities and spaces has undergone a transformation. In the contemporary society

<sup>27</sup> Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity* [EPUB]. Polity Press, Cambridge.

<sup>28</sup> Ren, R.(2023). *The research on z bauman's individualized society critical thought*. [Master's thesis, Jilin University].任蕊蕊.(2023). 齐格蒙特·鲍曼个体化社会批判思想研究. [硕士论文, 吉林大学].  
<https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27162/d.cnki.gjlin.2023.007198doi:10.27162/d.cnki.gjlin.2023.007198>.

characterized by instability and fluidity, cities are no longer stable entities, and boundaries have become transparent <sup>29</sup>(Barańska, E. 2019).

Anna Hartnell, in an article published in 2017, and Eric M. Hardy, in a review from the same year, discuss the nested relationship between Zygmunt Bauman's liquid modernity and the liquid management of cities. Hartnell, using the recent flooding in New Orleans as a starting point, critiques the early exploitation-based urban development in the United States during industrialization. The article argues that through suburbanization, cities expanded, and the flooding revealed that "all modern cities are to some extent entangled in the history of human-induced climate change." Bauman's described fluid and uncontrollable capitalism contributed to the uncontrollable water resource management in New Orleans, deepening societal instability<sup>30</sup> (Hartnell, A. 2017).

Eric M. Hardy focuses on the city as a 'structure of ideas,' exploring how 19th-century Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago managed water resources, influencing the formation of American urban society. The article introduces issues of modern water resource privatization, discusses how to uphold citizens' rights regarding environmental resources, and compares changes in modernity across two eras discussed by Bauman<sup>31</sup> (Hardy, E. M. 2017).

Aglieri Rinella, T., & García Rubio, R., based on Bauman's discussion of the instability, variability, and temporality of modernity, propose the concept of "liquid architecture." This architectural concept adapts to fluidity and variability, meeting the needs for various temporary activities, such as removable accommodation facilities. It provides spaces for collective interaction, temporary dining, and entertainment installations. Through the conceptualization of temporary architecture, the authors illustrate the fluid lifestyle of contemporary modernity<sup>32</sup> (Aglieri Rinella, T., & García Rubio, R., 2017).

## ● Conclusion

The study emphasizes the need for a nuanced understanding of urban space that considers the interplay between physical form, social function, and the variable boundaries between public and private life. Both Madanipur's and Bauman's works offer critical insights into the formation of urban landscapes and social structures, reflecting the complex interplay between space, society, and personal identity in the context of modern and postmodern thought.

<sup>29</sup> Barańska, E. (2019). A city in liquid modernity: a sociological perspective. Abstracts of the ICA. 1. 1-1. 10.5194/ica-abs-1-22-2019.

<sup>30</sup> Hartnell, A. (2017) Writing the liquid city: excavating urban ecologies after Katrina, *Textual Practice*, 31:5, 933-949, DOI: 10.1080/0950236X.2017.1323489

<sup>31</sup> Hardy, E. M. (2017). Liquid Modernity: Urbanization and the Challenges of Managing Water. *Journal of Urban History*, 43(3), 537-542. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144217695532>

<sup>32</sup> Aglieri Rinella, T., & García Rubio, R. (2017). Pop-Up, Liquid Architecture for a Liquid World. *Arts*, 6(3), 14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/arts6030014>



## 2.3 Henri Lefebvre

### ● Introduction

Regarding the extension of Henri Lefebvre's theory, I have selected three scholars of significant prominence in international academia within the Marxist urban theory framework. These scholars not only hold important positions but also share a lineage with Lefebvre's theories. From various perspectives, they have supplemented, critiqued, or further reconstructed Lefebvre's triad of spatial theory, right to the city, and social space.

### ● David Harvey

#### David Harvey's Influence from Lefebvre

David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre, prominent figures in critical geography and urban theory, share a common interest in Marx's work and the impact of space on social relations. Harvey expanded on Lefebvre's idea of the "social production of space" in his book "The Condition of Postmodernity," illustrating how space and our perceptions of it are shaped by shifts in capitalist production methods. The concept of "spatial fix," derived from Lefebvre's influence, describes how capital overcomes barriers to profitable investment by shifting investments to different geographic areas or economic sectors.

Harvey further developed the concept of the "right to the city," seeing it not just as access to urban resources but as the right to transform the city according to the desires of its inhabitants. This concept has influenced various fields, including urban planning, architecture, and social activism.

#### Critique of Spatial Justice

Spatial justice is a crucial theory proposed by David Harvey, building on Lefebvre's spatial production theory. Harvey explores the restructuring of space under globalized capitalism, viewing it as a manifestation of capitalist exploitation and the global division of labor and resource allocation. According to Harvey, the true nature of space lies in its social character, embedded in specific physical landscapes with societal meanings. In "Justice, Nature and the Political Geography of Difference," Harvey critiques postmodernist relativism in justice theories, emphasizing the importance of justice as a powerful political critique force with mobilizing discourse functions.<sup>33</sup>

(Ren,2014) He investigates the mechanisms of capitalist spatial production, categorizing them into global space production, natural space production, and urban space production, emphasizing the dialectical unity of "sameness" and "difference."<sup>34</sup>(Li,2012).

<sup>33</sup> Ren, Z. (2014). Capital, space, and justice critique: A study of David Harvey's spatial justice thoughts. *Studies On Marxism*, (6), 10. 任政. (2014). 资本、空间与正义批判——大卫·哈维的空间正义思想研究. *马克思主义研究*, (6), 10.

<sup>34</sup> Li, C. (2012). David Harvey's thoughts on spatial justice. *Philosophical Trends*, (4), 7.33. 李春敏. (2012). 大卫·哈维的空间正义思想. *哲学动态*, (4), 7.

## Space Fix

Harvey contends that modern disciplinary knowledge emphasizes temporal studies over spatial ones, with sociologists like Weber, Durkheim, and Marshall focusing on time and history rather than space<sup>35</sup> (Zhang & Li, 2010) . As a geographer, Harvey integrates urban space theory with Marxist theory, introducing the concept of "spatial fix." This theory aims to "reconstruct theory by making space a fundamental element of theoretical composition."<sup>36</sup> (He&Zhao,2021) The term "fix" in the spatial fix has a dual meaning: literal repair of physical space and the reorganization of space to address capitalist crises. This perspective corrects the imbalance in theoretical status between time and space.<sup>37</sup> (Zhao&He,2012)

### ● Edward W. Soja

#### Association with Lefebvre's Theory

In Soja's theoretical framework, there is a comprehensive inheritance of the propositions put forth by both Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey, culminating in the redirection of critical discourse towards spatial issues, referred to as "spatial turn." First and foremost is the acknowledgment of Lefebvre's dialectical relationship between society and space. In "Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory," Soja mentions, "Space itself may be given originally, but the organization and meaning of space are indeed products of social change, social transformation, and social experience" <sup>38</sup>(Soja, 1989). This aligns with Lefebvre's perspective on social space, where although there is no specific correlation between social and spatial relationships, the mode of production projects these relationships into reality, creating a reciprocal influence<sup>39</sup> (Zhang, 2020). Additionally, Soja's theory of the "third space" continues along the lines of Lefebvre's spatial dialectics.

#### The Third Space

Lefebvre introduced the concepts of "spatial practice," "representational space," and "representations of space" in the production of space. Soja builds upon these ideas, proposing the material first space, the conceptual second space, and the third space, which combines actual practices with imagination. Soja's third space transcends and rejects the dichotomy between the first and second spaces, deconstructing and reconstructing both. It disrupts the binary opposition

<sup>35</sup> Zhang, R., & Li, C. (2010). An exploration of David Harvey's New Marxist spatial theory. *Fujian Tribune(The Humanities & Social Sciences Monthly)*, (1), 6. 章仁彪, & 李春敏. (2010). 大卫·哈维的新马克思主义空间理论探析. *福建论坛:人文社会科学版*(1), 6.

<sup>36</sup> He, X., & Zhao, H. (2012). David Harvey's "Space-Time Restoration" Theory and Its Contemporary Value. *Guangxi shehui kexue*, (08), 39-43. 赫曦滢 赵海月. (2012). 大卫·哈维"时空修复"理论及其当代价值. *广西社会科学*(08), 39-43. doi:10. 3969 /j. issn. 1004-6917.2012.08.010

<sup>37</sup> Zhao, H., & He, X. (2012). Construction and considerations of David Harvey's "spatial fix" theory. *Journal of Beijing Administrative College*, (5), 5. DOI:10.16365/j.cnki.11-4054/d.2012.05.002 赵海月, & 赫曦滢. (2012). 大卫·哈维"时空修复"理论的建构与考量. *北京行政学院学报*(5), 5.

<sup>38</sup> Soja, E. W. (1989). *Postmodern geographies: The reassertion of space in critical social theory*. London; New York: Verso.

<sup>39</sup> Zhang, Y. (2020). Social Spatiality and Historicity: An Interpretation of Lefebvre's "The Production of Space." *Practice and Text, Shandong Social Sciences*, (10), 290. DOI: 10.14112/j.cnki.37-1053/c.2019.10.004 张一兵. (2020). 社会空间的关系性与历史性——列斐伏尔《空间的生产》解读 实践与文本. *山东社会科学*, 2019年第10期总第290期.

between the material and the spiritual aspects of space. Soja contends that the third space is thoroughly open, constituting a differential space that integrates reality and imagination, enabling discussions from various perspectives<sup>40</sup> (Feng, 2017).

## ● Manuel Castells

Manuel Castells, a prominent figure in the New Marxist urban theory, is profoundly influenced by Henri Lefebvre's urban theory. Creatively integrating Lefebvre's writings on space and revolution, Alain Touraine's social movement theory, and Althusser's structuralism into his own framework, Castells highly praises Lefebvre's contributions to Marxist theory<sup>41</sup> (He, 2012, p. 4). In his book "The Urban Question," Castells critiques Lefebvre's humanitarian urban perspective and undergoes a thorough rethinking of Western Marxist spatial theories.

### Urban Issues

In "The Urban Question, problems," Manuel Castells criticizes the framing of urban issues by the Chicago School at that time, particularly their focus on the assimilation of immigrants and the resolution of various problems within "marginal communities" in the United States. He argues that this approach disregards class, gender, and ethnic differences, assuming a unified urban culture when discussing urban<sup>42</sup> (Wang & Yang, 2008). Taking a humanistic ecological perspective, Castells views the city as a product of humanity.

Furthermore, he critiques Lefebvre's problem consciousness, challenging Lefebvre's attempt to view the city as a constitutive center where people can freely gather for daily life, a cohesion that is dispersed due to the domination and alienation imposed by capitalism. Castells contends that both the Chicago School and Lefebvre's urban problem consciousness exhibit a strong voluntaristic tendency, a stance incompatible with his own structuralist position. He argues for the use of new theoretical tools, specifically Althusserian structuralist methods. Castells defines the ideological system as a symbolic system composed of signifying elements, asserting that the city is a complex whole constituted by economic, political, and ideological links determined by the economy.

Castells introduces the concept of "collective consumption," stating in "The Theory and Ideology of Urban Sociology" that collective consumption, in terms of its nature and scale, is organized and managed as collective provision. Examples include housing, social public facilities, entertainment,

<sup>40</sup> Feng, Y. (2017). *A Study on Edward Soja's Spatial Theory*. [Doctoral dissertation, Zhongnan University of Economics and Law].  
冯忆.(2017). *爱德华·苏贾的空间理论研究*. [Doctoral dissertation, 中南财经政法大学].

<sup>41</sup> He, X. (2012). *Research of Neo-Marxism Urban Schools*. [Doctoral dissertation, Jilin University]. 赫曦滢. (2012). *新马克思主义城市学派理论研究*. [Doctoral dissertation, 吉林大学].

<sup>42</sup> 96. Wang, B., & Yang, Y. (2008). On the research of Manuel Castells. *Journal of Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications: Social Sciences Edition*, (6), 6. 王保臣, & 杨艳萍. (2008). 曼纽尔·卡斯特研究述评. *北京邮电大学学报: 社会科学版*(6), 6.

and leisure services. These collective consumption goods are produced either from the market or by the state to ensure the public and social nature of consumption<sup>43</sup> (Niu, 2013).

## ● Conclusion

Through an examination of Western scholars' studies of Henri Lefebvre's ideas, it becomes evident that his theories play a pivotal role in both Marxist urbanism and the "spatial turn" in Western social critique. Lefebvre's propositions, including the spatial triad, the reproduction of space, and the reproduction of social relations, hold foundational significance in Marxist urban theory, serving as a fundamental complement to dialectical materialism in spatial theory.

# Part II. Urban renewal and urban village in China

## Chapter 2. Urban renewal in China

### 1. Introduction of urban renewal

#### 1.1 Definition of urban renewal and its scientific debates

The definition of Urban renewal has been interpreted in a variety of ways based on different countries and time periods and by different scholars, lacking a unified definition in current academic discourse. This article aims to introduce several closely related terms that have garnered attention in the academic realm.

Terms	Period of utilization	Semantic emphasis	Main Bodies
Urban renewal	Prevalent after the war in some countries beginning in the early 19th century	Bulldozer type of large-scale demolition and construction	Government agencies. Dominated and evolved into multi-party cooperation
Urban redevelopment	Concentrated in 1950s	A term with a subjective connotation	Government and private developers
Urban revitalization	1970S-80S	To give new life, often to a certain area	Urban development. Corporation groups, social organizations

<sup>43</sup> Niu, J. (2013). *The problems in cities and the cities in problematics — on the urban question of manuel castells*. [Doctoral dissertation, Nanjing University]. 牛俊伟. (2013). *城市中的问题与问题中的城市卡斯特《城市问题》研究*. [Doctoral dissertation, 南京大学].

Urban renaissance	1980S-90S	Rebirth, with utopian urban ideals	Government, private developers, social organization
Urban regeneration	1990S	In response to the phenomenon of urban decline	Government, private developers, social groups, academics, the public

Fig.1: Table of the terms related to urban renewal

Source: 19. Ding, F., & Wu, J. (2017). The Evolution of the Concept of Urban Regeneration and the Practical Connotation in Today's Society. *Urban Planning Journal*, 6, 87-95. DOI:10.16361/j.upf.201706012 丁凡, & 伍江. (2017). 城市更新相关概念的演进及在当下的现实意义. *城市规划学刊*, (6), 87-95.



Fig.2: Graph of Frequency of use

Source: Google Inc. Google Books Ngram Viewer. Retrieved from [https://books.google.com/ngrams/]

- Urban renewal

The first international conference on urban renewal was held in 1958 in The Hague, Netherlands, and the description of urban renewal was introduced. In the book "Urban Renewal Theory and Practice," Chris Couch mentioned that "urban renewal is seen as the physical change, or change in the use or intensity of use of land and buildings, that is the inevitable outcome of the action of economic and social forces upon urban areas (Couch, 1990). "Other scholars also pointed out that "Urban renewal has three facts: urban redevelopment, neighborhood rehabilitation, and neighborhood conservation <sup>44</sup>(Deng,2009)."

The government's definition of urban renewal is more akin to the actual planning approach. In China, the Hong Kong SAR government defines urban renewal as a planning process and program of

<sup>44</sup> Deng, K. (2011). *The sustainability assessment of different models for urban renewal- A case of Guangzhou*. [Doctoral dissertation, Huazhong University of Science and Technology]. 邓堪强. (2011). 城市更新不同模式的可持续性评价. [博士学位论文, 华中科技大学].

[http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=0qMDjMp0v1luKGqH9D3OsEjkCdWrxzphOawUxMJqQ3gdX8em-t3KcrPmDi-Can0T09iXoyJvorfBGCV2FdsCFuAew10LfKErN5LGcmX42ViBV\\_xLevtS\\_sy9WfvjxbXzslHvoA1eUJG2WNZi0BYmA==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=0qMDjMp0v1luKGqH9D3OsEjkCdWrxzphOawUxMJqQ3gdX8em-t3KcrPmDi-Can0T09iXoyJvorfBGCV2FdsCFuAew10LfKErN5LGcmX42ViBV_xLevtS_sy9WfvjxbXzslHvoA1eUJG2WNZi0BYmA==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS)

environmentally friendly redevelopment activities in declining areas through large-scale destruction and removal.

There is also a clear definition of urban renewal in the U.S. regulatory system. "Urban renewal is a strategy for redeveloping and revitalizing substandard, decadent, and blighted open areas for residential, commercial, industrial, business, governmental, recreational, educational, hospital, or other uses. <sup>45</sup>(Massachusetts government)" Its relationship with urban renewal planning and urban Urban renewal is a highly relevant and complementary approach to urban renewal planning and urban renewal policies.

Urban renewal is the main idea and method of eliminating negative space in cities nowadays, and it also contributes to the sustainable development of society, economic development, and the provision of jobs and a good living environment for citizens.

- Urban Regeneration

The definition of urban regeneration lies in comprehensive foresight and actions to address urban issues, seeking sustained improvement in various aspects such as economic, material, social, and environmental conditions in a region undergoing change (Ding & Wu, 2017). Widely used in the UK, Hong Kong, and areas studied by British researchers, urban regeneration has broader applications in fields like sociology and public policy (Zhou, 2017). In comparison to urban renewal, urban regeneration encompasses a wider scope, including the well-being and development of individuals in the urban context<sup>46</sup> (Liu & Zhao, 2016).

- Urban Redevelopment

Predominantly used in the United States during the 1940s-50s, urban redevelopment places greater emphasis on the characteristic of a top-down management approach by the government, often involving private sector participation. The purpose is to initiate development projects for economic growth, implying a comprehensive re-planning of urban areas that positively transforms the social and economic environment <sup>47</sup>(Ding & Wu, 2017).

- Urban Renaissance

Described by scholars as a "typical feature of contemporary urban policies," urban renaissance, in contrast to urban renewal, focuses on enhancing the overall competitiveness of a city. It resembles a kind of urban development manifesto and encompasses goals of social, cultural, economic, environmental, and political sustainability (Kate, Libby, 2008). Emphasizing changes not only at the material level but also in social, ideological, and cultural aspects, urban renaissance reflects shifts in the entire city's values (Ding & Wu, 2017).

<sup>45</sup> Massachusetts government. *Urban Renewal (UR)*.

Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/urban-renewal-ur>

<sup>46</sup> Liu, P., & Zhao, H. (2016). Urban Renewal from the Perspective of Spatial Political Economy. *Academic Exchange*, (12), 5. 刘鹏飞, & 赵海月. (2016). 空间政治经济学视角下的城市更新. *学术交流*, (12), 5.

<sup>47</sup> Ding, F., & Wu, J. (2017). The Evolution of the Concept of Urban Regeneration and the Practical Connotation in Today's Society. *Urban Planning Journal*, 6, 87-95. DOI:10.16361/j.upf.201706012 丁凡, & 伍江. (2017). 城市更新相关概念的演进及在今天的现实意义. *城市规划学刊*, (6), 87-95.

## 1.2 The development of urban renewal in Western countries , the case of the United Kingdom

The urban renewal process in Western countries has profound effects on the physical form and social structure of cities. It also has an important reference role for urban renewal in China that will be discussed later. We will discuss the development of urban regeneration from a historical perspective, mainly taking the UK as an example.

1. Starting with the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, industrialization led to dramatic changes in population distribution patterns and urban form. The huge demand for labor caused a massive migration of the population around industrial plants and a large expansion of cities centered on industrial areas.

Chris Couch (1990) "rapid innovation in technical and social relations including not only the new relationships between employers and employees required by the factory system but also a social restructuring and a new social order within cities including ultimately a much expanded 'middle' class that proved highly influential in shaping future processes of urban development."(Couch,1990)

2. The rapid urbanization brought about the housing problems of the working class, especially the health issues caused by the poor sanitary environment. The government began to intervene in the process of urban renewal, proposing regulations and specific policies aimed at improving the housing conditions of the working class, demolishing slums and replacing them with housing that met housing standards, but due to the limitations of the state's power at the time and the effects of World War I, such interventions had limited positive impact.

3. The situation improved in the twentieth century, when the state increased its role and responsibility in urban renewal, as demonstrated by the creation of social housing, welfare facilities, and so on, but also by the more contemporary issues, such as the changing political ideologies, the fiscal constraints, the market failures, and the social conflicts.

4. The post-World War II reconstruction, with its global wave of migration and post-war resource constraints, created a number of social problems, foremost of which was the housing shortage, which made town planning an important part of Britain's post-war socio-economic program and continued into the 1960s, along with the attendant increase in social poverty and inequality, and rising crime rates. In 1968, the Home Office launched the regionally targeted Urban Plan, which focused not only on rising crime rates but also on broader social issues and extended to the community level. The goals of the program were ambitious and intended to address the structural problems of society, but the lack of a clear strategy and the lack of awareness of the shifting global economic environment at the time led to less than optimal implementation.

5. Starting in the 1980s, with Margaret Thatcher coming to power, the Keynesianism that the UK had followed for many years was abandoned in terms of economic policy, leading to a shift towards monetarism to deal with inflation in the UK at the time. There was also a paradigm shift in urban renewal, from the development of new urban areas to the redevelopment of old city areas and a switch from the previous slum clearance and reconstruction to the improvement of built-up areas. At this time, the UK was dominated by a variety of property developments, with commercial, office, and

convention centers becoming the main direction of regeneration. The reason for this is that in the context of the economic recession, the public sector has taken a back seat to the private sector, which has become the main force in promoting economic development and creating a favorable economic environment.

6. In the 1990s, the British government introduced a new City Challenge policy of global competition. The idea of urban renewal changed to a comprehensive, holistic approach to social improvement, involving economic development, housing, education and training, environmental improvement, social crime, equal opportunity, etc., and emphasizing the participation of residents in the renewal process.

7.

From Peter Roberts' book in 2000, it gives an overview of the current approach to urban renewal:

"Urban regeneration is comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change."

From the development process of urban regeneration in the UK, we can see that urban regeneration is inextricably linked to the economic environment and production patterns of the society in which it is located at a specific historical period and the political landscape of the world and the involvement of the national government is also a major factor influencing its development direction<sup>48</sup>. (Couch,1990)

## 2. Urban renewal in China

### 2.1 Introduction

Urban renewal is currently a major topic in China. Since the founding of New China, its urban construction has made great achievements and urban renewal theories, have been gradually improved in practice, but some problems can be noted that have grown out of it. Among them, there are universal problems in the globalized industrial system, and there are also problems in China's particular historical and social context. Therefore, in this chapter, we will focus on the particularities of Chinese cities and introduce the motivations, historical background, and management mechanisms of urban renewal in China.

### 2.2 Background and impetus

Due to the intricate historical background, China had been in a semi-colonial and semi-feudal state for a long time, the commodity economy was not developed, and the industrial revolution of the West, as well as the world in the 18th century, had little impact on China. After the establishment of New China, it began to adopt a socialist planned economy and really started to enter the globalized industrial production system from the reform and opening up in the late 70s. In just a few decades,

<sup>48</sup> Couch, C. (1990). *Urban Renewal, Theory and Practice*. Red Globe Press: London.



China's economy grew at a rapid pace, with explosive urbanization, the main hallmark of economic development. Of course, rapid urbanization has brought about the accumulation of problems in various aspects, resulting in the intractable "urban disease."

- Insufficient land resources and ecosystem imbalance due to explosive urban expansion

Over the past few decades, China has experienced rapid urban expansion, transforming the country from a predominantly rural society to an urbanized powerhouse. This explosive growth has been driven by several interrelated factors, including economic development, government policies, and social changes.

Rapid urbanization has brought about problems such as a shortage of land resources, inefficient use of land, and negative impact on the ecological environment caused by the improper use of resources.

Taking Shenzhen as an example, the urban construction of Shenzhen in the 1980s was basically confined to the original 327 km<sup>2</sup> SAR area. By the 1990s, Shenzhen had rapidly developed into a mega-city of one million people, and the contradiction of insufficient space for the Special Administrative Region became apparent. With the active appeal and advice from the planning department, the new municipal government of Shenzhen in 2005 dared to face up to the serious situation of urban development and openly admitted that Shenzhen was facing the real difficulties of limited land space, shortage of water and energy resources, overburdened population, and serious overdraft of environmental carrying capacity<sup>49</sup>(Zou, 2013).

In addition, the government has limited control over incremental land, and due to historical problems, there are sites with unclear property rights, intertwined legal and illegal sites, and complicated conflicts of interest. This type of land has become a huge unknown in the expansion of construction.

- Large number of old houses left behind have not been improved properly.

The renovation of old housing dates back to before the founding of New China, when the country was in a state of extreme poverty and residents' housing was generally of low environmental quality, with crowded space and backward infrastructure. During the planned economy, only small-scale environmental repairs of a compensatory nature were adopted, and by the early reform and opening-up period, the main approach was to fill the vacant space with the aim of building improved labor housing and infrastructure, but because of the immature management system, backward economic conditions and weak awareness of preserving the cultural and historical environment at that time, more hidden risks were left for the subsequent renovation work.

<sup>49</sup> Zou, B.(2013). From physical expansion to built-up area improvement: Shenzhen master plan transition forces and paths. *Planners*,29(5):5-10. 邹兵 (2013) 由“增量扩张”转向“存量优化”—深圳市城市总体规划转型的动因与路径. *规划师* .2013年,29卷,第5期,5-10.

- Change of urban development strategy in the context of industrial transformation and economic environment downside

In the context of a globalized economy, China has experienced a shift in industrial focus from industry to services, from the low end to the high end, including emerging industry and the demand for high-level talent, facilitating the process of urban renewal. But among these will also come a reduction in job opportunities and a weak economic growth rate.

2008, due to the U.S. subprime mortgage crisis into the global financial crisis, in November 2008, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, in the State Council executive meeting, deployed ten measures to further expand domestic demand to promote stable and rapid economic growth, including infrastructure construction, shantytown renovation, which will require an investment of about 4 trillion yuan by the end of 2010<sup>50</sup>(Chen. 2016).

This initiative is mainly used to stimulate consumption for the purpose of economic recovery through "new-type urbanization", including historical and cultural environment renovation, rural construction, etc.

In addition, during the real estate boom in China in the 21st century, urban development companies were the leading players in China's urban renewal decisions, as development groups with local government backgrounds transformed into urban developers, operators, investors, and so on. They are involved in a wide range of real estate projects, including tourism, culture, retirement, etc.

After 2014, China's real estate market started to go into recession, and the management model of urban development started to change subtly. The roles of the government and development companies in this are also constantly shifting.

### 2.3 Recent Objectives of urban renewal in China

- From traditional single physical planning to integrated, systemic planning

In the past, China's urban regeneration strategy has focused exclusively on the transformation of the physical form of the city without fully recognizing that the urban environment needs to take into account ecological, economic, and social aspects more. In order to adapt to the changing and complex urban problems of contemporary times, a more comprehensive and profound understanding of society, more flexible operation, and broader objectives are needed.

- From Physical Expansion To Built-up Area Improvement

China's rapid urbanization over the past few decades has led to significant physical expansion of cities. However, this expansion has often come at the cost of environmental and social sustainability.

Concerning the shortage of land resources and the historical legacy of land faced, the strategy of urban renewal should turn to the redevelopment and quality improvement of built-up areas. Improve the efficiency of land use, enhance urban functions, and adapt to the economic environment and

<sup>50</sup> Chen Yi.(2016).Study on Spatial Governance of Urban Renewal in China Transformation Period: Mechanism and Model.(PhD diss., Nanjing University) 陈易 (2016) 转型期中国城市更新的空间治理研究: 机制与模式 (博士学位论文, 南京大学)

industrial transformation.

- Focus on improving old houses and living standards for residents

Improving the quality of old housing stock and raising the living standards of residents are always the central objectives of urban renewal in China.

This is reflected in the effective investigation of potential housing safety hazards and the timely replacement of outdated infrastructure. For the livelihood protection of the residents, especially for the low-income group, it is necessary to allocate an appropriate proportion of subsidized housing, increase the supply of subsidized housing through multiple channels, and bundle medical, educational, and cultural services.

- Addressing and resolving historical land system issues

For land with historical legacy problems, unclear land ownership, intermingling of legal and illegal land use, etc., centralized management is needed to improve land utilization. Take Shenzhen as an example; Shenzhen through the urbanization construction in 2004, 21 towns or streets and 261 administrative villages in Bao'an and Longgang districts were turned into communities, 270,000 former villagers were turned into urban residents, and about 956 square kilometers of collective land was turned into state-owned at one time, and a total area of appropriate subsidies for the conversion of 241 square kilometers can be said to be a special case of the national development process of urbanization<sup>51</sup>(Liu,2014). However, the change from the institutional aspect is very limited; the government, village collectives, enterprises, and other parties still have disputes over interests and cannot reach a consensus.

Land governance is currently a difficult problem to solve, involving very complex social relations and historical reasons, and is a crux in China's urbanization.

## 2.4 History of urban renovation in China

Since the New China was established, numerous changes in urban planning have taken place. The development of urban renewal in China. In the context of China's changing institutional and economic environments, different periods have different goals, contents, and forms of practice, of which the reform and opening-up in 1978 will serve as an important node. It also discusses the main elements of urban renewal in China at different stages from the economic and policy context of the time, as well as in the context of relevant journals published at the time. It also compares the situation in Western countries by understanding the history of urban renovation in China.

<sup>51</sup> Liu L.(2008). Analysis of the game between real estate developers and the government Research on Financial and Economic Issue 2008,8,104-106 刘雷 (2008) 房地产开发商与政府之间的博弈分析, 财经问题研究 2008年, 第八期, 104-106

- (1949-1977) "Transformation of consumer cities into production cities" and "socialist industrialization"



Fig.3: The urban renewal projects in the early days of New China

Source: Ma, H. (2022). Research on the evolution of urban renewal development in my country based on journal literature statistics [Master's thesis, Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology],p.76.

For the newly founded New China, the whole country was in a state of extreme poverty, with cities destroyed by years of war and the economy stagnant for many years. The "transformation of consumer cities into production cities"<sup>52</sup>(Yang&Chen, 2023) was an important policy put forward by the government at the time, aiming at transforming the old China, where the people were exploited by imperialism and the buyer-bureaucratic class, into a new China, where domestic production served the people, by increasing the share of industrial production in the GDP of the whole population, and by increasing the number of people employed in industrial production. The state invested funds mainly in production industries, the establishment of industrial zones, and the renovation of old cities to serve industrial development.

In the early years of the country, it was important to clean up the urban environment and the living conditions of the population, such as housing where the population gathered in large numbers and where the sanitary conditions were generally very poor and dangerous. Infrastructure improvement work was also carried out in various cities, such as the representative Longshugou renovation in Beijing in 1951, which improved Beijing's sewerage system and power grid system, and the shantytown renovation in Zhaojiabang, Shanghai in 1954, which became the largest cityscape in Shanghai at that time. Although there were overall positive changes, the effect of urban renewal was limited due to the lack of experience and funds, the fact that the state did not pay attention to the improvement of people's quality of life, and the neglect of historical and cultural heritage.

During the Great Leap Forward period and the Cultural Revolution, the state's policies were skewed by many unrealistic projects and political instability, and the pace of urban construction almost came to a standstill, with indiscriminate demolition of houses and construction and damage to public facilities due to the surge in the city's population.(Yang&Chen,2023)

<sup>52</sup> Yang J. & Chen Y. (2023). Development and review of urban renewal in China from 1949 to 2019. *Urban Development Research*, 30(2), 8. 阳建强, & 陈月. (2023). 1949-2019 年中国城市更新的发展与回顾. *城市发展研究*, 30(2), 8.

● (1978-1989) High priority given to urban development



Fig.4: Beijing Shichahai "class courtyard" 1982.

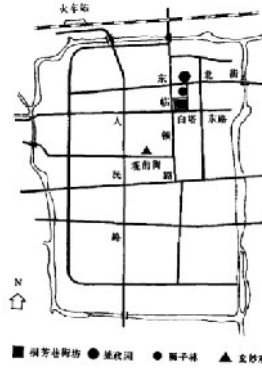


Fig.5: Tong Fang Lane, Suzhou,1989

Source: Ma H. (2022). *Research on the development and evolution of urban renewal in China based on periodical literature statistics*. [Master's thesis, Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology],p.97&99. 马皓宸 (2022) .基于期刊文献统计的我国城市更新发展演变研究. [硕士学位论文, 西安建筑科技大学],p.97&99.

In the early years of reform and opening up, the country focused on the transformation of old cities, and urban renewal planning projects shifted from government-led to developer participation. The projects mainly included the improvement of urban infrastructure and the accommodation of old employees, as well as the preservation of historical and cultural heritage.

In 1984, the first urban planning legislation, "the Urban Planning Ordinance," was published, which was of great significance and guidance to the then fledgling urban renewal program.(Yang&Chen, 2023)

The floating population of the city also grew at a high rate during this decade. According to the research of Mr. Lin Zhiqun, the proportion of the floating population to the non-agricultural population of the city in the three years of 1981, 1985, and 1990 were 5.29%, 11.02%, and 14.22%, respectively, which meant that the city needed to have the capacity to carry a sudden increase in the number of people living in the city, which posed a great challenge to the urban planning at that time. During the 10-year period from 1978 to 1987, the city built more than 44 million m<sup>2</sup> of new residences, of which 35 million m<sup>2</sup> were built in 1981-1987, and the proportion of residences in the total floor area increased by about 30%<sup>53</sup>. (Ma,2022)

In addition, the construction of the historical and cultural old city follows the "strengthen the maintenance, gradual transformation" in the renewal of the old city on the basis of, at the same time, ensuring that the local residents of the living environment, follow the laws of the economy, there are trade-offs on the transformation of the ancient buildings.

<sup>53</sup> Ma, H. (2022). *Research on the evolution of urban renewal development in my country based on journal literature statistics* [Master's thesis, Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology] 马皓宸 (2022) .基于期刊文献统计的我国城市更新发展演变研究 [硕士学位论文, 西安建筑科技大学]

## ● (1990-2011) Marketization of land



Fig.6: Xintiandi Square, 2001



Fig.7: Shougang Ertong factory after renovation,2010

Source: Ma H. (2022). *Research on the development and evolution of urban renewal in China based on periodical literature statistics*. [Master's thesis, Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology],p.125&126. 基于期刊文献统计的我国城市更新发展演变研究. [硕士学位论文, 西安建筑科技大学].

In the nineties, China's land system was reformed with the help of the state-owned land compensation system; the state-owned land was marketized, ending the period of welfare housing, the real estate economy developed rapidly under the impetus of the market economy, and the commercial housing became the main residence of the people, which also greatly increased the degree of land development, and pushed the progress of the transformation of the old cities in various places.

With the introduction of a large amount of foreign capital, urban renewal has shifted from a single "old house reconstruction" and "old area reconstruction" to "old area redevelopment," and cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Nanjing, Hangzhou, Shenzhen, etc. have boldly taken advantage of the specific conditions of each place to carry out practical exploration. Some representative projects include the transformation of Tianzifang in Shanghai in 1998, the renewal of Beijing's 798 Art District in 2001, and the functional transformation and redevelopment of industrial areas on both sides of the Huangpu River driven by the Shanghai World Expo in 2010.

At the same time, the structural problems unique to the society of that era made urban renewal a multifaceted challenge. In the 1990s, the reform and restructuring of state-owned enterprises led to a wave of layoffs, and the overdevelopment of the city resulted in high-density housing and overloaded infrastructure, among other things.

In addition, profit-oriented developer-led redevelopment has created large-scale disharmonious urban spaces by ignoring the historical heritage of the environment and the sustainability of the ecosystem during the construction process.

- (2012-Present) From Physical Expansion To Built-up Area Improvement



Fig.8: Caoyang Centennial Park, Shanghai, 2022



Fig.9: Mangrove Park, Sanya, 2018

Source: Atelier Liu Yuyang Architects. (2022). *Caoyang Centennial Park*. Gooood. <https://www.gooood.cn/caoyang-centennial-park-shanghai-atelier-liu-yuyang-architects.htm>

Turenscape. (2020). *2020 ASLA General Design Award of Honor: Sanya Mangrove Park, China*. gooood. <https://www.gooood.cn/2020-asla-general-design-award-of-honor-sanya-mangrove-park-china-by-turenscape.htm>

In 2012, China's urban rate exceeded 50%, and the idea of urban construction changed from outward expansion to optimization of stock or even reduction. The perspective has shifted from large-scale demolition and construction to the improvement of the human environment and the development of urban content.

Urban renewal projects have also shown diversified development, and different cities have carried out different dimensions and types of urban renewal projects in response to their own problems. A representative example is Sanya's "urban dual repair" and "ecological restoration, and urban repair." Ecological restoration refers to the management of Sanya's water system, and urban repair refers to the improvement of the city's form and street appearance<sup>54</sup>. (Ma,2022) Shanghai's Community Micro Space Renewal Program targets public spaces in old neighborhoods that do not have a clear management theme and attracts residents to participate in community renewal projects through, for example, pocket parks and urban farmland. There are also industrial heritage renovation projects, such as the Capital Iron and Steel Works, which recently reappeared as a venue and office center for the Winter Olympics in Beijing and has now become a high-end industrial service area with a variety of business, science, and technology, sports, culture, and tourism.

## 2.5 Management mechanism of Urban Renewal in China

- Introduction

The management mechanism of urban renewal in China has different structures at different times; this chapter only explains the mechanism in the current market economy period; we will introduce the planning methods and policies related to urban renewal in China from different levels in the process of urban renewal, cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong, and Shenzhen are in the leading

<sup>54</sup> Ma H. (2022). *Research on the development and evolution of urban renewal in china based on periodical literature statistics*. [Master's thesis, Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology]. 马皓宸 (2022). *基于期刊文献统计的我国城市更新发展演变研究*. [硕士学位论文, 西安建筑科技大学].

position, so we will emphasize on introducing the policy content of the large cities, and also In addition, it will raise the multi-interested parties and their relationship in the management mechanism of urban renewal, as well as the operation mode.

By understanding the policy and management mechanism of urban renewal, we will clearly recognize the goals and planning concepts of China's current urban development and its problems, as well as see the game of interest from a holistic perspective.

## ● Overview of administrative system of urban renewal in China

Urban renewal planning in China is formulated within the context of national land spatial planning. The "Guidelines for Overall Land Spatial Planning at the City and County Levels," released by the Ministry of Natural Resources in 2019, explicitly outlines the significance of urban renewal within national land spatial planning. The hierarchical land spatial planning system established by the "Opinions on Establishing a Land Spatial Planning System and Supervising its Implementation" issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council determines the management model for urban renewal.

The urban planning system is primarily divided into three levels: overall planning, detailed planning, and project implementation plans, ranging from macro to micro perspectives.

At the overall planning level, which operates at the city and district levels, the aim is to provide strategic and directional guidance for urban renewal, aligning with the national urban development strategy. Emphasis is placed on clarifying values, principles, and objectives, achieving consensus at the value level, and specifying concrete goals, methods, strategies, and institutional mechanisms. This level also includes spatial layout for various renewal targets, comprehensive planning for neighborhoods, and implementation pathways<sup>55</sup> (Du et al., 2022).

The detailed planning level operates at the "zone and unit" level, focusing on urban renewal units. It refines and confirms the goals and indicators of macro overall planning through specialized planning, statutory regulations, and specific assessments. Detailed planning can be categorized as "implementation-oriented" or "control-oriented." The former, more comprehensive type, is widely adopted by most cities, coordinating planning through implementation plans. The latter is a restrictive detailed planning that serves as a legal basis for land use, development intensity, and other requirements for planning units (Tang et al., 2023).

At the micro-level of project planning, activities are carried out under the rigid requirements of detailed planning. Cities such as Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Chengdu in different provinces have their urban planning management departments preparing targeted project implementation plans, focusing on property boundaries, entity attributes, funding sources, and planning design<sup>56</sup> (Tang et al., 2023).

<sup>55</sup> Du, Y., Hu, S., Wang, C., Li, K., Lin, C., & Chen, W., et al. (2022). Coordinated Planning and Coordination of Urban Renewal. *City Planning Review*, 46(3), March 2022. 杜雁, 胡双梅, 王崇烈, 李锴, 林辰芳, & 陈伟等. (2022). 城市更新规划的统筹与协调. 《城市规划》, 46(3), 3月 2022.

<sup>56</sup> Tang, Y., Yin, X., & Ye, H. (2023). Positioning, hierarchy, and operation of urban renewal planning from a collaborative perspective: A study and comparison of urban renewal systems in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen. In *People's City, Empowering Planning—Proceedings of the 2022 China Urban Planning Annual Conference (02 Urban Renewal)* (pp. 2304-2316).



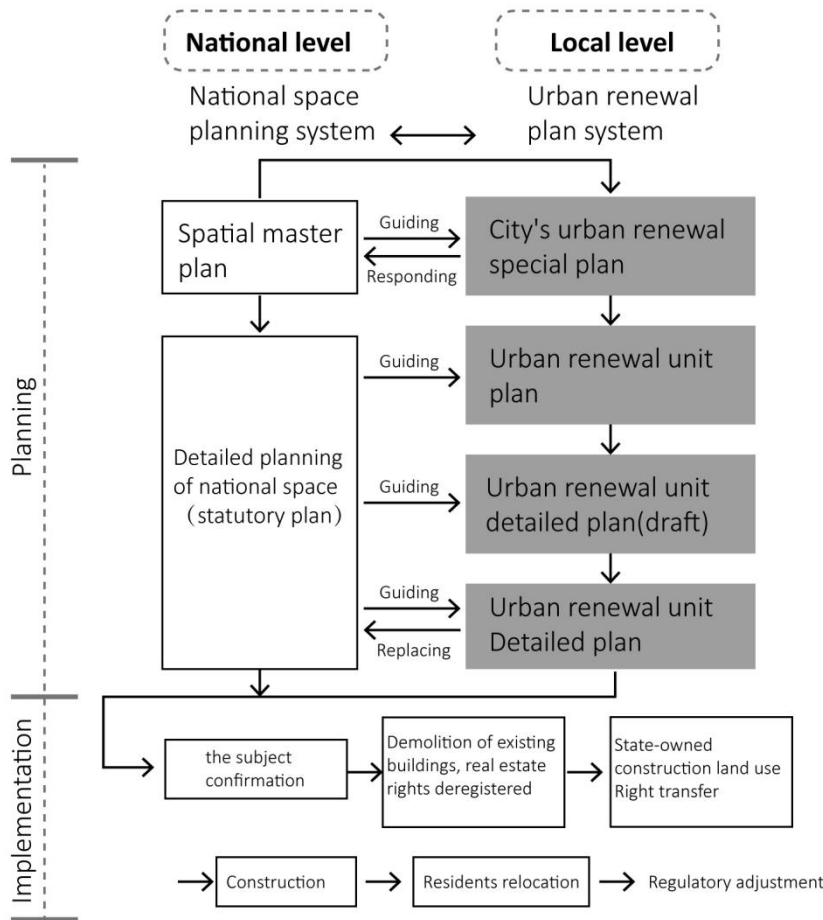


Fig.10: Diagram of the relationship between Shenzhen urban renewal planning system and territorial spatial planning system

Source: Tang, Y., Yin, X., & Ye, H. (2023). Positioning, hierarchy, and operation of urban renewal planning from a collaborative perspective: A study and comparison of urban renewal systems in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen. *In People's City, Empowering Planning—Proceedings of the 2022 China Urban Planning Annual Conference (02 Urban Renewal)* (pp. 2304-2316). School of Architecture, Tsinghua University. doi:10.26914/c.cnkihy.2023.052266. 唐燕、殷小勇、叶珩羽 (2023)。协同视角下城市更新规划的定位、层级与运作——基于北、上、广、深等地城市更新制度的研究与比较. *于人民城市, 规划赋能——2022 中国城市规划年会论文集 (02 城市更新)* 中 (pp. 2304-2316).清华大学建筑学院.

Taking Shenzhen's urban renewal planning system as an example, based on the "Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Urban Renewal Regulations," the city's urban renewal special planning is divided into city-wide urban renewal special planning, urban renewal unit plans, and urban renewal unit detailed plans, corresponding to the overall planning and detailed planning of national land spatial planning. The city-wide urban renewal special planning connects the requirements of overall planning to the city's planning, implementing the

School of Architecture, Tsinghua University. doi:10.26914/c.cnkihy.2023.052266. 唐燕、殷小勇、叶珩羽 (2023)。协同视角下城市更新规划的定位、层级与运作——基于北、上、广、深等地城市更新制度的研究与比较. *于人民城市, 规划赋能——2022 中国城市规划年会论文集 (02 城市更新)* 中 (pp. 2304-2316).清华大学建筑学院.

overall goal and strategic direction of urban renewal. Urban renewal unit plans connect to the content of detailed planning, that is, the statutory regulations issued (Tang et al., 2023). Urban renewal unit detailed planning adjusts and refines the statutory regulations at the micro-level, specifying the specific scope, goals, and renewal methods <sup>57</sup>(Yang, 2021).

- Policies related to urban renewal

### At the national level

Policies at the national level are the guiding program documents to guide urban renewal projects in various places across the country and to adapt to the requirements of sustainable urban development in the new era, realize the successful transformation of the national urban development model, and achieve the harmonious result of resource constraints and urban development; urban renewal has become a meaningful way to reach the above goals. <sup>58</sup>The table introduces the more critical guiding policies in recent years.

#### *Urban renewal policies in China at the national level*

<i>Number</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Title</i>
1	1998/02/27	<i>Provisional Regulations on the Management of Allocated Land Use Rights in the Reform of State-owned Enterprises</i>
2	2001/06/13	<i>Regulations of the State Council on the Administration of Urban Housing Demolition and Relocation</i>
3	2002/04/03	<i>Regulations on the Tendering and Listing of State-owned Land Use Rights</i>
4	2003/09/19	<i>Emergency Notice of the General Office of the State Council on Doing a Good Job in Urban Housing Demolition and Relocation and Maintaining Social Stability Notice</i>
5	2004/06/06	<i>Circular of the General Office of the State Council on Controlling the Scale of Urban Housing Demolition and Relocation and Strictly Managing Demolitions and Relocations</i>
6	2004/12/24	<i>Decision of the State Council on Deepening Reform and Strict Land Management</i>
7	2008/03/13	<i>Several Opinions of the State Council on Several Policy Measures to Accelerate the Development of the Service Industry</i>

<sup>57</sup> Yang, H. Y. (2021). Integration of urban renewal planning into the national territory spatial planning system. *Planners*, 37(8), 6. DOI:10.3969/j.issn.1006-0022.2021.08.004 杨慧祎. (2021). 城市更新规划在国土空间规划体系中的叠加与融入. *规划师*, 37(8), 6.

<sup>58</sup> Cao, L. (2017). *Evaluation and analysis of urban renewal policy based on policy instrument: Case in shenzhen*. [Master's Dissertation, Chongqing University]. 曹李(2017). 基于政策工具理论的城市更新政策演进分析——以深圳市为例. [硕士学位论文, 重庆大学].

8	2013/03/28	<i>Opinions of the State Council on Accelerating the Rehabilitation of Shantytowns</i>
9	2013/07/12	<i>Circular of the Ministry of Land and Resources on the issuance of Guiding Opinions on Carrying out Pilot Redevelopment of Urban Low-utility Land</i>
10	2014/03/03	<i>Circular of the General Office of the State Council on Further Strengthening the Work of Shantytown Renovation</i>
11	2014/03/16	<i>Guiding Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Promoting the Relocation and Reconstruction of Old Industrial Zones in Urban Areas</i>
12	2014/08/04	<i>National New Urbanization Plan(2014-2020)</i>
13	2015/03/11	<i>Opinions of the State Council on Further improving the Reform of Urban Shantytowns and Dangerous Houses in Cities and Towns and the Construction of Supporting Infrastructures</i>
14	2015/05/25	<i>Notice of the Ministry of Housing and Construction on Rural Dangerous Houses Rehabilitation Work in 2015</i>
15	2015/06/25	<i>Circular of the Ministry of Land and Resources on the assurance of the 2015 National Land Utilization Plan</i>
16	2016/11/11	<i>Guiding Opinions on Further Promoting the Redevelopment of Urban Low-Use Land(for Trial implementation)</i>
17	2023/07/21	<i>Guiding Opinions on Positively and Steadily Promoting the Transformation of Urban Villages in MegaCities</i>

Fig.11: Table of urban renewal policies at the national level

Source: Cao, L. (2017). *Evaluation and analysis of urban renewal policy based on policy instrument: Case in Shenzhen*. [Master's Dissertation, Chongqing University]. 曹李(2017). *基于政策工具理论的城市更新政策演进分析——以深圳市为例*. [硕士学位论文, 重庆大学].

The "new urbanization " is now the main guideline for China's urban development, aiming to promote China's urbanization process, which abandons the previous decision-making that prioritizes economic interests and shifts to human-centered planning, focusing on the human environment and the quality of life of the residents, and advocating the saving of land, instead of unthinkingly developing land, redeveloping the existing ground. Redevelopment of existing land. In addition, the reform of the household registration system, the governance of the real estate market, and the vigorous upgrading of urban infrastructure construction and other related policies have been implemented to ensure the quality of life and development of the migrant population from rural to urban areas.

The transformation of shantytowns and urban villages is an essential part of new urbanization, and the "Acceleration of Shantytown Renovation Work" was released in 2013, which standardized

renovation goals and financing principles and guaranteed the advancement of shantytown renovation on an institutional level.

The transformation of urban villages also released new guidance on July 21 this year "on the positive and steady promotion of the transformation of urban villages in megacities." the government has increased its support for the transformation of urban villages, especially in megacities, insisting that the people's government is responsible for the main body, and encouraging cooperation and innovation with private enterprises(Cao,2017).

### At the local level, the case of Guangdong



Fig.12: Location of Guangdong Province



Fig.13: Urban villages in Guangzhou

Source: *What are the three old renovation housing compensation methods in Guangzhou?* (2019). <https://m.jia.com/zixun/jxwd/685059.html>

Guangdong Province, located on the southeast coast of China, is the leading region in China's urbanization process, so the problem is also the first to appear; due to the overdevelopment of the pre-reform and opening up period, the land resources have been unreasonably consumed and is now faced with the problem of urban development constrained by the shortage of resources.

The Ministry of Land and Resources of the government has given particular policies for Guangdong Province, and in 2009, the "Acceleration of the "Three Olds" Transformation Work" was first promulgated in Foshan City, Guangdong Province. The "Three Olds" transformation is a Guangdong-specific approach to the transformation of old cities, which refers to old towns, old factories, and old villages. It is an improved innovation under the framework of the existing system, which covers the whole system process from objectives to supervision<sup>59</sup>(Zhou,2017) in 2011, and then in 2012, modifications related to the Three Old Renewal Areas were issued one after another, which simplified the administrative approval process and significantly improved the efficiency, and provided clear guidance on various technical issues in the implementation process, which increased the operability.

The Measures for Urban Renewal of Guangzhou Municipality issued in 2015 and the three supporting documents for old villages, old factories, and old towns, respectively, were further optimized on the

<sup>59</sup> Zhou, X.(2017). Research on the planning institution of urban redevelopment district. [PhD diss., Tsinghua University].  
周显坤.(2017). 城市更新区规划制度之研究. [博士学位论文, 清华大学].p.70-86.

basis of the three aged reforms in the previous years. Innovations have been made mainly in terms of promoting the old reforms in a calm and orderly manner, emphasizing piece-area planning, setting up special funds, improving the project exit mechanism, and reforming the approval process, which has facilitated the development of urban renewal in Guangzhou<sup>60</sup>(Cao,2017).

At present, Guangdong has local debt problems and infrastructure that needs to be renewed. The government gets more profits in urban renewal while reducing the enthusiasm of private capital.

## 2.6 The role and responsibilities involved in the urban renewal process

- Introduction

In recent decades, the government, private enterprises, communities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been significant players in China's urban development process. Each of them has been involved in the process of urban renewal, but more often than not in the form of cooperation, where there are both reciprocal benefits and zero-sum games, which has resulted in a lot of innovations conducive to the development of the city, but at the same time, led to a wide range of social problems.

- The formation of the various interest subjects

Administrative and market decentralization is a prerequisite for the formation of various interests. In China's planned economy, the interests of the central government represented everything, including the claims of localities, cities, and enterprises, as vassals of the government, and obeyed the government's planning instructions. Since the 1980s, the central government has decentralized power to local and city governments, expanding central cities' political, economic, and spatial management authority and gradually forming a "two-tier government, three-tier management" model in each city, with Shanghai as a representative example.

The market-based decentralization of power to enterprises, the government's control of the scope of the market part of the transfer, based on the enterprise organization more freedom of development. For example, at the beginning of the reform and opening-up period, state-owned enterprises were reorganized into independent business entities and market entities that were self-managed, self-supporting, self-developing, and self-restraining, reducing the proportion of state-owned enterprises in the overall economic structure<sup>61</sup>(Wang,2009). Enterprises have also taken on some of the public affairs that were originally the responsibility of the government. Enterprises have also taken over some of the public affairs that were originally the responsibility of the government.

Local governments have gradually formed interest subjects after the decentralization of the central government, and they play two roles at the same time; firstly, they are the executive departments that carry out the central government's macroeconomic management and regulation, and as independent interest subjects that need to make profits, with the intention of maximizing their

<sup>60</sup> Cao, L. (2017). *Evaluation and analysis of urban renewal policy based on policy instrument: Case in shenzhen*. [Master's Dissertation, Chongqing University]. 曹李(2017). *基于政策工具理论的城市更新政策演进分析——以深圳市为例*. [硕士学位论文, 重庆大学].

<sup>61</sup> Wang, D.(2009). *Behavioral mechanism of interest subjects in urban governance*. China Remin University Press, Beijing . 王佃利.(2009). *城市治理中的利益主体行为机制*, 中国人民大学出版社,北京.

interests through the market. Enterprise organizations are developing more and more rapidly in the market-oriented free competition, which also changes the government's behavior pattern, and the enterprises that hold a large number of resources are usually the target of the local government's alliance, and the market behaviors carried out by the government-enterprise model promote the development of the city.

- Government

In urban construction, the government plays a role in safeguarding the public interest. It has access to capital to ensure the good functioning of the city's public property and to intervene in the market to monitor it. The process of urban renewal is often a cooperative model with enterprises that carry out market behavior.

For the city government, economic growth is still the core development goal, for example, through local revenue, foreign trade surplus, etc. Urban renewal projects are a significant source of local finance; as an essential growth point of the macro-economy, urban development, and construction bear the heavy responsibility of reducing the consumption of domestic demand. The government is forced to promote the development of urban regeneration and the reconstruction of the urban space<sup>62</sup>(Xu,2008).

Urban planning is a governmental behavior in which the government has the decision-making power in the decision-making process. The government uses its planning and investment power to decide the functional planning and the layout of public facilities in different areas of the city to guide the direction of the city's development, in which the enterprises and communities are also involved in the decision-making process.

- Enterprises

Enterprises are an essential stakeholder in urban construction, using the social resources at their disposal to maximize their profits in the process. Entrepreneurs can also bring innovative ideas and solutions to urban renewal, contributing to the creation of vibrant and sustainable urban spaces. At the same time, they need to fulfill their social responsibilities, generally through partnerships with the government or through charitable activities to provide public services and facilities for the city.

- NPOs

Non-profit organizations (NPOs) are distinguished from business organizations and governmental social organizations by the spirit of volunteerism and carry out a variety of self-initiated activities that are beneficial to social development and serve as an essential bridge for the public to enter into public life and participate in urban governance. NPOs include not only inherent social organizations and private non-enterprise units but also China's unique institutions, people's organizations, and a large number of unregistered or transferring groups, which are different from the traditional Western NPOs, which are generally affiliated with or dependent on government support and are chosen based on the social situation, which is somehow out of the scope of NPOs. Unlike traditional Western NPOs, these groups are generally affiliated with or dependent on government support. They

<sup>62</sup> Xu, J.(2008). *Urban renewal and disadvantaged groups in the perspective of social exclusion - the case of Shanghai*. [PhD diss., Fudan University]. 徐建.(2008). *社会排斥视角的城市更新与弱势群体——以上海为例*. [博士学位论文, 复旦大学].

are chosen by the government according to the social situation, which is, to a certain extent, out of the scope of non-profit organizations(Wang,2009).

- Communities

The community is the basic unit of city construction, including residents and local businesses, which are the most directly affected stakeholders in the urban renewal process. Communities have the most direct interest in and familiarity with transformation objects and occupy an important position in the decision-making and construction process. According to the difference in production methods, urban communities can be roughly divided into unit-type communities, unit-type communities, mixed communities, and transformed communities (urban village communities)<sup>63</sup>(Ma,2014). Transitional communities are the focus of transformation in urban renewal, and community residents generally maximize their benefits by obtaining as much compensation as possible through the demolition and relocation of the community.

- Relationships of these subjects

When it comes to urban renewal, specifically in urban village communities, the government typically works alongside enterprises and NPOs in a cooperative and supervisory manner. These entities provide public services and resources that are managed by the government. The government offers complementary administrative services for enterprises and NPOs and carries out power support such as expropriation and demolition of houses. The government provides security, organizes and manages the relationship with the community's residents, and conducts reasonable negotiations on the expropriation of their homes. The developer compensates the residents for demolishing their homes, and the residents give up their homes to the developer in exchange for benefits<sup>64</sup>(Chen,2009).

### 3. Urban renewal practices in China

#### 3.1 Introduction

With the increasing number and diversification of urban renewal projects in China, we cannot make sweeping generalizations about the development of urban renewal. This is because, under different economic material foundations and social relationship networks, the development strategies of urban renewal and the challenges faced vary. Therefore, this section will explore various types of urban renewal projects in China and introduce some representative practical cases. By comparing the differences and commonalities of projects of different types, we will summarize the common problems that exist in the development process.

#### 3.2 Classification of Urban Renewal Projects

<sup>63</sup> Ma, X. (2014). *Study on spatial production and land use conflicts in urban-rural fringe*. Beijing Book Co. Inc, Beijing. 马学广.(2014).*城市边缘区空间生产与土地利用冲突研究*. 北京大学出版社, 北京.

<sup>64</sup> Chen, X. (2009). *The role of local government, property developer and public in the urban regeneration-----case study of Hanzhengjie, Wuhan, China*. [Doctoral dissertation, Huazhong University of Science and Technology]. 陈焯(2009) *城市更新过程中地方政府、开发商、民众的角色关系研究——以武汉汉正街为例*[博士学位论文, 华中科技大学].

There are many different directions for the classification methods of urban renewal. I will focus on the decisive classification methods, such as main stakeholders, land use type, and renovation type, and make an analysis based on the policies of urban renewal methods in different cities in China.

### ● Classification by main stakeholder

Different stakeholders often represent different transformation goals for urban renewal projects. Defining the main stakeholders can typically be based on the entire project process and its funding sources, including project initiation, planning, land acquisition and demolition, listing and transfer of land use rights, and development. Among these, the primary stakeholders are the main initiators and major fund providers of the project, and they have the highest level of involvement throughout the entire transformation process.

Urban renewal projects can typically be distinguished into three types: government-led, market-led, and collectively-led:

- Municipal and district governments supervise government-led projects. Temporary special departments related to all divisions are established, creating an internal government coordination relationship. These projects generally involve 1) purposeful urban area transformations, such as slum refurbishments, old industrial area renovations, and urban village renovations. These are projects aimed at improving negative urban spaces, and 2) individual non-profit constructions like schools, hospitals, roads, parks, and other municipal projects or renovations to infrastructure in older areas. Other stakeholders are typically not involved in these cases, with the entire project process completed within the government's purview.
- Market-led projects are initiated by enterprises that apply for permits from the government, conduct detailed planning for the renovation project, and finance the development. Compared to government-led projects, market-led projects leverage the rich experience of enterprises and yield higher implementation efficiency and superior market-oriented designs. However, they may also lead to conflicts of interest between the enterprises, government, and other stakeholders. The interests of vulnerable groups such as property owners and tenants may be hard to protect. Furthermore, market-led projects may have lower risk resilience, as evidenced by the debt crisis of Evergrande, a real estate company in China.
- Collectively-led projects usually refer to small-scale renovations conducted by interest communities formed by owners, such as in urban village renovations where village collectives establish joint-stock companies to renovate their own land. Other examples include project companies formed by government departments and developers. The nature of collectively-led projects tends to mitigate social conflicts in urban renewal but may face challenges due to lack of experience or financing difficulties<sup>65</sup>(Zhou,2017).

<sup>65</sup> Zhou, X.(2017). *Research on the planning institution of urban redevelopment district*. [PhD diss., Tsinghua University]. 周显坤.(2017). *城市更新区规划制度之研究*. [博士学位论文, 清华大学].



## ● Classification by reconstruction mode

The differences in urban redevelopment approaches largely hinge on the extent of land transformation. Drawing from the "Shenzhen Urban Renewal Methods," these approaches are typically classified into three categories: comprehensive remediation, function alteration, and demolition-reconstruction. These types are not entirely independent, as a single area's renovation may involve different redevelopment modes.

- Comprehensive remediation involves improving fire-fighting facilities, infrastructure, public service facilities, street facades, environmental regulation, and making energy-saving modifications to existing buildings. However, it does not alter the building's primary structure or its usage function. <sup>66</sup>This approach is often employed in the renovation of old neighborhoods and urban ecological environment projects. From an economic perspective, the profits are modest, primarily contributing to environmental refurbishment.
- Function alteration refers to changing the use of part or all of a building without altering the land use rights holder or the duration of use while preserving the original structure of the building <sup>67</sup>(Shenzhen Municipal People's Government,2009). This approach is typically used in the transformation of old industrial areas and historic cultural districts. Compared to comprehensive remediation, function alteration shows a noticeable increase in economic benefits.
- Demolition reconstruction represents the most extensive form of transformation. It reshapes the overall or partial spatial form, building function, and property rights structure. This approach is commonly applied in renovating urban villages and slums, and it is suitable for real estate development and realizing short-term economic benefits(Zhou,2017).

## ● Classification by original land use

The classification by original land use of urban renewal projects involves understanding the different types of spaces and their previous functions before renewal efforts. Urban renewal projects can vary significantly based on the original land use, and each type poses unique challenges and opportunities for development. The following case studies will be dedicated to having a more detailed understanding of this kind of classification.

### 3.3 Historical Street- Kuanzhai Alley

#### ● General introduction

"Kuanzhai Alley" is a part left from the Qing Dynasty, constituting one of Chengdu's historical and cultural preservation areas. It comprises three east-west ancient streets and the residential courtyards between them. It is transformed into a pedestrian street and incorporates commercial functions such as dining, culture, and leisure. This famous attraction in Chengdu is located in the Qingyang District, adjacent to the bustling CBD. The vicinity includes significant government offices

<sup>66</sup> Shenzhen Municipal People's Government. (2009). *Shenzhen City Urban Renewal Measures (No. 211)*. [http://www.sz.gov.cn/zfgb/2009/gb675/content/post\\_4945734.html](http://www.sz.gov.cn/zfgb/2009/gb675/content/post_4945734.html). No.19

<sup>67</sup> Shenzhen Municipal People's Government. (2009). *Shenzhen City Urban Renewal Measures (No. 211)*. [http://www.sz.gov.cn/zfgb/2009/gb675/content/post\\_4945734.html](http://www.sz.gov.cn/zfgb/2009/gb675/content/post_4945734.html). No.23

and Chunxi Road shopping street, giving this area high commercial value. The Kuanzhai Alley cultural preservation area covers an area of 319,342 square meters, with the core area being 66,590 square meters<sup>68</sup>(Liu,2012).

### ● Process of development



Fig.14: Night scene of Kuanzhai Alley

Source: CGTN.(2022).*La industria cultural de China registra un crecimiento constante en el período enero-septiembre.* [China's cultural industry records constant growth in the January-September period.] <https://espanol.cgtn.com/news/2022-10-31/1586906644232884226/index.html>

Kuanzhai Alley's streets were originally the barracks for the Qing soldiers during the Qing Dynasty. In the late Ming and early Qing periods, they evolved into mansions and courtyards, with many iconic buildings dating back to that time. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, private land was confiscated or requisitioned, and the space was repurposed for ordinary people's residences.

As time passed, the environmental issues in Kuanzhai Alley became increasingly prominent. The existing living infrastructure gradually became inadequate to meet modern living needs.

In 2003, the Chengdu government decided to renovate Kuanzhai Alley, establishing a specialized company responsible for planning, design, and operation management. They adopted a corporate operating model to explore the separation of ownership and operation management of tourism resources, ensuring the overall protection and management of the cultural district while fully leveraging market mechanisms. In 2004, Kuanzhai Alley was positioned as a mid-to-high-end commercial area, encompassing cultural, tourism, dining, and leisure functions. It officially opened to the public in 2008, attracting a large number of tourists and becoming a representative of Chengdu's local culture. In 2011, Kuanzhai Alley was designated as a national 4A-level scenic area, preserving the architectural style of the Qing Dynasty Sichuan residences<sup>69</sup>. (You,2016)

<sup>68</sup> Liu, M. (2012). *Comments on external space of the historic cultural area of kuanzhaixiangzi after completion.* [Master's Thesis, Qinghua University]. 刘明霞 (2012). *成都宽窄巷子历史街区外部空间规划建成后评析.* [硕士学位论文, 清华大学].

<sup>69</sup> You, Y.(2016). *The landscape change design research of chengdu historical and cultural blocks basing on the concept of organic renewal--taking china lane in chengdu as an example.* [Master's Thesis, Southwest Jiaotong University]. 游媛媛. (2016). *基于有机更新理念的成都历史文化街区景观改造设计研究.* [硕士学位论文, 西南交通大学].

## ● Spatial transformation

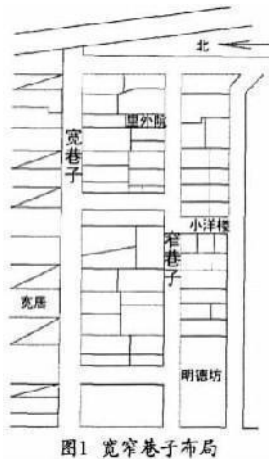


图1 宽窄巷子布局

Fig.15: Arrangement of Kuanchai Alley

Source: Lin, Q. (2009). The way of space construction in the reconstruction of urban historic district—Take Kuanchai Alley in Chengdu City as an example. *Chinese Hi-tech Enterprises*, (19), 185-186. DOI:10.13535/j.cnki.11-4406/n.2009.19.028. 林强. (2009). 城市历史街区改造中的空间营造途径——以成都市宽窄巷子为例. *中国高新技术企业*, 2009年 第19期, 185-186.

The layout of Kuanchai Alley's road space resembles a "fishbone" pattern, continuing the Qing Dynasty Sichuan residents' architectural style and original road texture during the renovation process. (Lin,2009,p:185-186)<sup>70</sup> The original blue bricks, gray tiles, brown wood, and other materials were preserved. The purpose of the alley was transformed from residential to commercial, aiming to avoid the demolition of existing buildings as much as possible. Instead, the original residents were relocated, and modern commercial styles were introduced. The original motor vehicle lanes were converted into pedestrian streets. Given the narrowness of the previous road space and the random parking of vehicles, the transformation considered setting up fire zones to ensure fire safety on the streets, allowing smooth access in both directions.

A distinctive feature of the alley is the design of the street space scale, with building heights and street widths maintaining a ratio of 1:1 or less. This design enhances the pedestrian experience, providing a comfortable walking environment. Additionally, green elements and small landscape features were added to enrich the overall ambiance. (Lin,2009)

## ● Current plight

While efforts were made to preserve the original street style and local cultural essence in the spatial renovation, the relocation of the original residents and the excessive commercial transformation through property ownership recovery have compromised the preservation of its original cultural significance. Moreover, the shift toward a mid-to-high-end commercial positioning for entertainment and consumption has disconnected from the ordinary residents' lifestyle and habits that were

<sup>70</sup> Lin, Q. (2009). The way of space construction in the reconstruction of urban historic district—Take Kuanchai Alley in Chengdu City as an example. *Chinese Hi-tech Enterprises*, (19), 185-186. DOI:10.13535/j.cnki.11-4406/n.2009.19.028. 林强. (2009). 城市历史街区改造中的空间营造途径——以成都市宽窄巷子为例. *中国高新技术企业*, 2009年 第19期, 185-186.

originally in Kuanzhai Alley. This transformation has also witnessed instances where businesses, in pursuit of higher commercial value, disregard regulations and damage historical buildings. The involvement of the general public in the transformation of their living environment seems limited, positioning them more as elements to be removed in the process of renovation rather than active participants.

### 3.4 Urban village - Dafen Village

#### ● General introduction

Dafen Oil Painting Village is located in Dafen Community, Buji Street, Longgang District, Shenzhen City. It covers an area of approximately 0.4 square kilometers and primarily serves as a production base for mid-to-low-end oil paintings and related products and services. Currently, the village houses over 1,200 galleries and art institutions, 200+ framing manufacturers and stores, 30+ art material stores, and nearly 80 art education institutions. There are also over 60 well-known enterprises and 268 sets of talent housing, employing more than 8,000 people. In the surrounding community, there are approximately 20,000 individuals engaged in related professions<sup>71</sup>. (Huang,2020)

#### ● Process of development

Before becoming an oil painting village, Dafen Village was a traditional Hakka village that relied on rice cultivation for livelihood. In 1989, with a significant demand for oil paintings in Europe and the United States, Hong Kong art dealers saw an opportunity due to Shenzhen's proximity and low rent. They rented houses in Dafen, brought in painters, and began the production of low-end oil paintings for export. Given the low entry barriers into oil painting production and the possibility for individuals to become independent contractors after about six months of learning from experienced artists, the composition of practitioners became quite diverse.

Over the following decade, Dafen Village's oil painting industry expanded continuously, securing numerous overseas orders and extending its reach to neighboring villages. It gradually developed into a mature oil painting production base. In 1998, the government improved Dafen Village's infrastructure and living environment. Some residential houses were converted into art-related public spaces, attracting more businesses. Dafen Village evolved into a complete oil painting industry chain, hosting numerous galleries engaged in oil painting production, as well as offering art-related products and services like retail art materials, frames, and art training.

In 2008, due to the international financial crisis, the oil painting industry in Dafen Village, which was heavily reliant on exports, suffered a significant blow. Order numbers decreased by 60%, prompting a shift from an export-oriented market to a focus on domestic sales. The majority of oil painting production in Dafen Village involved repetitive labor and lacked creativity, leading to a decline in competitiveness. However, through adjustments in business strategies, the production of original high-value artworks gradually replaced replicas, and before the 2019 pandemic, the output value remained steadily increasing.

<sup>71</sup> Huang, C. (2020). *The formation mechanism and space optimization strategy of the art village: A case study of three typical art villages in Shenzhen*. [Master's Thesis, Guangzhou University]. 黄翠翠. (2020). *艺术村的形成机制及其空间优化策略——以深圳三个典型艺术村为例*. [硕士学位论文, 广州大学].

Post-2020, the village faced the impact of the pandemic. Many offline galleries in Dafen closed down, and the focus shifted to online transactions<sup>72</sup>. (Huang,2020)

- Spatial transformation



Fig.16: The bird's view of Dafen village

Source: People's Daily Online. (2021, October 22). 深圳大芬：新兴城市文化软实力跃升的精彩样本 [Shenzhen Dafen: A wonderful example of the cultural soft power of emerging cities]. <http://sz.people.com.cn/n2/2021/1022/c202846-34968938.html>

Dafen Village primarily consists of three to six-story residential houses constructed by the villagers themselves, with a dense distribution. The roads and infrastructure were not adequately planned and did not comply with local construction standards.

To avoid disrupting the village's original economic activities, the renovation did not involve the demolition of the village's existing buildings. While preserving the original spatial layout, efforts were made to utilize its characteristics effectively. For instance, the outer walls of the buildings were utilized to display oil paintings, and the alleyways were extended to serve as shop spaces. The multi-story residential buildings were adapted to accommodate the economic activities. The ground floor typically served as galleries for selling oil paintings and external office spaces, while the upper floors were used for living, storage, and e-commerce office spaces.

Around the year 2000, with government intervention and renovation, the village gained cultural establishments like the Dafen Art Museum and TNT Art Center, attracting tourists and visitors from outside. <sup>73</sup>(Li,2022)

<sup>72</sup> Huang, C. (2020). *The formation mechanism and space optimization strategy of the art village: A case study of three typical art villages in Shenzhen*. [Master's Thesis, Guangzhou University]. 黄翠翠. (2020). 艺术村的形成机制及其空间优化策略——以深圳三个典型艺术村为例. [硕士学位论文, 广州大学].

<sup>73</sup> Li, J. (2022). *A Study of the Oil Painting Art Market in Dafen Village*. [Master's thesis, East China Normal University]. 李金宇. (2022). 大芬村油画艺术市场研究. [硕士学位论文, 华东师范大学]. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27149/d.cnki.ghdsu.2022.002417doi:10.27149/d.cnki.ghdsu.2022.002417>.



Fig.17: Dafen village laneway Fig.18: TNT art center

Source: Shot by author Source: Li, J. (2022). *A Study of the Oil Painting Art Market in Dafen Village*. [Master's thesis, East China Normal University]. 李金宇. (2022). *大芬村油画艺术市场研究*. [硕士学位论文. 华东师范大学]. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27149/d.cnki.ghdsu.2022.002417>doi:10.27149/d.cnki.ghdsu.2022.002417. p:43.

### ● Current plight

Most of the oil painters in Dafen Village are dissatisfied with the current rental rates, leading to a loss of residents and artists. Despite several rounds of environmental improvements in the village, many oil painters are unhappy with the rising rent, which has led to an exodus of talent. While the living and artistic environments have improved for the residents after these environmental upgrades, the original advantages of Dafen Village have diminished due to the escalating rent. The spatial layout of urban villages is inherently not suitable for the production of art, and the constraints of space have limited the potential expansion of Dafen Village's art industry.

Furthermore, the high-end oil painting market often demands that producers receive systematic art education. Hence, the existing oil painting production model in Dafen Village does not align with these requirements. (Li,2022)

## 3.5 Displaced Industrial Area- Beijing Shougang Park

### ● General introduction

Beijing Shougang Park, also known as Shougang Industrial Park, is a distinctive urban renewal project located in the Shijingshan District of Beijing, China. The park is a symbol of Beijing's efforts to transform its industrial past into a future focused on sustainability, innovation, and cultural heritage.

"The urban renewal of the Shougang Park is currently the largest-scale heavy industrial heritage regeneration project in China and even on a global scale. The 'New Shougang High-end Industrial Comprehensive Service Zone' covers an area of 8.63 square kilometers, with a planned construction area of 10.6 million square meters, making it the only region within the six urban districts of Beijing suitable for large-scale, contiguous development."<sup>74</sup>(Bo,2019,p:115)

<sup>74</sup> Bo, H. (2019). *Research on the strategy of regeneration of industrial remains in the stock era: a case study of the urban regeneration of shou gang park in Beijing*. [Ph.D. thesis, Southeast University]. 薄宏涛.(2019). *存量时代下工业遗存更新策略研*

## ● Process of development

"Shougang is one of the significant representatives of heavy industry born during China's 'Steady Growth Period' of modern national industry. In 1919, Dr. Sun Yat-sen completed the 'Industrial Plan,' which discussed the development approach, principles, and plans for Chinese industry. It advocated centralizing national industrialization to drive comprehensive modernization of the Chinese economy."(Bo,2019)

In the thirty years following the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the Capital Iron and Steel Plant, as a significant mid-to-large-sized state-owned steel enterprise, made outstanding contributions to the nation in terms of industrial technology and production. After the initiation of economic reforms and opening up, the enterprise underwent structural reforms, transforming Shougang into a relatively independent entity with operational autonomy. There was a breakthrough in production capacity, making it the leading steel producer in China. Simultaneously, its business diversified and expanded into various other domains.

Starting in 1994, the country underwent an economic structural transformation, emphasizing the development of the tertiary industry to drive the transformation of the primary and secondary industries. During this phase, despite continuous resource investment in technology and management, Shougang achieved a considerable level of excellence. However, the enterprise's development remained stagnant. The bid for the Summer Olympics in Beijing in 2008 became the catalyst for change. The environmental issues associated with Shougang became a significant concern for the city at that time. In 2005, the government mandated the overall relocation of the factory. By 2010, Shougang's Beijing Park had ceased operations entirely.

In 2011, the Beijing municipal government approved the 'Control Detailed Planning of the New Shougang High-end Industrial Comprehensive Service Zone,' marking the beginning of the transformation of Shougang's Beijing Park. Over the course of 14 years, it became the first pilot for the transformation of old industrial areas. The objective was to transform Shougang into a globally recognized industrial site for regeneration and development.

In 2015, Shougang Park was selected as the office venue for the Beijing Winter Olympics. By 2019, Shougang Park had transformed into a large-scale comprehensive service zone. Implemented projects included, but were not limited to, squares, art galleries, hotels, office spaces, sports facilities, museums, and more. (Bo,2019)

## ● Spatial transformation

The Shougang industrial area is an extremely numerous industrial complex, housing a multitude of industrial structures and buildings. In an area of approximately eight square kilometers, considerations for functional transformation, as well as allocation and rational adjustments of resources such as greening, water bodies, mountains, roads, and underground pipeline systems, are

essential. Targeted analysis and planning for different zones within the area are required to ensure a balanced and efficient distribution of these resources.

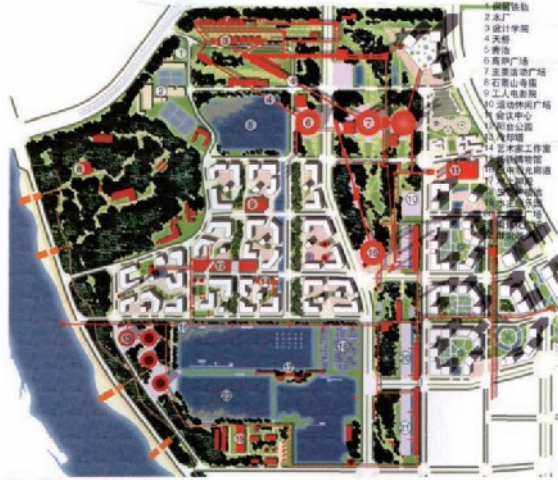
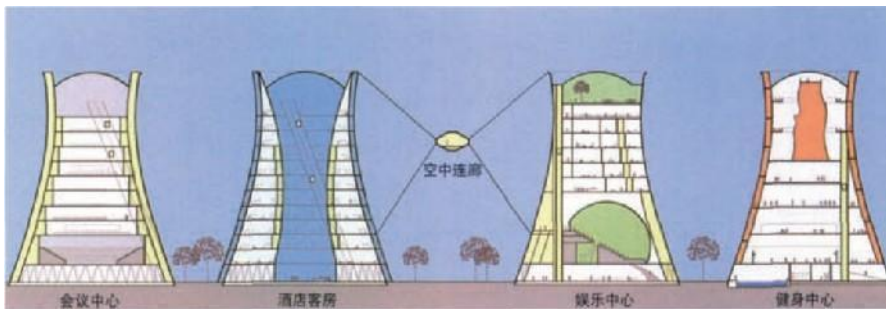


Fig.19: General plan of industrial site park

Source: Liu, B., & Li, K. (2012). Conservation Planning and Renovation Design of Shougang Industrial Heritage. *Journal of Architecture*, 1, 6. 刘伯英, & 李匡. (2012). 首钢工业遗产保护规划与改造设计. *建筑学报*, 1, 6.

Taking the industrial heritage park within Shougang Park as an example, the overall layout follows a spatial pattern of 'one axis, one belt, and five zones.' Since the majority of the factory area was constructed after the founding of the People's Republic of China, there are no historical legacies that need to be strictly preserved, facilitating comprehensive planning.

Fig.20: Cooling tower reconstruction section



Source: Liu, B., & Li, K. (2012). Conservation Planning and Renovation Design of Shougang Industrial Heritage. *Journal of Architecture*, 1, 6. 刘伯英, & 李匡. (2012). 首钢工业遗产保护规划与改造设计. *建筑学报*, 1, 6.

The key approach to spatial transformation is to retain the original industrial character while enabling diverse functional shifts, integrating new industries, and improving the ecological environment. For instance, concerning the existing individual structures within the steel plant, such as blast furnaces, cooling towers, silos, and sintering plants, various updating strategies are employed to repurpose them into new cultural and creative spaces<sup>75</sup>.(Liu&Li, 2012)

<sup>75</sup> Liu, B., & Li, K. (2012). Conservation Planning and Renovation Design of Shougang Industrial Heritage. *Architectural Journal*, 1, 6. 刘伯英, & 李匡. (2012). 首钢工业遗产保护规划与改造设计. *建筑学报*, 1, 6.



## ● Current plight

Improving the ecological environment is a focal point in the planning process, given the long-term pollution of water, soil, and air resulting from extensive steel production. Additionally, the cessation of industrial operations in the area posed challenges in terms of reemployment and resettlement for a large number of employees. Despite the implementation of resettlement policies, there were still 35,000 employees facing difficulties in finding new employment opportunities.<sup>76</sup> (Wei,2020) Furthermore, the relocation of the steel plant disrupted the stable social networks that had formed among tens of thousands of employees within the Shougang industrial area.

In comparison to other industrial areas, Shougang Park plays a more crucial role in the country's economic development. However, it also faces more complex challenges. Balancing and considering various elements, such as social, cultural, economic, and environmental aspects, in an integrated manner is essential. Additionally, addressing uncertainties in future economic development is crucial, especially given the significant unknowns in the development process of early-industry occupants. The introduction of an industry with uncertain factors within the park could potentially impact industries within a certain radius<sup>77</sup>. (Zhang,2015)

### 3.6 Problems of urban renewal in China

- **The process of urban renewal has not effectively addressed the polarization of urban space.** Urban renewal has not effectively addressed the polarization of urban space. In the vast majority of urban renewal projects, economic benefits are the main objective, and the interests of the people, especially the disadvantaged and challenging groups, are easily overlooked. As seen from the previous case, the economic benefits of the renovation project are realized through the direct relocation of all the original inhabitants during the renovation process.
- **The absence of public voices during urban renewal is a significant issue.** From the vast majority of urban renewal projects, we can find that the public, as the most directly affected subject of the renovation project, has been treated as an object, i.e., a passive recipient. In terms of policy, the mechanism of people's participation is not perfect, and secondly, there is no effective communication platform to allow people's opinions to be fed back in time.
- **Urban renewal undermines people's housing rights.** In the case of redevelopment projects, on the one hand, the residents are relocated out of their original homes. On the other hand, after the redevelopment, the rents of the actual streets have risen, with the result that the residents who have benefited from the compensation policy are usually relocated into affordable housing on the fringes of the city, which may usually be accompanied by problems such as the lack of amenities and other issues, and those who have not been reasonably compensated have been pushed into the neighborhoods where the rents are low, and the quality of life is poor.

<sup>76</sup> Wei, F. (2020). Research on the post-industrial landscape reconstruction based on the logic of difference stratification: Take the design of shougang winter olympic organizing committee headquarter as an example. *Industrial Construction*, 50(11), 5. 魏方. (2020). 基于差异层化逻辑的后工业景观改造方法研究——以首钢冬奥组委总部设计为例. *工业建筑*, 50(11), 5. DOI: 10.13204/j . gyjzG20042401

<sup>77</sup> Zhang, Y. (2015). Study on the issues and strategies for regeneration and reconstructing in the shougang industrial district. *Urban Development Studies*, 22(5), 6. 张燕. (2015). 首钢老工业区更新改造面临的问题及策略研究. *城市发展研究*, 22(5), 6.

- **The continuation of local history and culture is often overlooked in the context of a market economy.** In the pursuit of productivity and economic growth, urban renewal often leads to homogenization of the transformation results and shortens the time cost of the project's pre-investment as much as possible, which can also lead to the implementation of the implementation of the parcel of land is not in-depth research, and in the process of transformation only in the form of the preservation of cultural symbols of the region, as in the case of Kuanzhai Valley.

## 4. The meaning of Shenzhen and Nantou city on China's urban renewal

### 4.1 The particularity of Shenzhen and urban village in China's urbanization

Shenzhen as a reform and opening up of the Special Economic Zone at the time of the existence of its particularity, nearly forty years, from a population of only a few hundred thousand counties to a population of 20 million mega-cities, China's modernization and urbanization process has a representative position, Shenzhen's urban development can also be seen as a microcosm of China's urbanization, Shenzhen is currently facing a shortage of land resources urgently need to be reused through the stock of land to solve the problem. The current shortage of land resources in Shenzhen needs to be solved through the reuse of the land stock, and the existing urban renewal system in Shenzhen is also a significant reference value for the problems that China's mega and large cities are facing now or will face in the future.

As a unique urban phenomenon in China, the formation process of urban villages is directly related to China's urbanization and land system, and the complexity and diversity of the development of urban villages have also been complex to solve in the process of urban renewal in China. The urbanization process has caused the disintegration of a pre-modern rural society with deep social network connections intertwined with many factors. It has turned into a mixed community with many kinds of migrant populations, most of which are in the middle of the city. The majority of the community is diverse, and most outsiders are looking forward to the future and the development of a city with unlimited potential. There are conflicts arising from very different lifestyles and cultural backgrounds, but the disputes do not come from the inside alone. Urban villages are also regarded as the "cancer" of the city, a tumor that can not be wiped out and continues to grow with the progress of urbanization. We need to see its internal contradiction, that is, it is a negative space in the city, but also for the improvement of urbanization to make up for a large labor force gap through the continuous export of labor force for the city so that the urban space can be a high-speed development and expansion, but also led to a large number of population loss in the countryside, exacerbating the secondary division between the city and the countryside.

By recognizing the inherent contradictions of urban villages and their unique characteristics in Chinese cities, we can get closer to the real problems of China's urbanization.

## 4.2 The role of Nantou City for the analysis of China's urban renewal

- Multi-identities of historical streets and urban village

Nantou City holds significant historical research value for both Shenzhen and Hong Kong. Its origins date back over 1,600 years. The area encompasses one key cultural relic under provincial protection, four under city-level protection, and one under district-level protection. Additionally, there are ten preserved buildings and 34 historical structures. It can be regarded as a focal point showcasing the historical and cultural heritage of Shenzhen<sup>78</sup> (2021, Gu). Moreover, Nantou City is a predominantly migrant-populated urban village, with over ninety percent of its population being mobile. It has long been a key target for transformation by the Shenzhen government. However, due to its multiple identities, defining the direction of its transformation has proven challenging. On the one hand, its internal workings are characteristic of an urban village within the ancient town, and the government's protection of internal historical relics is quite limited, making it difficult to establish a museum-like management approach. Simultaneously, the typical urban village "demolish and rebuild" transformation model is not suitable. Hence, Nantou City needs to explore a new path for its transformation.

- A focus point of Social events about urban renewal

The attention towards Nantou City in the context of urban renewal primarily stems from the 2017 Shenzhen-Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture. The biennale intervened in the site's space in a short-term cultural event, resulting in a micro-upgrade of the area's space and exerting a certain influence on its social structure and economic culture. This event drew the public's attention to the issues of Nantou City, thus promoting the urban renewal process of the site.

The association between the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture and Shenzhen's urban renewal also lies in the fact that both are supervised by the same authority, the Shenzhen Municipal Planning and Natural Resources Commission. Hence, the biennale has continuously aligned with the urban renewal needs of Shenzhen.

Another significant event was the minor renovation of collectively rented housing in urban villages, which sparked extensive public discussion in 2023. Since 2017, the "Integrated Governance Action Plan for 'Urban Villages' in Nanshan District (2017-2020)" issued by Nanshan District, Shenzhen, determined that collectively rented housing would be the main direction for urban village transformation in the Nanshan District. The renovation of collectively rented housing, facilitated by commercial entities within urban villages, not only improves the rental quality and management effectiveness but also significantly raises the visible rent. In Nantou City, Vanke Corporation was introduced as the market entity, and it is expected to undertake the renovation of 299 buildings

<sup>78</sup> Gu, S. (2021). *Research on the post-renewal evaluation of nantou city in shenzhen from the public perspective*. (Master's thesis, Harbin Institute of Technology). 顾思明. (2021). 公众视角下深圳市南头古城更新后评价研究. (硕士学位论文, 哈尔滨工业大学). <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2021.006857doi:10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2021.006857>.

within the collectively rented housing project area<sup>79</sup> (2022, Lu). During my field visit in August 2023, I observed widespread deployment of collectively rented apartments within the city.

## 5. Conclusion

This chapter discusses the development of urban renewal in China from multiple perspectives. Firstly, it explores the concept of urban renewal and examines the development of urban renewal in developed Western industrial countries, using the UK as an example for comparison with the urban renewal process in China.

The second section introduces several important aspects of urban renewal in China. In the first half, it briefly outlines the stages of urban renewal development in China from a linear time perspective. It analyzes the current driving forces of urban renewal in China and the goals for future development. The second half presents the management mechanism, analyzing urban renewal policies from both the national and local dimensions, categorizing the participants, and describing the relationships between the participants in the urban renewal process.

The third section further discusses the practice of urban renewal in China. In the first half, it categorizes and introduces urban renewal projects using different methods. It provides detailed introductions to representative urban renewal projects in historical districts, urban villages, and industrial heritage, aiming to identify commonalities and differences in the transformation process.

The final part is back to the topic, tends to discuss the relationship between urban villages and urbanization in China, and provides the preliminary introduction of Nantou City and the reasons to study further on this case.

## Chapter 3. Urban village renovation in Shenzhen , the case of Nantou City

### 1. Introduction of urban village in China

#### 1.1 Formation of urban villages

- Dual nature of land and collective land ownership

The formation of urban villages in China is closely intertwined with the dual nature of land and the blurred property rights of collective land, giving rise to numerous issues. China's land is categorized into state-owned land and collectively owned land by farmers. Article 8 of the "Land Administration Law of the People's Republic of China" stipulates that "urban land belongs to the state in urban areas.

<sup>79</sup> Lu, Q. (2022). Research on the conflict of interests and measures in the operational model of unified renting in nantou ancient city. [Master's thesis, Harbin Institute of Technology]. 卢钦 (2022). 南头古城统租运营模式利益冲突与对策研究. (硕士学位论文, 哈尔滨工业大学). <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2022.000797doi:10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2022.000797>.

Land in rural and suburban areas, except for that defined as state-owned by law, belongs to the collective ownership of farmers; homesteads, self-retained land, and self-retained mountains belong to the collective ownership of farmers." Urban villages fall under the category of homesteads within the collective land of farmers within urban areas, with usage rights owned by farmers. However, the state does not have clear and detailed regulations for such land and cannot intervene in its management <sup>80</sup>(Liu,2017).

- From the perspective of China's land system

As previously mentioned, urban villages possess a dual nature in terms of land ownership. Homesteads within the urban area, according to regulations, should belong to state-owned land. However, in practice, they are managed by village collectives. To protect rural land tenure and property rights, the "Land Administration Law" establishes strict standards and compensation policies for acquiring collective land from farmers. The government can legally convert homesteads within urban areas into state-owned land, providing farmers with corresponding land compensation and resettlement subsidies based on land area. However, due to fiscal concerns and other issues, the government cannot fully possess the management rights of homesteads. Therefore, land is primarily managed by village collectives, leading to the current disorder in the management of urban villages. Villagers can acquire homesteads from the village collective at low or no cost and proceed to rent them out. To maximize rental income, unauthorized expansions occur on homesteads, disregarding the quality of life and the destruction of infrastructure in urban villages <sup>81</sup>(Cao,2012).

- From the perspective of the economy

The emergence of urban villages is intertwined with the rapid urbanization in China. On one hand, the nation's urbanization construction requires absorbing a large amount of low-cost labor to achieve efficient production. On the other hand, rural and other external migrant populations can reside in low-cost areas, such as urban villages, within the city. Urban villages have thus become buffer zones between these two dynamics, allowing them to persist and expand.

According to national regulations, land reserved for future economic development in urban villages must be returned after land acquisition. This reserved land becomes a crucial foundation for the economic development of the urban village area. <sup>82</sup>(Huang, 2013) Village collectives achieve stable and increasing profits through leasing and community economy. The development of the community economy enhances cohesion among urban village residents. Residents and community organizations form an economic community, jointly maintaining this economic model.

<sup>80</sup> Liu, S. (2017). China's two-stage land reform. *International Economic Review*, 5, 28. 刘守英. (2017). 中国土地制度改革:上半程及下半程. *国际经济评论*, 5, 28.

<sup>81</sup> Cao, Y. (2012). Study on reconstruction of urban village from perspective of land system. *Journal of Henan University of Urban Construction*, 21(05), 81-84. 曹永志. (2012). 土地视野下的城中村改造研究. *河南城建学院学报*, 21(05), 81-84. doi:10.14140/j.cnki.hncjxb.2012.05.009.

<sup>82</sup> Huang, Z. (2013). *The research on the models and strategies in the reconstruction of the urban village illustrated by the case of Shenzhen*. [PhD diss., Wuhan University]. 黄治. (2013). *城中村改造模式与策略研究*. [博士学位论文, 武汉大学]. [http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLkXMTUXPnp0bYewFtzCHHUN7wkkbvvMHQombNC33yWRDD1c4vgQZSpGijE8pTOGugEaQgbO3iHF283OwE2hcEBi-w0bqbAl1LpqRhOppKzDdBptnpSV1TFjLG\\_I5gNNippGaQarDb49A==uniplatfor m=NZKPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLkXMTUXPnp0bYewFtzCHHUN7wkkbvvMHQombNC33yWRDD1c4vgQZSpGijE8pTOGugEaQgbO3iHF283OwE2hcEBi-w0bqbAl1LpqRhOppKzDdBptnpSV1TFjLG_I5gNNippGaQarDb49A==uniplatfor m=NZKPTlanguage=CHS)

## 1.2 Dilemma of urban villages

### ● Villagers' Dilemma

In China's rapid urbanization process, the expansion of cities results in the incorporation of surrounding rural land into the new urban areas. Government requisitioning of farmland for urban use leaves farmers without a means of production. Unable to sustain their livelihood through traditional production methods, the new generation of farmers, who have abandoned ancestral production modes and kinship ties, struggle to assert bargaining power in the urban labor market. Consequently, they find it challenging to integrate into the city and obtain basic citizen rights. The emergence of urban villages is closely linked to the deprivation of farmers' original means of production and their development rights in the city<sup>83</sup> (Fu, 2023).

New policies allow farmers to treat their homesteads as new means of production by expanding their residences to maximize rental income. The existence of urban villages reflects farmers' assertion of their rights in the face of urban development challenges<sup>84</sup> (Li, 2005).

### ● Dilemma of floating Population

Eighty percent of Shenzhen's population comprises floating individuals, with seventy percent settling in rural areas and townships. Urban villages serve as the first step for migrants from villages and townships to establish themselves in large cities. Despite the deplorable living conditions, urban villages enable them to secure their basic survival at a lower cost. While urban villages are often perceived as negative spaces needing eradication by experts and citizen representatives, for the floating population, these areas represent hope for establishing roots in the city. The city's development is inseparable from the diligent labor of the vast floating population (Li, 2005). Urgent attention is required to address the living conditions in urban villages, but the protection of survival rights for migrants from rural areas and townships in the city is equally imperative.

### ● Government's Dilemma

Governance of urban villages in China differs from the management of slums in other developed countries. The low rents within urban villages attract a substantial amount of cheap labor for China's urbanization. However, governance of urban villages in China poses unique challenges, including complex land property issues, resolving conflicts of interest among residents, villagers, and the market, and the substantial financial investments required for governance. Given the economic development of cities, immediate returns on governance efforts for urban villages are challenging. The government must comprehensively consider various factors and draw upon long-term urban governance experience to formulate a sustainable urban renewal strategy.

<sup>83</sup> Fu, Q. (2023). Analysis of Large-Scale Unified Renting Transformation in Urban Villages under the Theory of Spatial Production. *In People's City, Planning Empowerment: Proceedings of the 2023 China Urban Planning Annual Conference (Vol. 13, pp. 118-125)*. Overseas Chinese Studies; doi:10.26914/c.cnkihy.2023.049848. 付倩. (2023). 空间生产理论下城中村规模化统租改造分析. *在人民城市, 规划赋能——2023 中国城市规划年会论文集 (13 规划实施与管理)* (pp. 118-125). 华侨学; doi:10.26914/c.cnkihy.2023.049848.

<sup>84</sup> Li, J. (2005). Realist Issues in UEVs. *China Opening Herald*, (3),43-48. 李津逵 (2005) 城中村的真问题. *开放导报*, 2005 年 7 月, 第 3 期,43-48.DOI: 10.19625/j.cnki.cn44-1338 / f .2005 .03.010

### 1.3 Conclusion

The phenomenon of urban villages in China represents a complex intersection of socio-economic dynamics, urban development challenges, and governance dilemmas. With roots in the unique dual land ownership system, urban villages have emerged as byproducts of rapid urbanization, serving as transitional communities for the burgeoning urban population, particularly the floating and migrant workers. These communities have inadvertently become a buffer, balancing the influx of low-cost labor and the need for affordable housing within urban peripheries.

In conclusion, urban villages are symptomatic of the broader transitions within Chinese society, reflecting the tensions between rural and urban, tradition and modernity, and economic development and social equity. Addressing the issues associated with urban villages calls for nuanced policies that balance the rights and needs of all stakeholders—villagers, migrants, and the state—while steering urban development towards inclusivity and sustainability.

## 2. Shenzhen and Urban villages<sup>85</sup>

### 2.1 Urban village in Shenzhen

- Historical background



Fig.21: The location of Shenzhen

Fig.22: Shekou under construction in the early 1980s in Shenzhen

Source: China development gateway. (2018, May 24). 致敬改革开放 | 走进蛇口改革开放博物馆 [Tribute to Reform and Opening Up | Visit Shekou Reform and Opening Up Museum]. [http://cn.chinagate.cn/news/2018-05/24/content\\_51510113\\_13.htm](http://cn.chinagate.cn/news/2018-05/24/content_51510113_13.htm)

Shenzhen, as China's economic special zone, can be regarded as a pioneer city in the context of China's reform and opening up as well as urbanization. Leveraging policy advantages and the geographical proximity to Hong Kong, Shenzhen's industrial development has outpaced other Chinese cities. On the other hand, during the initial stages of reform and opening-up, Shenzhen was merely a small town and fishing village in the southern county with a population of only a few hundred thousand. It had numerous primitive villages. In the subsequent urban development, some

<sup>85</sup> Liu, L. (2014). Studies on urban village renewal of independence: Take Shenzhen for instance. [Doctoral dissertation, Wuhan University]. P.81-87. 刘蕾. (2014). 城中村自主更新改造研究. [Doctoral dissertation, 武汉大学]. 第 81-87 页. [http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmUI8slAE\\_ewxGmUFxNsxVr10StyJzv1JW6I2-my8bo01xTq3Ws qZHp61q9j\\_RaDUHfJMd2xvImfMCAqsceXlcWHJe3R8qJKN-u2u\\_oeBvkD7SxlyDO-nxoABWtAhAL1k8JSN92xO\\_g==uniplatform=NZ KPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmUI8slAE_ewxGmUFxNsxVr10StyJzv1JW6I2-my8bo01xTq3Ws qZHp61q9j_RaDUHfJMd2xvImfMCAqsceXlcWHJe3R8qJKN-u2u_oeBvkD7SxlyDO-nxoABWtAhAL1k8JSN92xO_g==uniplatform=NZ KPTlanguage=CHS)

of the existing villages were demolished, while others were transformed into new industrial and commercial centers, serving as the foundation for surrounding areas. These villages, in the process of urbanization, gave rise to what is known as urban villages. Overall, whether in the periphery or the central urban areas, Shenzhen is dotted with urban villages.<sup>86</sup> (Li,2018)

## ● Demography

### Overall situation

The population of Shenzhen's urban villages primarily consists of indigenous residents and migrant populations. The development of urbanization in China has not only led to the impact of the rural-urban dichotomy but has also seen a new generation of migrant workers seeking development opportunities in cities, with the national migrant population growing by an average of approximately 8 million people annually, reaching 247 million by the end of 2015<sup>87</sup>(National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China,2018). As a mega-city that developed almost from scratch after the introduction of the reform and opening-up policies, Shenzhen's non-hukou (household registration) population constitutes around 70% of the total population. Nearly half of the overall migrant population resides in urban villages.

### Situation of native residents

The income of indigenous residents in urban villages largely depends on rental income from their private properties and village collective economies. About 85% of villagers are unemployed, with an additional 10% working in village shares and only 3% working outside the village (Liu, 2014). Indigenous residents constitute a relatively small proportion of the population in urban villages, typically returning only when renting out properties or collecting rent.

### Situation of migrants

The main sources of income for the migrant population in urban villages are predominantly manual labor in manufacturing and low-end service industries. Additionally, the type of work undertaken by tenants often correlates with the industrial ecology surrounding the urban village. For instance, tenants near Dongmen Seafood Market in Hubei Village are mostly engaged in seafood wholesale, while those near the Science and Technology Park in Nantou Ancient City include a significant number of IT industry professionals. There is also a group of university graduates who, due to low initial incomes, choose to temporarily reside in urban villages.

### Social Relations in Two Types of Urban Villages

Based on the social relations of urban village residents, they can be broadly categorized into affinity-oriented (缘聚型) and mixed-type (混聚型) urban villages. In affinity-oriented urban villages, tenants often share similar social identities or have geographical and familial ties, creating close-knit

<sup>86</sup> Li, J.(2018). *Research on space value and renewal of shenzhen's urban village*. [PhD diss., South China University of Technology]. 李景磊. (2018). *深圳城中村空间价值及更新研究*. [博士学位论文, 华南理工大学]. [http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLIWfugpZ5tXZ15LexA\\_0XmPciUTXYRGO5H78W5-ft7rir\\_p-QS53hSG5AkDdE8p2huSwl9cybFrgH7UjwKTrv2J5HcxM9-tHzbm1zRfHi6gP3Ni4oBcd8D4wrwqRrhWcKImMOYPBjbow==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLIWfugpZ5tXZ15LexA_0XmPciUTXYRGO5H78W5-ft7rir_p-QS53hSG5AkDdE8p2huSwl9cybFrgH7UjwKTrv2J5HcxM9-tHzbm1zRfHi6gP3Ni4oBcd8D4wrwqRrhWcKImMOYPBjbow==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS)

<sup>87</sup> National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China. (2018). *Overview of the Development Report on China's Floating Population 2018* [Report]. <http://www.nhc.gov.cn/wjw/xwtd/201812/a32a43b225a740c4bff8f2168b0e9688.shtml>



connections. Production activities within such villages often rely on kinship relationships, such as the operation of chain restaurants or retail stores within the urban village. For example, tenants in Hubei Village are predominantly from the Chaoshan region, and the village serves as a crucial base for the Chaoshan people in Shenzhen, with its seafood market relying on geographical ties. The family composition of Hubei Village tenants is diverse, encompassing all age groups, distinguishing it from other urban villages.

Mixed-type urban villages have a more heterogeneous resident composition engaged in various types of work. This diversity often results from the structural adjustments in Shenzhen's industries and the relocation of factories, leading to the mass movement of residents and the subsequent formation of new, socially diverse urban villages. For instance, Nantou Ancient City has a background of factory relocation, with residents averaging a residence time of no more than five years. The population is complex, and residents do not form strong social networks (Li, 2018).

- Development of urban villages

### **Stage One: 1980-1990**

During this phase, the early period of urban development coincided with the initiation of reform and opening-up policies. In 1982, the Shenzhen Municipal Government introduced the "Interim Regulations on the Construction of Rural Snake Houses in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone," marking the first relevant document for urban villages. The regulations standardized the land area for villagers' construction and the industrial land area for brigades. It specified that the land used by original villagers belonged to the state, allocating a portion for new village development. This regulation laid the foundation for Shenzhen's urban villages. As the pace of development accelerated, in 1986, the government issued the "Notice on Further Strengthening the Planning of Rural Areas in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone," providing further specifications for rural land construction, defining control lines, suspending construction approvals, and leading to a concentrated outbreak of unauthorized constructions within control lines<sup>88</sup> (Liu, 2014). These two documents, as the most crucial normative files for managing urban villages in the early stages of Shenzhen's urban development, determined the basic development pattern for Shenzhen's urban villages in the future (Li, 2018).

### **Stage Two: 1991-2004**

Starting in 1992, the Shenzhen Municipal Government declared comprehensive urbanization, marking a period of rapid development for the city. With the construction of numerous factories concentrated in the Baoan and Longgang districts, where rents were lower, a large influx of migrant populations settled in these areas, stimulating the explosive development of nearby urban villages. Although, in policy terms, urban village land had been nationalized, the actual usage rights remained in the hands of villagers and village collectives. The original village collectives transformed into joint-stock limited companies, establishing a system of village self-governance. In the absence of

<sup>88</sup> Liu, L. (2014). Studies on urban village renewal of independence: Take Shenzhen for instance. [Doctoral dissertation, Wuhan University]. p.81-87. 刘蕾. (2014). 城中村自主更新改造研究. [Doctoral dissertation, 武汉大学]. p.81-87. [http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmUI8slAE\\_ewxGmUFxNsxVr10StyJzv1JW6I2-my8bo01xTq3Ws qZHp61q9j\\_RaDUHfJMd2xjvImfMCAqsceXlcWHJe3R8qJKN-u2u\\_oeBVkd7SxlyDO-nxoABWtAhAL1k8JSN92xO\\_g==uniplatform=NZ KPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmUI8slAE_ewxGmUFxNsxVr10StyJzv1JW6I2-my8bo01xTq3Ws qZHp61q9j_RaDUHfJMd2xjvImfMCAqsceXlcWHJe3R8qJKN-u2u_oeBVkd7SxlyDO-nxoABWtAhAL1k8JSN92xO_g==uniplatform=NZ KPTlanguage=CHS)

effective government supervision, illegal construction issues became increasingly severe. In 1999 and 2002, the government successively enacted several policies to curb illegal construction in urban villages. However, the villagers' mentality of "grabbing the last train" intensified the illegal construction activities after the enactment of these policies, leading to a substantial system of unauthorized housing by 2004 in Shenzhen (Li, 2018).

### **Stage Three:2005-Present**

Following the uncontrolled and rampant growth of urban villages in the absence of effective government regulation, the government initiated strong governance measures in 2004. The "Decision of the Shenzhen Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of China and the People's Government of Shenzhen Municipality on Resolutely Investigating and Dealing with Illegal Construction and Illegal Land Use" was enacted, implementing four measures - confirming property rights, lawful demolition, confiscation, and temporary use - to address illegal construction. The enforcement was unprecedentedly stringent. Starting in 2005, expansion activities in Shenzhen's urban villages significantly declined. Additionally, labor-intensive factories gradually disappeared from the inner city, relocating from the central areas (Liu, 2014). This period also witnessed a shift in Shenzhen's urban planning direction from seeking increments to the reuse of existing land resources. The curtain was raised on the renewal and transformation of urban villages in Shenzhen during this period.

#### ● Space and organization characteristics of urban villages in Shenzhen

As of March 2018, urban villages in Shenzhen span the entire city, extending from the central to the peripheral areas. According to information released by the Shenzhen Urban Village Renovation Office in March 2018, the total land area for urban villages is 320 square kilometers. These urban villages, organized on the basis of administrative villages, amount to 336 in total. The city houses approximately 350,000 private structures within urban villages, with a total construction area exceeding one billion square meters. Based on incomplete statistics, the residential population in urban villages is estimated to be around 12 million<sup>89</sup> (Li, 2018).

Urban village structures primarily consist of privately owned homes and industrial factory buildings. The proportion of industrial land is slightly higher, and the majority of private residences exceed planned construction standards. Due to the vertical development based on the original villagers' homesteads, urban villages lack spacious roads and extensive green spaces.

The organizational management of urban villages largely relies on two institutions: joint-stock companies established by the original village and neighborhood committees. The former is responsible for the economic development of urban villages, while the latter, as a self-organized body, handles various social management affairs. It wasn't until the implementation of the "Shenzhen Social Work Station Management Measures" in 2006 that the government gradually became involved, jointly overseeing the management of urban villages with neighborhood committees (Liu, 2014).

<sup>89</sup> Li, J. (2005). Realist Issues in UEVs. *China Opening Herald*, (3), 43-48. 李津逵 (2005) 城中村的真问题. *开放导报*, 2005年7月, 第3期, 43-48. DOI: 10.19625/j.cnki.cn44-1338 / f.2005.03.010

## 2.2 Introduction of Nantou City

### ● General information

#### Situation of the district Nanshan<sup>90</sup>

Nanshan District is one of the economic hubs in Shenzhen, and it holds a prominent position as a vital high-tech industry base in China. This district hosts numerous high-tech enterprises and research institutions, including well-known companies like Huawei, Tencent, and ZTE. It also boasts top-tier educational resources, with several high-quality universities and research organizations, such as Shenzhen University, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Shenzhen Campus), and Southern University of Science and Technology.

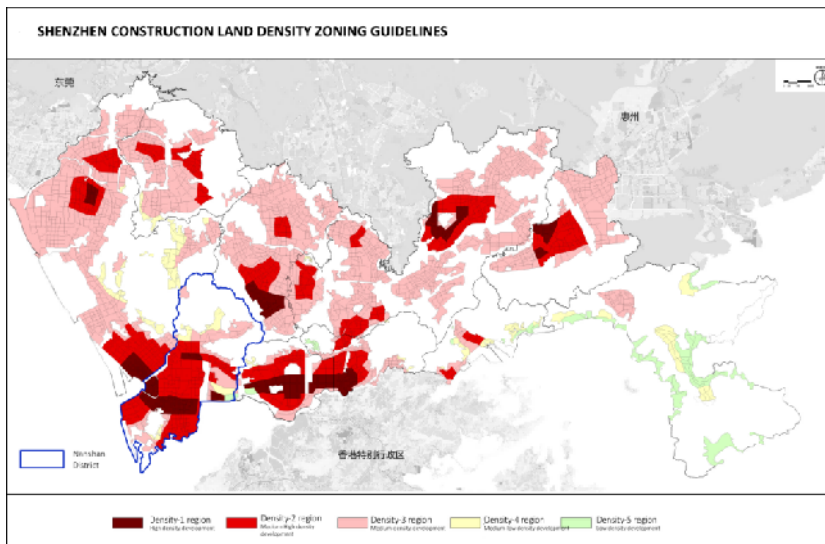


Fig.23: Plan of Shenzhen construction land density zoning guidelines

Source: Shenzhen Municipal Planning and Natural Resources Bureau. (2019). *Notice of the Municipal Planning and Land Commission on the implementation of the revised provisions of the density zoning and floor area ratio chapters of the "Shenzhen Urban Planning Standards and Guidelines"*. Shenzhen Municipal Planning and Land Commission.

[https://www.sz.gov.cn/cn/xxgk/zfxxgj/ghjh/csg/zt/content/post\\_1344686.html](https://www.sz.gov.cn/cn/xxgk/zfxxgj/ghjh/csg/zt/content/post_1344686.html)

Nanshan District is home to 28 urban villages with a permanent resident population of 16,800 people, constituting 13% of the total permanent population in the district. Additionally, there is a temporary resident population of 162,655 individuals, making up 45.3% of the overall temporary population. These urban villages are somewhat scattered across the district, with a more concentrated presence in areas like Nantou and Shekou. Due to their proximity to the technology parks, many of the urban village residents are employees of technology companies (Xu,2005).

In 2019, the Nanshan District government launched a comprehensive urban village revitalization project. This initiative aimed to address issues related to sanitation, public facility provision, and enhanced services. It introduced a third-party, centralized leasing and operation model, enabling

<sup>90</sup> Xu, Q.(2005). Village inside the city's renewal analyse in Shenzhen. [Master's Thesis, ChongQing University]. 许强.(2005).深圳市"城中村"改造分析研究. [硕士学位论文,重庆大学]. <http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLkcVRKGan12tSDLeWq0KkzHq1ywa6fOX4J8EVGWqIXPfQhEIAylu2qwclZmco1YrjuDiNuiVnCNT6T05V0emVOPeccRHq9L67Gzba8IbO5aRUMy8iIlCG6ix0g9T3k9b5ksJ0oMyY64g==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS>

third-party social enterprises to manage and oversee housing refurbishments in bulk and streamline the leasing processes<sup>91</sup>.

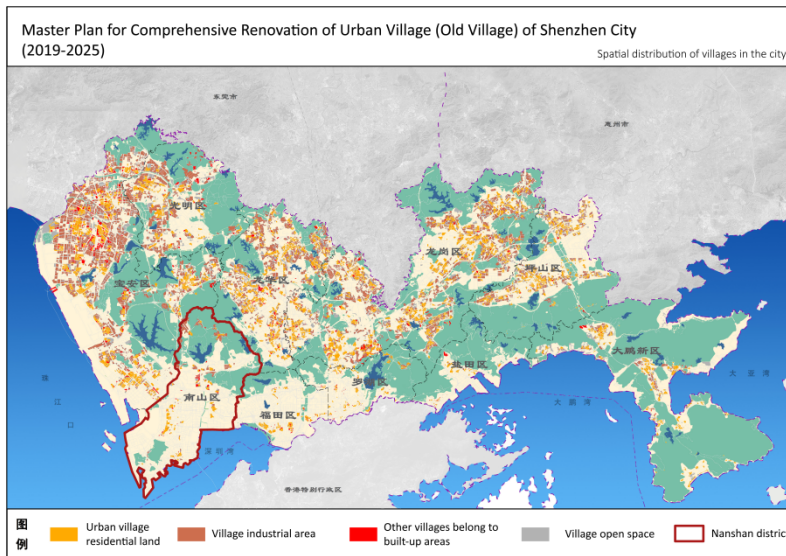


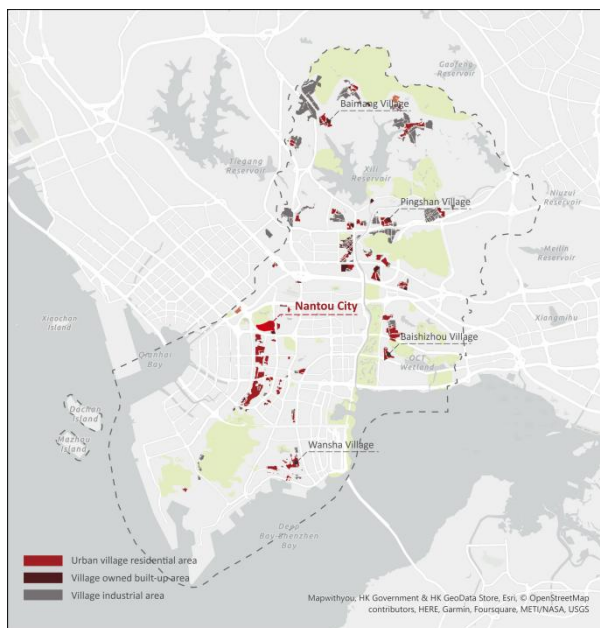
Fig.24: Master Plan for the comprehensive renovation of the urban village (old village) of Shenzhen City(2019-2025)

Source: Shenzhen Municipal Government. (2019). *Master Plan for comprehensive renovation of urban village (old village) of Shenzhen City(2019-2025)*. 深圳市政府.

[https://www.sz.gov.cn/cn/xxgk/zfxgj/ghjh/csgj/zt/content/post\\_1344686.html](https://www.sz.gov.cn/cn/xxgk/zfxgj/ghjh/csgj/zt/content/post_1344686.html)

**Geographical Position**

Nantou City is located south of the Nanshan District of Shenzhen City, north of Nantou Tianqiao, and adjacent to Shenzhen Bay. It is located in the heart of Shenzhen, about 15 km from Shenzhen city center and just steps away from Shenzhen Bay Park, a famous tourist attraction in Shenzhen.



<sup>91</sup> Shenzhen Urban Renewal . (2018) .*Nanshan District Urban Village Comprehensive Management Big Initiative*. 南山区域城中村综合治理大举措. <https://csgx.szhome.com/home/detail/275925.html>

Fig.25: Location of Nantou City Source: Drew by author

The total area is about 14.5 hectares, and there are more than 1000 buildings inside, and the building density is as high as 50%<sup>92</sup>. (2021, Gu), there are many natural landscapes around.



Fig.26: Surrounding situation of Nantou City Source: Drew by author

### ● History<sup>93</sup>

Nantou city has a history dating back 1,700 years, tracing its origins to the establishment of Baoshan County in the Eastern Jin Dynasty during the sixth year of Emperor Xianhe, in 331 AD. Nantou emerged as a central city on the eastern bank of the Pearl River. In 736 AD, an independent military garrison known as Tunmen Town was established on the southeastern seaside of Nantou, aimed at bolstering coastal defense. During the Song and Yuan dynasties, the government established the Dongguan Salt Field Office in Nantou, making it a significant center for salt production. In 1394 AD, a military defensive organization called the Dongguan Shouyu Qianhu Office was set up in Nantou, and later, it formed the basis for the establishment of Xin'an County, which administered the region encompassing modern-day Shenzhen and Hong Kong<sup>94</sup>. (Ren,2022)

<sup>92</sup> Gu, S. (2021). *Research on the post-renewal evaluation of nantou city in shenzhen from the public perspective*. [Master's thesis, Harbin Institute of Technology]. 顾思明. (2021). 公众视角下深圳市南头古城更新后评价研究. [硕士学位论文, 哈尔滨工业大学]. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2021.006857doi:10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2021.006857>.

<sup>93</sup> Lai, W. (2018). *Research on the expression of landscape culture based on spatial narrative——taking Nantou ancient city in Shenzhen as an example*. [Doctoral dissertation, Shenzhen University].p.8. 赖婉仪. (2018). 基于空间叙事的景观文化表达研究——以深圳市南头古城为例. [Doctoral dissertation, 深圳大学].第 8 页. [http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmBkHBJB0vvpv33nKtNZXW5WY-ybGv61rusBj8u7DwUigYkx-\\_nJ-TOQPHWQOudTMiPI6Di\\_DM9TrLI6Y5I5Ou5IWRIEYtNUjwvuelCYwjk\\_y2HGJ4cMU669KjPVoqNCjZXkCtCpboKQ==uniplatform=NZKPTLanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmBkHBJB0vvpv33nKtNZXW5WY-ybGv61rusBj8u7DwUigYkx-_nJ-TOQPHWQOudTMiPI6Di_DM9TrLI6Y5I5Ou5IWRIEYtNUjwvuelCYwjk_y2HGJ4cMU669KjPVoqNCjZXkCtCpboKQ==uniplatform=NZKPTLanguage=CHS)

<sup>94</sup> Ren, J. (2022). *Collaborative research on ancient city site protection and cultural tourism development based on service design concept ——A case study of Nantou ancient city in Shenzhen*. [Master's thesis, Nanchang University]. 任佳颖. (2022). 基于服务设计理念的古城遗址保护与文旅开发协同研究——以深圳市南头古城为例. [硕士学位论文, 南昌大学]. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27232/d.cnki.gnchu.2022.004355doi:10.27232/d.cnki.gnchu.2022.004355>.

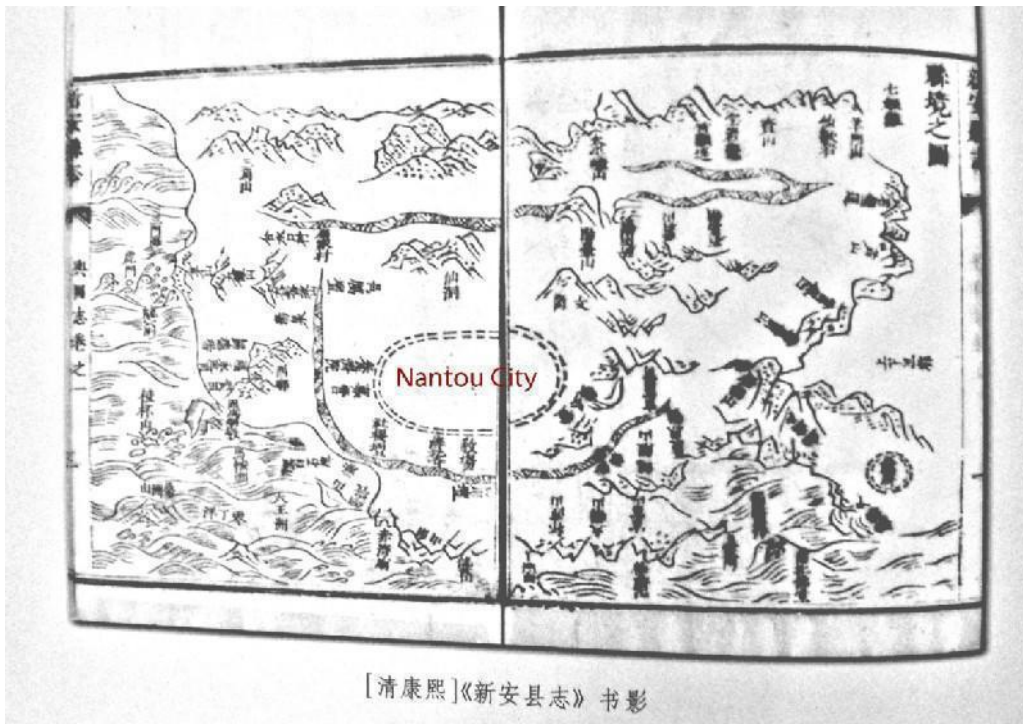


Fig.27: Xin'an County Seat in the Reign of the Kangxi Emperor (1661-1722)

Source: Donnell, M. (2013). *Xin'an County Seat in the Reign of the Kangxi Emperor (1661-1722)*. OpenDemocracy. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opensecurity/laying-siege-to-villages-nantou-peninsula/>

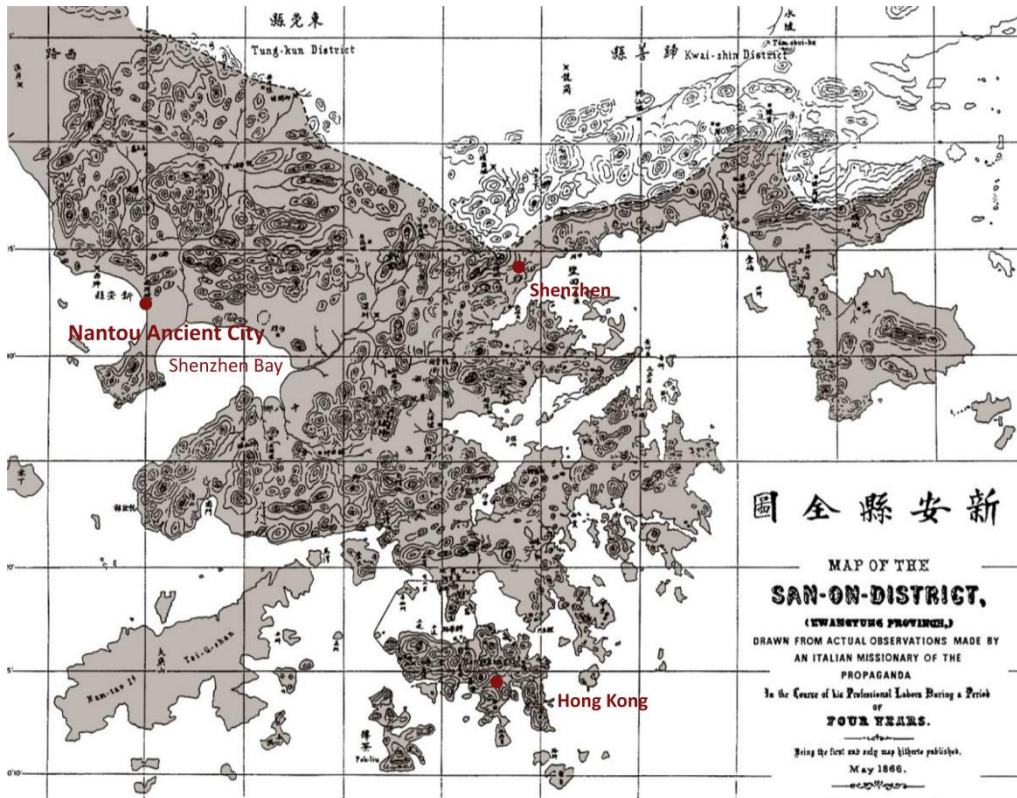


Fig.28: Map of San on District in 1866

Source: Donnell, M. (2013). *Xin'an County Seat in the Reign of the Kangxi Emperor (1661-1722)*. OpenDemocracy. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opensecurity/laying-siege-to-villages-nantou-peninsula/>

Subsequently, Nantou City underwent several instances of large-scale destruction. The first took place during the Kangxi period of the Qing Dynasty when the government implemented a policy of border relocation and coastal restrictions, resulting in the demolition of all houses within Nantou except for the city walls. Many residents were forced to relocate. Later, during the period of the Republic of China, the Japanese military constructed numerous fortifications and other military facilities in Nantou. In 1953, Nantou was downgraded from a county to a commune, leading people to build houses on the former city wall's location. The moat was filled, and the ancient buildings suffered varying degrees of damage. (Chu&Wang, 2020)

With the advent of the reform and opening-up era and the establishment of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, Nantou City found itself surrounded by newly emerging urban areas. In the following decades, the interior of Nantou City continued to witness constant construction and leasing to the outside, transforming it into one of the relatively underdeveloped urban villages.

- Demography and income structure

In 1992, Nantou City established a village joint-stock company and leased land to factories participating in the "Three Comes and One Compensation" policy. At that time, approximately 80% of the residents in Nantou were migrant workers. Following the relocation of factories, Nantou City transformed into a rental housing area primarily catering to floating migrant populations<sup>95</sup>. (Li,2018) The demographic composition of Nantou city resembles that of other urban villages in Shenzhen. Among the more than 24,800 current residents living within the ancient city, over 90% are migrants with a high degree of internal mobility. Most of them have resided for less than five years, and interpersonal relationship networks among residents are relatively weak. The composition of the migrant population is diverse, with occupations including delivery personnel, food delivery drivers, janitors, shop attendants, drivers, and a portion of white-collar professionals working in nearby technology and industrial parks due to the city's proximity to such areas. Additionally, recent university graduates often choose urban villages as their initial settling point upon arriving in Shenzhen.

Based on previous research related to the local survey, we can infer that the data concerning occupation, income, and age should be interpreted with caution in subsequent usage due to the limited sample size in the referenced literature. According to the survey results, the majority of residents are engaged in individual businesses and freelancing, with the primary age group falling within the 31-45 age bracket, followed by the 45-60 age range<sup>96</sup> (Gu, 2021:52). In terms of income, it is generally below 10,000 RMB, with 23.38% of the population having no income, including full-time mothers, retired residents, and teenagers still in school (Lai, 2018:38).

<sup>95</sup> Li, J. (2018). Comparative study on the folk belief space of homogeneous urban village and heterogeneous urban village: The case of hubei old village and nantou old town. *Development of small cities & towns*, (6), 8. 李景磊. (2018). 同、异质型城中村民间信仰空间比较研究——湖贝旧村与南头古城. *小城镇建设*, (6), 8.

<sup>96</sup> Gu, S. (2021). *Research on the post-renewal evaluation of nantou city in shenzhen from the public perspective*. [Master's thesis, Harbin Institute of Technology]. 顾思明. (2021). 公众视角下深圳市南头古城更新后评价研究. [硕士学位论文, 哈尔滨工业大学]. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2021.006857doi:10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2021.006857>.

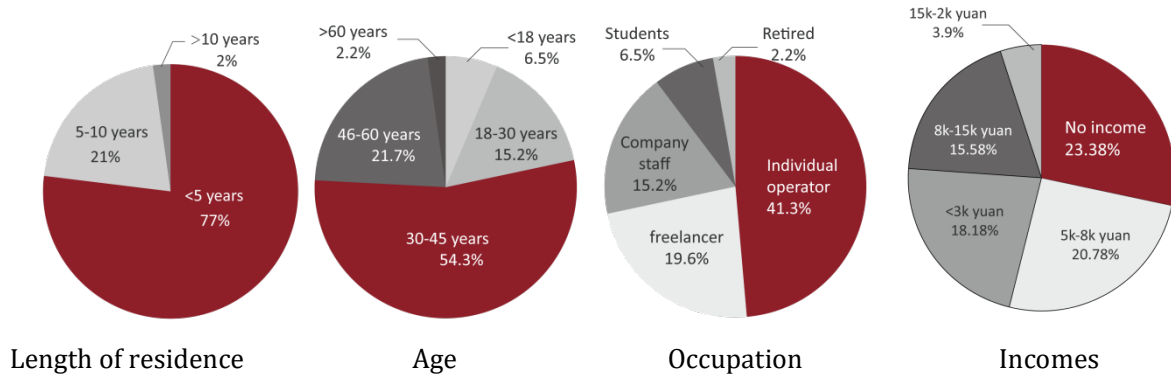


Fig.29: Demography information of Nantou City

Source: Adapted from *Research on the Post-renewal Evaluation of Nantou city in Shenzhen from the Public Perspective.* (p52) by Gu, S.2021, and *Research on landscape cultural expression based on spatial narrative.* (p38) By Lai W.2018.

### 2.3 Conclusion

Shenzhen, as a city, has played a distinctive and leading role in China's urbanization process. In just forty years, it has transformed from a fishing village with a population of only a few hundred thousand to its current status as an international metropolis. Through the study of the development process of Shenzhen's urban villages, this article reveals the roles played by different stakeholders in these villages and their impact on the city's overall urban development. It also highlights the diverse measures taken by the government, reflecting China's economic policy directions at various stages. The current state of urban villages in Shenzhen reflects the irreconcilable issues in China's urbanization process, shedding light on the survival challenges faced by the nearly 400 million mobile population. Furthermore, this section provides a preliminary exploration of the geographical location, history, and demographic composition of Nantou City. Subsequent sections will delve into its transformation process in greater detail.

## 3. Renovation of urban village in Shenzhen

### 3.1 The objectives of urban village renovation

Since the introduction of the "Interim Provisions for the Renovation of Urban Villages in Shenzhen" by the Shenzhen Municipal Government in 2004, the official process of transforming urban villages in Shenzhen has commenced. The objectives of this transformation are multifaceted, encompassing environmental, economic, and institutional aspects.

- Improve the living environment

Urban villages in Shenzhen face challenges such as high population density, inadequate infrastructure, and poor sanitation. Addressing these issues is crucial for enhancing the living environment. Measures include the transformation of unsafe and dilapidated structures, comprehensive area redevelopment with an emphasis on increasing greenery, and the improvement of water systems. Additionally, efforts are made to augment public services within urban villages, such as healthcare



services, parks, and recreational facilities.

- Change the economic governance model of urban villages

Traditional urban villages often relied on the self-governance of the original village collectives, lacking external supervision and guidance, leading to various service supply issues. The nationalization of original rural collective land, especially illegally developed land, and the introduction of market entities, such as real estate companies, into the market for free circulation, has been instrumental. This measure not only opens up more urban land resources but also expands the space for capital flow, alleviating government financial pressure.

- Reform the household registration system

Due to the unequal hukou system, urban village residents often lack the same civil rights in education, employment, and healthcare as local residents in Shenzhen. Breaking down hukou barriers and establishing new hukou identities are essential to effectively address the development issues of the significant migrant population in Shenzhen. Creating a social security system and equal employment opportunities equivalent to those of citizens is crucial for migrant populations<sup>97</sup>. (Huang,2013)

### 3.2 Relevant policies for urban village renovation

- 2009 "Shenzhen Urban Renewal Measures"

Established the urban renewal unit system, identifying urban villages as the main subject of urban renewal. It laid the foundation for the predominant transformation model, guided by the government and operated by the market. The "Implementation Rules for Shenzhen Urban Renewal Measures" issued in 2012 provided strict regulations on the management of urban renewal units, gradually refining and standardizing the valuation within renewal units. (Zhai,2020) The policy had a significant impact, with the proportion of Shenzhen's urban renewal investment in the overall real estate market increasing from 18% in 2010 to 41% in 2013. <sup>98</sup> (Liu, 2014)

- 2019 "Shenzhen Urban Village (Old Village) Comprehensive Rectification Master Plan (2019-2025)"

Since 2016, the Shenzhen Municipal Government has devolved powers to each district to encourage the exploration of new models and approaches to development. Urban village renovation is considered a crucial milestone in the "construction of an international city." The preferred renovation model leans towards micro-renovation, emphasizing respect for the intentions of multiple rights-holders and providing sufficient attention and legislative protection for vulnerable groups (Yuan et al., 2021). The 2019 Master Plan continues the positioning of the previous "City General

<sup>97</sup>Huang, Z. (2013). *The research on the models and strategies in the reconstruction of the urban village illustrated by the case of Shenzhen*. [PhD diss., Wuhan University]. 黄治. (2013). *城中村改造模式与策略研究*. [博士学位论文, 武汉大学]. [http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLkXMTUXPnp0bYewFZtzCHHUN7wkkbvvMHQombNC33yWRDD1c4vgQZSpGijE8pTOGugEaQgbO3iHF283OwE2hcEBi-w0bqbAl1LpqrRhOppKzDdBptnpSV1TFJLG\\_I5gNNippGaQardb49A==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLkXMTUXPnp0bYewFZtzCHHUN7wkkbvvMHQombNC33yWRDD1c4vgQZSpGijE8pTOGugEaQgbO3iHF283OwE2hcEBi-w0bqbAl1LpqrRhOppKzDdBptnpSV1TFJLG_I5gNNippGaQardb49A==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS)

<sup>98</sup> Liu, L. (2014). *Studies on urban village renewal of independence: Take Shenzhen for instance*. [Doctoral dissertation, Wuhan University]. P.93. 刘蕾. (2014). *城中村自主更新改造研究*. [Doctoral dissertation, 武汉大学]. P.93. [http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmUI8slAE\\_ewxGmUFxNsxVr10StyJzv1JW6I2-my8bo01xTq3Ws qZHp61q9j\\_RaDUHFJMd2xjvImfMCAqsceXlcWHJe3R8qJKN-u2u\\_oeBVkd7SxlyYDO-nxoABWtAhAL1k8JSN92xO\\_g==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmUI8slAE_ewxGmUFxNsxVr10StyJzv1JW6I2-my8bo01xTq3Ws qZHp61q9j_RaDUHFJMd2xjvImfMCAqsceXlcWHJe3R8qJKN-u2u_oeBVkd7SxlyYDO-nxoABWtAhAL1k8JSN92xO_g==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS)

Plan," aiming to implement the new urban development strategy proposed in the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. It establishes a demonstration zone for deep cooperation among Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau. The policy further refines the regulations for urban village renovation and emphasizes the supervision of the urban village rental market, highlighting measures to enhance and regulate affordable housing (Shenzhen Municipal Planning and Natural Resources Bureau, 2019).

### 3.3 The current situation of urban village renewal in Shenzhen

Since the issuance of urban renewal policies in Shenzhen, a boom in urban renewal projects has emerged, with a predominant focus on the transformation of urban villages. The process of urban village transformation primarily involves a multi-party game among stakeholders, addressing the challenge of balancing the post-transformation increase in property values and the substantial costs of redevelopment. For investors, engaging in urban village transformation still entails significant risks, necessitating government support to actively participate (Huang, 2013).

Currently, the approach to urban village transformation has shifted from the previous emphasis on demolition and reconstruction to regional micro-upgrades. After 2017, the Shenzhen municipal government began decentralizing authority to district-level governments, aiming to enable each district to develop autonomous and tailored approaches to urban renewal. This decentralization has refined and made Shenzhen's urban renewal policies more meticulous and conducive to practical implementation. The system of urban village transformation has gradually improved and become more systematic, with clearly delineated stages publicly disclosed. This enhancement has increased the efficiency of the transformation process and fostered the collective involvement of various stakeholders, moving away from a scenario where either the government or market entities held unilateral dominance (Li, 2018).

### 3.4 Main problems in the process of renovation<sup>99</sup>

- The obscurity of property rights

The issue of property rights remains a significant and undeniable obstacle in the urban village transformation, as lands with unclear property rights cannot be seamlessly integrated into the market. The equitable distribution of compensation during the property rights resolution process poses a major challenge, necessitating a balanced approach to address conflicts of interest among various stakeholders, including original villagers and tenants. Furthermore, considerations must extend to potential social instability resulting from improper handling. Regulatory gaps and lagging legislation during the transformation process add impediments, hindering the government's coordination efforts in addressing property rights issues.

- Plight of floating population in the rental market

Following urban village transformations, the inevitable rise in land and rental prices overlooks the

<sup>99</sup> Huang, Z.(2013).*The research on the models and strategies in the reconstruction of the urban village illustrated by the case of Shenzhen*. [PhD diss., Wuhan University]. 黄治. (2013). *城中村改造模式与策略研究*. [博士学位论文, 武汉大学]. [http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLkXMTUXPnp0bYewFztzCHHUN7wkbvMvMHQombNC33yWRDD1c4vgQZSpjE8pTOGugEaQgbO3iHF283OwE2hcEBi-w0bqbAl1LpqRh0ppKzDdBptnpSV1TFjLG\\_I5gNNippGaQarDb49A==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLkXMTUXPnp0bYewFztzCHHUN7wkbvMvMHQombNC33yWRDD1c4vgQZSpjE8pTOGugEaQgbO3iHF283OwE2hcEBi-w0bqbAl1LpqRh0ppKzDdBptnpSV1TFjLG_I5gNNippGaQarDb49A==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS)

essential needs of the lower-income groups for cost-effective living. Most tenants forced to relocate due to redevelopment projects often find themselves constrained within other untransformed urban villages, enduring repeated spatial squeezes. Ultimately, this form of urban renewal leads to the gradual loss of the floating population as they opt for second-tier cities providing a lower cost of living. This approach fails to fundamentally resolve the contradictions within urban villages, merely shifting the burden onto the vulnerable segment <sup>100</sup>(Li, 2018).

- Missing Entities in the Renewal Process

Despite the government's establishment of a transparent urban renewal platform and the formulation of a mature system involving government entities, implementing bodies, village shareholders, and villagers, the interests of the tenant group, which constitutes a significantly higher proportion than the villagers, are inadequately considered throughout the renewal process. In situations characterized by disparate power dynamics and information asymmetry, the tenant group, lacking tangible safeguards, incur losses (Li, 2018).

- Distribution Issues in Urban Renewal System:

Urban renewal policies prioritize incremental construction in key development areas, concentrating on urban renewal projects. This excessive inclination of land resources towards urban renewal exacerbates the unfairness faced by land rights in non-urban renewal projects<sup>101</sup>. (Lin, 2017).

### 3.5 Conclusion

This passage primarily discusses the direction and objectives of urban village transformation from the perspective of the Shenzhen municipal government. It outlines how current policies are specifically planned and how the government is decentralizing power to district governments to make the renewal process more targeted. The transformation approach has shifted from the previous emphasis on demolition and reconstruction to regional micro-upgrades.

However, the existing methods of renewal have yet to effectively address the fundamental contradictions within urban villages. Persistent property rights issues from historical legacies remain unresolved. Housing difficulties persist for the floating population in Shenzhen, and the current renewal methods have not adequately involved the main residents of urban villages in the transformation process.

<sup>100</sup> Li, J.(2018). *Research on space value and renewal of shenzhen's urban village*. [PhD diss., South China University of Technology]. 李景磊. (2018). *深圳城中村空间价值及更新研究*. [博士学位论文, 华南理工大学]. [http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLIWfugpZ5tXZ15LexA\\_0XmPciUTXYRGO5H78W5-ft7rir\\_p-QSz53hSG5AkDdE8p2huSwl9cybFrgH7UjwKTrv2J5HcxM9-tHzbm1zRfHi6gP3Ni4oBcd8D4wrwqRrhWcKImMOYPBjbow==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLIWfugpZ5tXZ15LexA_0XmPciUTXYRGO5H78W5-ft7rir_p-QSz53hSG5AkDdE8p2huSwl9cybFrgH7UjwKTrv2J5HcxM9-tHzbm1zRfHi6gP3Ni4oBcd8D4wrwqRrhWcKImMOYPBjbow==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS)

<sup>101</sup> Lin, Q.(2017). Institutional Arrangement and Policy Reflections of Urban Renewal: A Case Study of Shenzhen. *City Planning Review* 2017,41(11) 林强. (2017). 城市更新的制度安排与政策反思——以深圳为例. *城市规划* 2017年, 41卷11期. doi: 10.11819/cpr20171109a

## 4. The urban village renovation in Shenzhen, the case of Nantou City

### 4.1 Space form of the village

#### ● Introduction

The spatial morphology of Nantou City shares similarities with many urban villages in Shenzhen. From a planning perspective, although there is a considerable quantity of public space, its overall area is limited, leading to high building density. The main road network consists of two primary arteries, running east-west and north-south, penetrating the entirety of Nantou City. The overall distribution of buildings appears disorderly, lacking comprehensive planning.



Fig.30: Nantou city map bottom relationship

Source: Author drawing

#### ● Streets

Within the confines of Nantou Ancient Town, the road network maintains a grid structure characterized by 'two horizontal and seven vertical' axes. With the exception of two main roads, most pathways are relatively narrow, with the main thoroughfares measuring approximately 4-6 meters in width and exhibiting a height-to-width ratio of around 3. Secondary roads are narrower, ranging from 1.5 to 3 meters, with a height-to-width ratio of approximately 5.5. Alleyways designated for daily living are around 1 meter wide. Furthermore<sup>102</sup> (Nie, 2022, p. 24), the layout of minor roads is

<sup>102</sup> Nie, Y. (2022). *Research on the relevance of spatial form and its physical environment of the nantou gucheng urban village*. [Doctoral dissertation, Harbin Institute of Technology]. 聂颖通. 南头古城空间形态与其物理环境的关联性研究. (Doctoral dissertation, 哈尔滨工业大学).

<https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2020.004159doi:10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2020.004159>.

concentrated, disorderly, and lacks a cohesive arrangement, contributing to an overall subpar road environment. The road surfaces are notably undermaintained, and instances of local residents occupying segments of the roads for personal activities are observed.

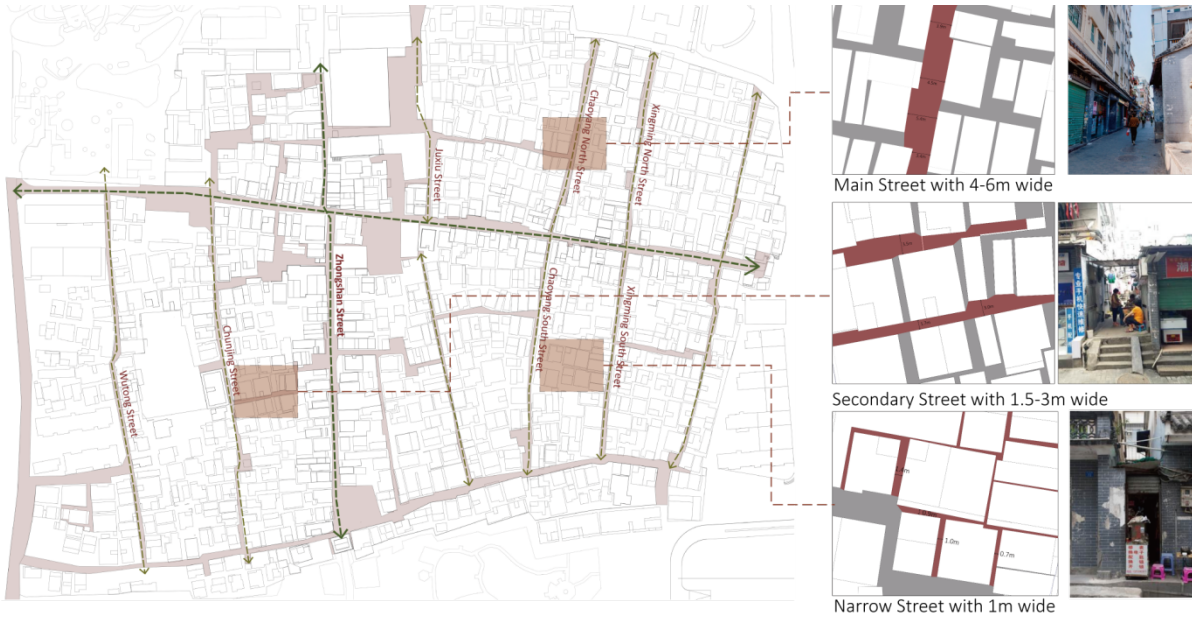


Fig.31: Nantou city street system

Source: Author drawing

● Pocket spaces



Fig.32: Nantou city pocket spaces map

Source: Author drawing

## ● Buildings

The majority of buildings in Nantou Ancient Town consist of residential structures ranging from 3 to 10 stories, with a predominant height of 6 to 7 stories. Additionally, there are some culturally protected buildings and factories interspersed within the area. In terms of architectural texture, there is significant diversity in building forms, and different types of structures are juxtaposed. In comparison to the building plot ratios of 3.0 to 4.0 observed in Shenzhen's urban villages, Nantou Ancient Town has a plot ratio of around 3.0<sup>103</sup>(Fan, Chen, & Zhang, 2023). Residential buildings exhibit distinct variations in their facades across different decades. Houses constructed since the 1980s often feature mosaic tiling or plastered cement as the primary materials. Buildings from the 1990s commonly utilize water brush stone and dry-bonded stone. Starting from the 21st century, facades are frequently adorned with wall tiles, contributing to an overall eclectic architectural style<sup>104</sup>(Lai, 2018).

### Building types



### Building qualities



## Building Heights

<sup>103</sup> Fan Y. & Chen S. & Zhang Q.(2023). Nantou Old Town as a Residential Place: Understanding the Evolution and Perception Comparison of a High-Density Residential Area in Shenzhen. *Time+Architecture*, 2023(4):57-63.

DOI:10.13717/j.cnki.ta.2023.04.057 范悦, 陈珊, 张琼.(2023). 南头古城作为居住的场所 : 基于深圳高密度居住形态演变与感知对比的视角 [J]. *时代建筑*, 2023 (4) : 57-63.

<sup>104</sup>Lai, W. (2018). *Research on the expression of landscape culture based on spatial narrative——taking Nantou ancient city in Shenzhen as an example*. [Doctoral dissertation, Shenzhen University]. 赖婉仪. (2018). *基于空间叙事的景观文化表达研究——以深圳市南头古城为例*. [Doctoral dissertation, 深圳大学].

[http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmBkHBJB0vppy33nKtNZXW5WY-ybGv61rusBj8u7DwUigYkx-\\_nJ-TQPHWQOudTMiPI6Di\\_DM9TrLi6Y515Ou5IWRIEYtNujvwuelCYwjk\\_y2HGJ4cMU669KjPVoqNCjZXkCtCppboKQ==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmBkHBJB0vppy33nKtNZXW5WY-ybGv61rusBj8u7DwUigYkx-_nJ-TQPHWQOudTMiPI6Di_DM9TrLi6Y515Ou5IWRIEYtNujvwuelCYwjk_y2HGJ4cMU669KjPVoqNCjZXkCtCppboKQ==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS)

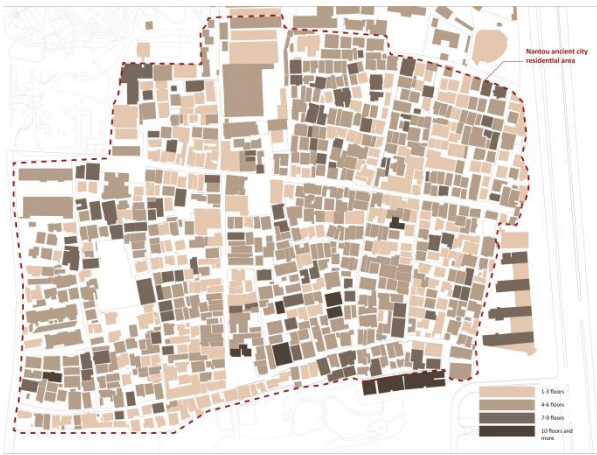


Fig.33: Nantou city building analysis

Source: Author drawing



Fig.34: Typical buildings in Nantou City

Source: Author drawing

Xin'an County Government Office



Guanyin Pavilion Well



Dongguan Guildhall



Baode Ancestral Hall



Wen Ancestral Hall



The South Gate



The East Gate



Fig.35: Historical buildings in Nantou City

Source: Author drawing



Idea Factory



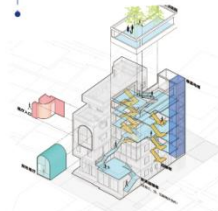
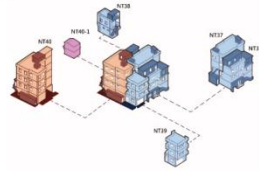
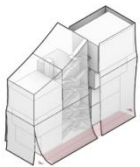
Diverse Homology Pavilion-Administration



Hybrid Building



Nantou Neighbourhood Center



Diverse Homology Pavilion-Culture

Fig.36: Renovated buildings in Nantou City

Source: Author drawing



## 4.2 The Process of the development

The modern transformation process of Nantou City is intricately linked to the urban development of Shenzhen and can be delineated into several phases:

Starting from the onset of China's reform and opening up in 1980, Shenzhen entered a rapid development phase. The administrative status of Nantou City, situated in the Nanshan District, underwent a downgrade from "urban" to "village." In 1986, the implementation of the "Notice on Further Strengthening Rural Planning in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone" standardized rural land within the urban scope, permitting farmers to rebuild on their land. This initiated a fervor for land occupation and construction, resulting in the removal of a significant portion of Nantou City's city walls and the outward expansion of the built-up area <sup>105</sup>(Zhou, He, Zang, Yang, & Ikebe, 2022).

Starting in 1997, due to the disorderly construction and destruction of the historical appearance of Nantou City, coupled with preparations for the return of Hong Kong, the Shenzhen government embarked on a restoration project for Nantou City. A comprehensive assessment was conducted with the intention of restoring the traditional appearance of the ancient city. The Nanshan District government allocated approximately 60 million RMB for the overall restoration of Nantou City. In 2011, renovations were undertaken on the street facades of Nantou City. The "Shenzhen Nantou Ancient City Protection Plan" in 2012 proposed the demolition of numerous illegal structures within Nantou City and the construction of historical and cultural streets<sup>106</sup> (Gu, 2021).

From 2016 to 2018, the official implementation of the renewal and protection project for Nantou City commenced. In 2017, the "The Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture" selected Nantou City as the main exhibition venue. Leveraging this opportunity, a comprehensive plan for Nantou City was executed, positioning it as a historical and cultural town showcasing the shared cultural origins of Shenzhen, Hong Kong, and Macao. Several important open public spaces and buildings within the city were renovated.

<sup>105</sup> Zhou, T. , He, X. , Zang, T. , Yang, X. and Ikebe, K. (2022) The Neglected Voices within Urban Village Regeneration as a Historic Urban Landscape: A Case Study of Nantou Village in Shenzhen. *Current Urban Studies*, 10, 763-786. doi: 10.4236/cus.2022.104044.

<sup>106</sup> Gu, S. (2021). *Research on the post-renewal evaluation of nantou city in shenzhen from the public perspective*. [Master's thesis, Harbin Institute of Technology]. 顾思明. (2021). 公众视角下深圳市南头古城更新后评价研究. [硕士学位论文, 哈尔滨工业大学]. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2021.006857>doi:10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2021.006857.

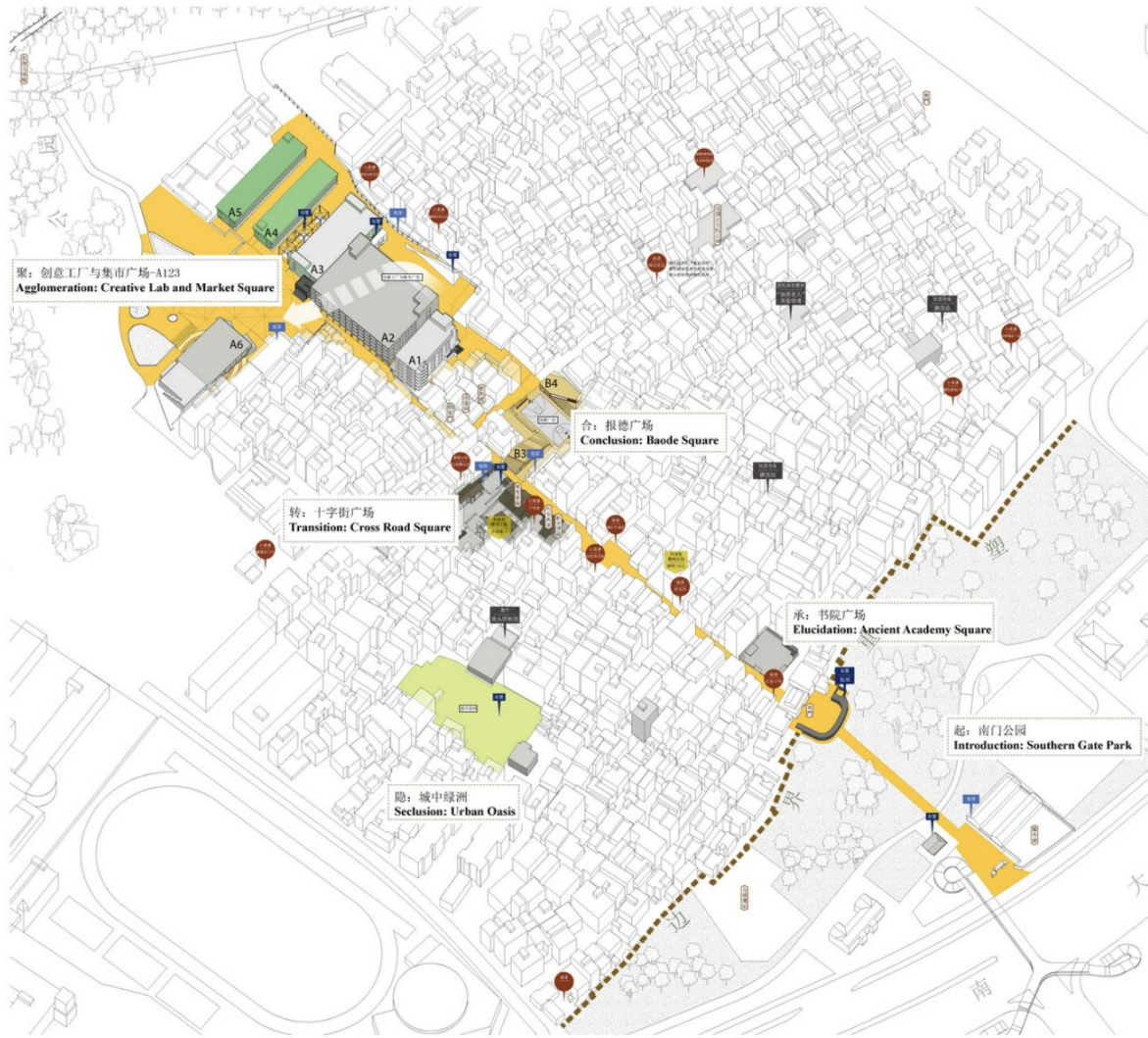


Fig.37: Nantou city renovation in UABB 2017

Source: Urbanus. (2017). Nantou Old Town. Retrieved from <http://www.urbanus.com.cn/projects/nantou-old-town/>

Notably, the Bao De Square and its surrounding structures were demolished and rebuilt. The renovated buildings now serve as exhibition halls and a square, providing crucial spaces for performances and exchanges within the exhibition area.



Fig.38: Baode Square in Nantou city after renovation

Source: Urbanus. (2017). *Nantou Old Town*. Retrieved from <http://www.urbanus.com.cn/projects/nantou-old-town/>

Additionally, a clothing factory within Nantou City was repurposed as the main exhibition area for the biennale, with its facade adorned with exhibition themes. The ground floor was opened up, and some surrounding walls were removed to connect the western streets, Joy Stage, and Zhongshan Park<sup>107</sup> (Urbanus, 2017).

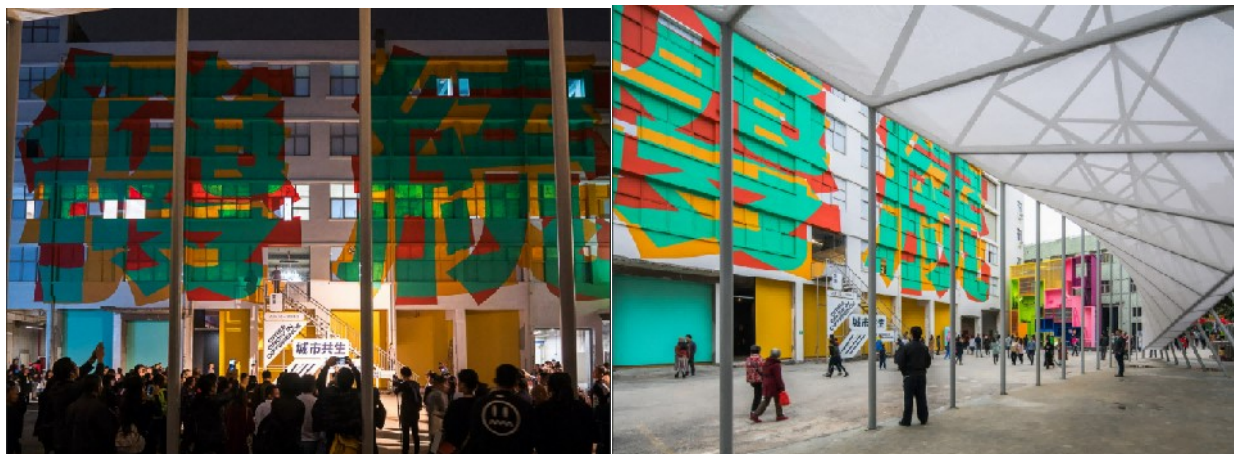


Fig.39: Main exhibition area of UABB 2017

Source: Urbanus. (2017). *Nantou Old Town*. Retrieved from <http://www.urbanus.com.cn/projects/nantou-old-town/>

From 2019 to the present, under the "Outline of the Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area," Nantou City, as one of the few local sites preserving traditional culture in Shenzhen, has undergone further development and protection initiatives. A more in-depth transformation of the internal structures and streets of the urban village was carried out. The redevelopment of Nantou City is positioned as a comprehensive cultural hub integrating cultural creativity, commerce, and residential components. In March 2019, the "Butterfly Metamorphosis Rebirth Plan" for Nantou City commenced, and by 2020, the north-south street sections of Nantou City were officially opened to the public (Gu, 2021).

<sup>107</sup> Urbanus. (2017). *Nantou Old Town*. Retrieved from <http://www.urbanus.com.cn/projects/nantou-old-town/>

### 4.3 The current situation of the renovation

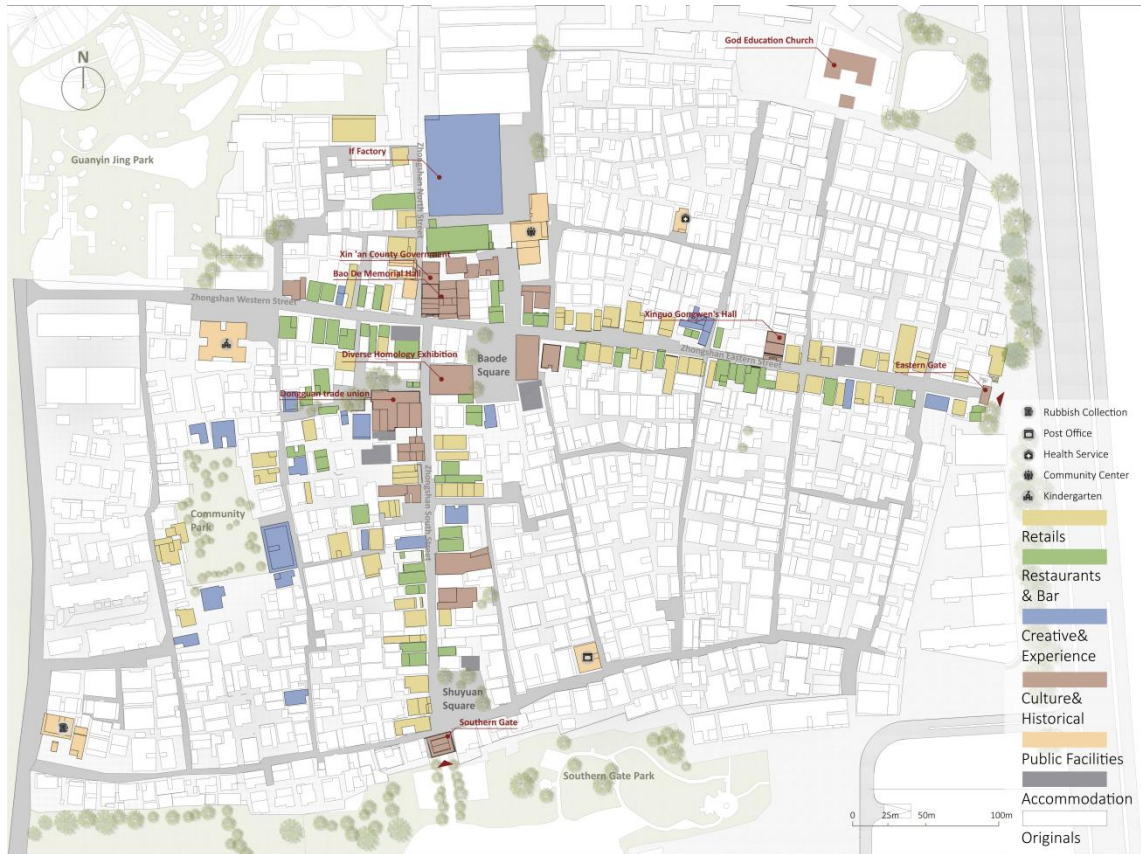


Fig.40: Current Plan of Nantou City in 2023

Source: Author drawing

Nantou City initiated a new round of redevelopment in 2019, organized into three phases. The first phase focused on the north-south main streets, the second phase focused on the northeast street, and the third phase focused on the Chun Jing Street area. These phases were gradually unveiled from 2020 to 2021. The project, a collaborative effort involving the government, corporate entities, and local residents, saw the establishment of a joint venture by Vanke, state-owned enterprises, and the village collective stock company. This joint venture implemented a unified lease and building renovation operational strategy (Gu, 2021). Key landmarks such as Cross Street Square, Bao De Square, and Shuyuan Square were preserved, while three pocket parks were newly constructed. Art installations and stages previously erected for biennial exhibitions were dismantled, and former factories were repurposed into office spaces. Additionally, infrastructure within Nantou City underwent optimization, including the introduction of access control systems and fire stations (Gu & Ma & Wang, 2022).

The comprehensive leasing housing project continues in Nantou City, with Vanke's 'Boyu' apartments occupying over 90 buildings in the city. The focus has been on reinforcing existing structures, updating and upgrading pipelines and fire safety measures, and enhancing both external facades and internal layouts. The apartments are primarily targeted at the youth demographic, with rents comparatively high and featuring predominantly one-bedroom units (Fan, Chen, & Zhang, 2023).

#### 4.4 Problems derived from the renovation<sup>108</sup>

- The Impact of Introducing New Business Formats on Traditional Locally Operated Businesses Originally maintained by local residents

The traditional business formats have been affected by the redevelopment plan, leading to the eviction of shops operated by local residents for over a decade. This has caused economic losses and inconveniences in their daily lives. According to feedback from these residents, they now need to travel to external markets for the purchase of basic necessities and agricultural products. The businesses that have moved in after the redevelopment no longer cater to the current needs and leisure preferences of local residents, and the prices of similar goods have doubled<sup>109</sup>(Gu,2021).

- Uneven Distribution of Infrastructure Within the Nantou Ancient Town

There is an insufficient number of recreational areas and public restrooms. Moreover, the placement of these facilities has not considered service coverage and is predominantly concentrated in a few larger public spaces. Nighttime lighting is also problematic, as the primary sources of illumination are storefront windows.

- Inconvenient External Transportation: Public transportation options are inconvenient for those wishing to travel to the Nantou Ancient Town.

The nearest subway station, in a straight line, is approximately one kilometer away, requiring a 15-minute walk. In terms of private vehicle transportation, there is a scarcity of parking spaces in the Nantou Ancient Town. On weekends, it is common to observe long lines of vehicles waiting outside parking lots.

- Limited Public Spaces for Residents

The post-redevelopment residential areas continue to have limited public spaces. Public activities remain concentrated in narrow alleyways and a few small pockets of open space, with no notable improvement in spatial quality. Furthermore, local residents and tourists experience a fragmented activity space. Moving between the redeveloped and non-redeveloped areas, activities in these two regions appear disconnected. The public spaces within the commercial streets are not designed for long-term residence from the perspective of local residents.

## 5. Conclusion

This chapter examines the development and transformation of urban villages in Shenzhen, starting with an exploration of the unique formation mechanisms and challenges faced by these villages in the context of China's urban development. The genesis of urban villages is not merely a spatial phenomenon; it reveals underlying issues related to China's land tenure system and economic development model, as well as inherent contradictions in the modern state's urbanization process.

<sup>108</sup> Ma, H. (2007). Renewal of city village in Shenzhen from perspective of urban sociology. *City Planning Review*, 3(1), 26-28. 马航 (2007).深圳城中村改造的城市社会学视野分析. *城市规划*, 2007年, 第31卷, 第1期, 26-28.

<sup>109</sup> Gu, S. (2021). *Research on the post-renewal evaluation of nantou city in Shenzhen from the public perspective*. [Master's thesis, Harbin Institute of Technology]. P.69-72. 顾思明. (2021). 公众视角下深圳市南头古城更新后评价研究. [硕士学位论文, 哈尔滨工业大学]. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2021.006857>doi:10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2021.006857.,第 69-72 页。

Subsequently, the article delves into the redevelopment of Shenzhen's urban villages, providing a more nuanced understanding of aspects such as distinctive spatial configurations and demographic compositions. Through an examination of Shenzhen's urban village development, we observe the city's diverse challenges over the past four decades, along with the evolving government perspectives on urban renewal and the redevelopment of urban villages.

In the final section of the chapter, the focus is narrowed down to the transformation process of Nantou City in Shenzhen. It narrates the government's initiatives for Nantou City's redevelopment since the 1990s, encompassing early facelifts to street facades, recent BBUA exhibitions, and the ongoing "Metamorphosis" redevelopment project. The role of Nantou City in Shenzhen's urban village redevelopment has undergone several transformations over the years.

## **Part III. Urban renewal in China and Lefebvre's theories**

### **Chapter 4. The theories of Henri Lefebvre and its relation to urban renewal in China**

#### **1. Introduction**

##### **1.1 Henri Lefebvre**

- **Background**

Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) was a French Marxist philosopher and sociologist renowned for his pioneering work in critiquing everyday life, introducing concepts such as the right to the city and the production of social space, and for his contributions to dialectics, discussions on alienation, and his critical analysis of Stalinism, existentialism, and structuralism.

Lefebvre, like many radical young scholars of his time, was profoundly influenced by the events of World War I and the Russian workers' revolution. He began to study and propagate Marxist theory, and his persistent, specialized research into everyday life became a significant aspect of his contributions to Marxism. Lefebvre also played a pivotal role within the French Communist Party during this period.

- **Major works**

Henri Lefebvre's theoretical trajectory commenced with his interpretation of Marxist texts, laying the groundwork for his subsequent seminal work, the *Critique of Everyday Life*. This early engagement with Marxist thought positioned him as a trailblazer in the field. Subsequently, he transitioned to the

development of his most representative contributions, delving into the "spatialized ontology" theory and critiquing the urban space as a locus of power construction in the capitalist era. This evolution solidified Lefebvre's status as a pioneer in the scholarly exploration of critical urban studies<sup>110</sup>. (Liu, 2003)

**Dialectical Materialism (Le matérialisme dialectique):** Published in 1939, this book presents Lefebvre's interpretation of Marx's method of dialectical materialism. It was a significant contribution to the philosophical debates of the time.

**Critique of Everyday Life (Critique de la vie quotidienne):** This is arguably Lefebvre's most influential work. Initially published in three volumes (1947, 1961, and 1981), it presents a critique of the alienation of people in everyday life under capitalist modernity. Lefebvre argues that every day is a critical site of resistance and revolution.

**The Right to the City (Le droit à la ville):** In this 1968 work, Lefebvre introduces the concept of the "right to the city," arguing that all urban inhabitants should have a say in the city's development and access to its benefits. The idea has been influential in urban studies and activism. **The Urban Revolution (La révolution urbaine):** In this work from 1970, Lefebvre analyzes the shift from rural to urban societies and argues that the urban phenomenon changes the social relations and the mode of life.

## 1.2 Background of the theory

Lefebvre's theories on the production of space are intrinsically linked to the rapid globalization and urbanization of his era. In the post-World War II era, as the global economy surged, Western developed nations initiated urbanization processes, leading to improved living standards for the populace and welfare systems providing a safety net for the working class. However, numerous issues emerged in the subsequent decades<sup>111</sup>(Sun,2015).

In France, Lefebvre consistently focused on urban development, recognizing the traumatic aspects of the urbanization process. He observed that the violence inherent in urbanization erased the interpersonal relationships and regional cultures that people had maintained during the agricultural era. Furthermore, it exacerbated the urban-rural divide and revealed the class struggles concealed beneath the veneer of rapid economic development and progress. (Sun,2015)

<sup>110</sup> Liu, H. (2003). *Establishing and exploring the way of critique of everyday life in the modern world-----a research on Lefebvre's philosophical thoughts*. [Doctoral dissertation, Nanjing University]. 刘怀玉. (2003). *现代日常生活批判道路的开拓与探索——列斐伏尔哲学思想研究*. [博士学位论文, 南京大学].

[http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmo\\_vtcsghcFc-qMKlh9aO6OsqYzI5WyPGo2\\_pD6puTkPnPxO8p1FsywotS-ROVybX7iWBzZXAJhynxKATOH0HBuHkCnV2nz19g3qlmyTK4d7KawiZCnBTjD0v07a0Vb3h6V0qkeHWXQ==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmo_vtcsghcFc-qMKlh9aO6OsqYzI5WyPGo2_pD6puTkPnPxO8p1FsywotS-ROVybX7iWBzZXAJhynxKATOH0HBuHkCnV2nz19g3qlmyTK4d7KawiZCnBTjD0v07a0Vb3h6V0qkeHWXQ==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS)

<sup>111</sup> Sun, Q. (2015). *Study of the theoretical forms of Henri Lefebvre's "The production of space"*. [PhD diss., Southeastern University]. 孙全胜 (2015). *列斐伏尔“空间生产”的理论形态研究*. [博士学位论文, 东南大学]. 第 86-88 页. <http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmcNFSs74cw8fCRofYleYqbbRZ64BiqOOEf6mac6aLaJGJGccOgYELKzM4GtqJt6PBtGINUtaN04Lwyndzcpf711NWDohHKAZkg6EmAljFQRNsfNG0j42mTgajGj3RUJzjytCI9aJt2Gg==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS>

## 2. Overview of production of space

### 2.1 Theoretical Sources

#### ● Introduction

The Production of Space represents a new ontological perspective on space within the framework of historical materialism, extending and expanding upon Marxist explorations of spatial theory. Henri Lefebvre, in developing his own theory, drew inspiration from theorists such as Marx, Hegel, Nietzsche, and others. As Butler (2012) notes, "Marx contributes the theoretical materials for a transformative critique of capitalist social relations, Hegel reminds us of the overwhelming power of the state, and Nietzsche highlights the celebration of art, festival, and bodily pleasures that are the hallmarks of civilization<sup>112</sup>."

#### ● Material Dialectics

Hegel's dialectics resulted in a closed synthesis encapsulated in absolute spirit, attempting to resolve all contradictions and issues through absolute consciousness (Butler, 2012). Marx, on the other hand, utilized dialectics to transcend Hegel's idealism, providing a materialist critique of speculative philosophy. According to Marx, dialectics constitute history itself, with each moment's unfolding being open and subject to continuous change. Lefebvre further developed dialectics in two aspects, constructing his theoretical framework. He argued that dialectics is not solely a speculative process as in Hegel but involves a movement from individual to theory and, subsequently, from theory to the reality of struggle and conflict. In "The Production of Space," Lefebvre emphasized the importance of revolutionary struggles in addressing structural contradictions within society<sup>113</sup> (Lu, 2014).

Additionally, Lefebvre introduced a threefold dialectical structure of space in his study of spatial ontology, applying dialectical materialism to spatial concepts.

#### ● Alienation

Lefebvre consistently applied alienation theory throughout his work. His early discussions on alienation can be found in his collaborative work with Guterman, "Mystification: Notes for a Critique of Everyday Life." According to Lefebvre, alienation manifests as the mystification of individual lives influenced by abstract social relations, leading to the mystification of consciousness and daily life. This theme persists in his later critique of everyday life, where he views alienation as a bridge connecting Hegel and Marx. While Hegel saw alienation as a temporary materialization in the return of spiritual consciousness to itself, Marx shifted the concept to the labor process and production relations, analyzing how the existence of commodities oppresses individuals. Lefebvre incorporated

<sup>112</sup> Butler, C. (2012). *Henri Lefebvre, Spatial Politics, Everyday Life and the Right to the City*. Routledge-Cavendish, Oxfordshire. P.13-19.

<sup>113</sup> Lu, C. (2014). *A study on Lefebvre's Spatial Theory*. [Doctoral dissertation, Fudan University]. 路程. (2014). *列斐伏尔的空间理论研究* [博士学位论文, 复旦大学]. [http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmRoQOiLnyKBLCa8EBfJWOW9vxxbH\\_1RKpiC62qN530F9SsZ-4qEjG9aSmDj5QbwibPzx1EHDXdqjDoiWRauFQ7KZOPX02CT8odcCjfh160cTmOU\\_wdD3M2CQEFYFQMBauIJX3dx\\_JtAA==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmRoQOiLnyKBLCa8EBfJWOW9vxxbH_1RKpiC62qN530F9SsZ-4qEjG9aSmDj5QbwibPzx1EHDXdqjDoiWRauFQ7KZOPX02CT8odcCjfh160cTmOU_wdD3M2CQEFYFQMBauIJX3dx_JtAA==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS)



these ideas into his spatial theory<sup>114</sup> (Liu, 2003).

Lefebvre staunchly defended the humanistic critique in Marx's theory of alienation, suggesting that alienation transcends capitalist society and persists even in post-revolutionary stages in new forms. His resistance to alienation included the proposition of establishing the "total man."

## ● Totality

Lefebvre expanded Marx's discourse on totality, offering a dialectical interpretation of social contradictions. He described society as an "open totality" continually changing through human transformative practices. Lefebvre inherited and further developed the concepts of Nietzsche's Overman and Bacchic spirit (Butler, 2012).

"Dialectical thinking has never ceased to evolve, nor have new aspects of it failed to appear... Every truth is relative to a certain stage of the analysis and of thought to a certain social content. It preserves its truth only by being transcended. The exposition of dialectical materialism does not pretend to put an end to the forward march of knowledge or to offer a closed totality, of which all previous systems had been no more than inadequate expression... No expression of dialectical materialism can be definitive, but instead of being incompatible and conflicting with each other, it may perhaps be possible for these expressions to be integrated into an open totality, perpetually in the process of being transcended" <sup>115</sup>(Lefebvre, 2009).

As part of the natural world, humans are both dependent on and independent of nature. Lefebvre argued that the concept of the "total man" eliminates subject-object dualism, overcomes dispersed subjectivity, and breaks free from the constraints of abstract principles. It proclaims itself as a totality, becoming one with the liberated natural world. This perspective aligns with Marx's ideas presented in the "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844."

In "The Production of Space," Lefebvre introduced the concept of "differential space," suggesting that artistic creation and aesthetic activities, as forms of social practice, can alleviate the alienated conditions of human existence. In "The Urban Revolution" and "The Right to the City," Lefebvre conceptualized the city as a "work of art" and advocated for the transcendence of urban alienation through aesthetic activities(Lu, 2014).

In conclusion, Lefebvre's engagement with material dialectics, alienation theory, and the concept of totality provides a rich framework for understanding and critiquing social relations, spatial production, and human experience. His contributions extend beyond traditional Marxist analyses, offering a nuanced and dynamic perspective on the complexities of social life and the potential for emancipatory transformations.

<sup>114</sup> Liu, H. (2003). Establishing and exploring the way of critique of everyday life in the modern world-----a research on Lefebvre's philosophical thoughts. [Doctoral dissertation, Nanjing University] 刘怀玉. (2003). 现代日常生活批判道路的开拓与探索——列斐伏尔哲学思想研究. [博士学位论文, 南京大学].

[http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmo\\_vtscghcFc-qMKlh9aO6OsqYzI5WYpGo2\\_pD6puTkPnPxO8p1FsywotS-ROVybX7iWBzZXAJihynxKATOH0HBUhKcNV2nz19g3qlmyTK4d7KawiZCnBTJD0v07a0Vb3h6V0qkeHWXQ==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmo_vtscghcFc-qMKlh9aO6OsqYzI5WYpGo2_pD6puTkPnPxO8p1FsywotS-ROVybX7iWBzZXAJihynxKATOH0HBUhKcNV2nz19g3qlmyTK4d7KawiZCnBTJD0v07a0Vb3h6V0qkeHWXQ==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS)

<sup>115</sup> Lefebvre, H. (2009). *Dialectical Materialism* (J. Sturrock, Trans.; S. Kipfer, Ed.). University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

## 2.2 Key concepts of the production of space

"Henri Lefebvre's "The Production of Space" is considered one of his pivotal texts, and in his analysis, the concept of space transcends the physical dimension. It is not a mere receptacle for objects devoid of meaningful connection, nor does it align with Kant's notion of "a priori intuitional forms." Instead, Lefebvre conceptualizes space as a relational entity constructed through human activities within the framework of social relations. By delving into the "second nature" inherent in materiality, Lefebvre discerns the historical production and reproduction of spatiality within social relations, marking a profound cognitive leap<sup>116</sup> (Zhang, 2020)."

### ● Interpretation of space

The three-dimensional dialectical relationship of space. In the fifteenth section of the first chapter of "The Production of Space," Lefebvre clearly explained the three categories of space:

1. Spatial practice, which embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation. Spatial practice ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion. In terms of social space and each member of a given society's relationship to that space, this cohesion implies a guaranteed level of competence and a specific level of performance.

2 . Representations of space, which are tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to 'frontal' relations.

3 . Representational spaces, embodying complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art (which may come eventually to be defined less as a code of space than as a code of representational spaces)<sup>117</sup> (Lefebvre,1992) .

"Spatial practice" refers to various human activities and their outcomes, where the production and reproduction of social space occur through social practices. It manifests as experiential and material, constituting the production of spatiality<sup>118</sup> (Zhang, 2007). People begin to reflect on their social activities through their perceptions of daily life and the consequences of spatial practices.

"Representations of space" are conceptualized spaces that hold a dominant position in any society, rooted in the interests and power relations of the ruling class. They dictate how space is conceptualized and govern the lived spaces of people. These are spaces for scientists, planners, urbanists, technocrats, and others (Zhang, 2007).

"Representational spaces" are directly experienced or lived spaces characterized by their associated images and symbols. They are spaces of passive experiences and spaces of resistance to the dominant order. These spaces conceal their inherent attributes and are symbolically used by their objects. This aligns with Lefebvre's concept of the "truth of space," reflecting the true spaces of human society and

<sup>116</sup> Zhang, Y. (2020). Social Spatiality and Historicity: An Interpretation of Lefebvre's "The Production of Space." *Practice and Text, Shandong Social Sciences*, (10), 290. DOI: 10.14112/j.cnki.37-1053/c.2019.10.004 张一兵. (2020). 社会空间的关系性与历史性——列斐伏尔《空间的生产》解读. *实践与文本. 山东社会科学*, 2019 年第 10 期总第 290 期.

<sup>117</sup> Lefebvre. H.(1992) . *The Production of Space*. Wiley-Blackwell,Hoboken, New Jersey. P.36-46.

<sup>118</sup> Zhang, Z. (2007). Review of Henri Lefebvre's "The Production of Space." . *Journal of Jiangsu University: Social Sciences Edition*, 9(5), 10-14.张子凯. (2007). 列斐伏尔《空间的生产》述评. *江苏大学学报: 社会科学版*, 9(5), 10-14. doi:10.13317/j.cnki.jdskxb.2007.05.004.

everyday life, transcending the first two categories <sup>119</sup>(Cui, 2022).

Lefebvre's "Spatial Triad Dialectics" goes beyond previous debates on spatial nature, presenting a coherent theoretical framework for spatial systems across different historical development periods. He contemplates the foundational and holistic significance of space in historical materialism<sup>120</sup> (Zhao & He, 2012).

### ● Social space dialectics<sup>121</sup>

"Social space" represents Henri Lefebvre's transcendence of the traditional, rigid binary perceptions of space, which categorize it as physical space or mental space. The essence of social space lies in the production and reproduction of social relations. It is both a produced outcome and a productive tool, serving as both a commodity for consumption and a facilitator of productivity.

"Social space is neither a singular object among many species, nor is it a product among many products. Instead, it encompasses a multitude of produced entities and the interrelationships between these entities. It is the result of a sequence and a series of operational processes, defying reduction to the order of a simple object. Leveraging a plethora of networks and channels in people's daily lives, social space obtains real existence and concrete form through a web of relationships. Examples include communication networks, trade networks, and the formation of various markets, such as financial capital markets and labor markets (Lefebvre, 1992)."

Social spaces intermingle without material barriers; they interact and permeate one another. Their complexity makes it impossible to analyze isolated social relations, and it implies that within each analyzed social space, concealed within, are multiple social relations waiting to be revealed.

"Social space (like theatrical, pictorial or architectural space) can no longer seem like the discovery of a pre-existent, 'real' external space, any more than it can seem like the covering over of a natural space by an 'authentic' mental space. These philosophical schemas are no longer admissible. Social space manifests itself as the realization of a general practical schema. As a product, it is made in accordance with an operating instrument in the hands of a group of experts, technocrats who are themselves representative of particular interests but at the same time of a mode of production, conceived not as a completed reality or an abstract totality, but as a set of possibilities in the process of being realized." (Lefebvre, 1992)

### ● Abstract Space Production

In describing the transformation of national space, Henri Lefebvre refers to the production of abstract space in modern capitalist states. For modern states and capitalism, space encompasses the

<sup>119</sup> Cui, Y. (2022). *Research on Lefebvre's Space Ternary Dialectics*. [Master's thesis, Changchun University of Science and Technology]. 崔莹. (2022). *列斐伏尔的空间三元辩证法研究*. [长春理工大学, 硕士学位论文].  
<https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.26977/d.cnki.gccgc.2022.000475doi:10.26977/d.cnki.gccgc.2022.000475>.

<sup>120</sup> Zhao, H., & He, X. (2012). Construction and considerations of David Harvey's "spatial fix" theory. *Journal of Beijing Administrative College*, (5), 5. DOI:10.16365/j.cnki.11-4054/d.2012.05.002 赵海月, & 赫曦滢. (2012). 大卫·哈维"时空修复"理论的建构与考量. *北京行政学院学报*(5), 5.

<sup>121</sup> Sun, Q. (2015). *Study of the theoretical forms of Henri Lefebvre's "The production of space"*. [PhD diss., Southeastern University]. 孙全胜 (2015). *列斐伏尔"空间生产"的理论形态研究*. [博士学位论文, 东南大学]. 第 79-85 页.  
<http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NlmcNFs74cw8fCRofYleYqbbRZ64BiqOOEf6mac6aLaJGJGccOgYELKzM4GtqJt6PBtGINUtaN04Lwyndzcpf711NWDohHKAzkg6EmAljFQRnsfNG0j42mTgajGj3RUJzjtCI9aJt2Gg==uniplatform=NZKPT language=CHS> 第 79-85 页

elements of land, capital, and labor. In the rapid process of capital accumulation and expansion, the state's strong intervention becomes necessary. The formation of modern state space requires violence, employing the concept of "sovereignty" to eliminate the old influences of the church and feudal landlords, establishing state space constructed by political-economic forms. The formation of the modern state simultaneously signifies that space is no longer an absolute concept for the state. Space is no longer considered a natural part but rather a crucial carrier that concretizes the power system, moving from absolute space to abstract space <sup>122</sup>(Lu, 2014).

The production of abstract space is the core of the capitalist operation, supported by a form of violence and connected to capital as its driving force, linked to surplus value. The ruling class divides space through power, monopolizing the definition of space. Through the production of abstract space, class contradictions continually expand while the ideological apparatus of the state continuously conceals them. Simultaneously, the production of abstract space yields homogenized and fragmented spatial forms, causing the alienation of individual daily life and social relations.

Lefebvre believes that the inherent contradictions of abstract space will lead to the production of its own opposite—differential space. The production of differentiated space will ultimately liberate people from the shackles of abstract space, leading them toward a realm of nature and creativity (Sun, 2015).

### ● Production of Differential Space

According to Lefebvre, differential space represents a subversion of the original symbolic system. It aims to restore unity disrupted by abstract space and terminate regionalized practices. The production of differential space is primarily propelled by two sets of contradictions. The first is the contradiction between quantity and quality. For Lefebvre, the liberation of space involves breaking free from the quantified space of abstract space, meaning that people's consumption of space is no longer a reproduction process following the logic of capitalism but a genuine response to unalienated needs. The pursuit of qualitative space and resistance to the current symbolic order will lead to social practice, namely, artistic behavior. Lefebvre sees art as an act of struggle, breaking down class barriers in the struggle against symbols of pleasure and consumption. The second is the contradiction between production and consumption, an internal dialectical movement within productive consumption. Homogeneous and utilitarian space dominates contemporary society, with space existing abstractly in theory through mathematics, logic, and planning. Additionally, space is segmented and commodified, resulting in fragmentation.

The two contradictory movements, homogeneity and fragmentation, global and local, lead to the consequence that the act of occupying space itself implies its functionalization. "Occupation itself means time, rhythm, symbols, and practice." The more functionalized space becomes, the more challenging it is to occupy. At this moment, through exchange, the use value of space is restored (Lu, 2014).

<sup>122</sup> Lu, C. (2014). *A study on Lefebvre's Spatial Theory*. [Doctoral dissertation, Fudan University]. 路程. (2014). 列斐伏尔的空间理论研究 [博士学位论文, 复旦大学].

[http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmRoQOiLnyKBLcA8EBfJWOW9vxxbH\\_1RKpiC62qN530F9SsZ-4qEjG9aSmDj5QbwibPzx1EHDXdqjDoiWRauFQ7KZOPX02CT8odcCjfhI60cTmOU\\_wdD3M2CQEFYFQMBauIJXdx\\_JtAA==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmRoQOiLnyKBLcA8EBfJWOW9vxxbH_1RKpiC62qN530F9SsZ-4qEjG9aSmDj5QbwibPzx1EHDXdqjDoiWRauFQ7KZOPX02CT8odcCjfhI60cTmOU_wdD3M2CQEFYFQMBauIJXdx_JtAA==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS)

## 2.3 Conclusion

Henri Lefebvre's "The Production of Space" stands as the culmination of his late-period theoretical work. This section provides a brief overview of Lefebvre's theoretical background, drawing from Marxist and Hegelian perspectives, and explores key concepts such as alienation, totality, and dialectical materialism. Subsequent chapters introduce the central themes discussed by Lefebvre in his pivotal work on the production of space, including the trialectical structure of space, the reproduction of social space, and the shift from abstract space to differential space. Following the exploration of Lefebvre's theoretical trajectory regarding space, the article will focus on his theories related to urban space.

## 3. The study on urban space

### 3.1 Introduction

- Discussion of the nature of urban space

Henri Lefebvre examines the city as his subject of study, delving further into the discourse of social space. He posits, "The city is a space that has been shaped, formed, and designed by the societal activities of a given historical era." Using Venice as an example, Lefebvre expounds on the dialectical relationship between the city as a work and a product. Venice, with its profound significance and expressive spatial characteristics, could be considered a work of art. However, even in this light, Venice cannot be produced as an artwork, and the moment it becomes a subject of professional activity, it loses its nature as a work of art. In other words, it cannot exist in a transcendent position relative to a product. Lefebvre's example illustrates that a work and a product are not strictly unified, nor are they fundamentally opposed. We cannot separate a work from a product. Instead, we should recognize that, in a sense, the artwork is inherent within the product, while the product, in itself, is not necessarily a mechanical repetition.

Urban space possesses replicability, resulting from repetitive activities, and is amenable to exchange. The only difference between one urban space and another can be quantified in terms of monetary value. Therefore, this space can be seen as a product in the strictest sense. Returning to Venice, its development relies on a system of commodity exchange. Additionally, its magnificent urban design is realized through the "maritime power" of a political class and the commercial elite. This is achieved through a multitude of intermediate steps and individuals engaged in construction work, including digging, pile driving, building docks, laying harbor facilities, and constructing palaces—all of these tasks constitute social labor, a form of labor conducted under arduous conditions and mandated by the political class's profit-driven intent<sup>123</sup> (Lefebvre, 1992). Lefebvre's discourse on Venice reveals that even in such a unique and often dubbed "miraculous" space, it is tightly intertwined with production and production relations. This space is not an entirely neutral entity formed solely by

<sup>123</sup> Lefebvre, H.(1992) .*The Production of Space*. Wiley-Blackwell, Hoboken, New Jersey.

geographic and climatic factors<sup>124</sup> (Lu, 2008).

### 3.2 Critique of capitalism urbanization

#### ● Urban society and differential space

In the 1960s, Henri Lefebvre observed that with the progression of industrialization and the arrival of a stage in a capitalist economy dominated by consumerism, lifestyles tended to become homogenized. During this era, the city transformed into an object of profit and exchange. The age of industrial mass production ceased to be the decisive factor in determining urban development. Lefebvre proposed that modern society should be defined as an "urban society in ongoing formation" rather than an "industrial society"<sup>125</sup> (Biagi, 2020). In this context, urban society is considered a state in continuous development, including some elements within the realm of utopia, ultimately evolving into a thoroughly urbanized society.

The spatial logic of urban society differs from previous agricultural and industrial societies. In industrial society, spatial issues were characterized by homogeneity, uniformity, and coercive continuity. However, the spatial logic in urban society reflects a logic of production, emphasizing diversity. Urban space planning is dictated by the commands of the bourgeois rulers, resulting in a centralized social space. The city exists in a fragmented state, with the bourgeoisie and the working class residing in different areas, creating an unequal distribution of space centered around the power of a small ruling class. This disparity is evident in marginalized urban spaces, slums, and spaces affected by conflict.

In his 1971 "Declaration of Right to Difference," Lefebvre advocates for the promotion of differential spaces as a means of resistance against the homogeneity, division, and inequality prevalent in urban spaces. This perspective is also reflected in his advocacy for the right to the city. Lefebvre argues that the urban working class and marginalized populations have the right to construct their living spaces autonomously, disrupting the logic of capitalist commodity production and exchange. He contends that decision-making power in the city should shift to the hands of residents, who, through worker autonomy, can create spaces that are diverse, pluralistic, and liberated.

Lefebvre's concept of differential space serves as a comprehensive critique of capitalist society and a rejection of abstract space. It proposes, in an experimental utopian form, the possibility of a new collective life<sup>126</sup>(Cui, 2023).

<sup>124</sup> Lu, Y. (2008). The Production of Social Space: An Analysis of Henri Lefebvre's "The Production of Space." *Gansu Social Sciences*, (5), 4. 陆扬. (2008). 社会空间的生产——析列斐伏尔《空间的生产》. *甘肃社会科学*, (5), 4.

<sup>125</sup> Biagi, F. (2020). Henri Lefebvre's Urban Critical Theory: Rethinking the City against Capitalism. *International Critical Thought*, 10:2, 214-231, DOI: 10.1080/21598282.2020.1783693

<sup>126</sup> Cui, J. (2023). *A study on lefebvre's thought of differential space*. [Master's thesis, Harbin Normal University]. 崔佳伟. (2023). 列斐伏尔差异空间思想研究. [哈尔滨师范大学, 硕士学位论文]. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27064/d.cnki.ghasu.2023.000267doi:10.27064/d.cnki.ghasu.2023.000267>.

### 3.3 The Urban revolution

Lefebvre, in his works "The Urban Revolution" and "The Right to the City," deviates from his previous writings and focuses more on the political and urban crises that unfolded after 1968. This period represents the post-industrial era and marks a new chapter in the development of capitalism, characterized by a broader global market and the emergence of neoliberal financial markets<sup>127</sup>(Lu, 2014). He posits that the urban revolution signifies a historical turning point, analogous to the transition from agricultural cities to industrial societies and, subsequently, to contemporary urban societies<sup>128</sup>(He, 2012: p.42). The succession of production relations and urban transformations is directly linked, representing two intertwined processes.

Lefebvre contends that the city does not undergo a linear evolution but rather experiences non-continuous historical stages or critical phases<sup>129</sup> (Liu, 2017). Urban revolution, according to him, necessitates a thorough abandonment and negation of existing social and production relations to generate a new spatial order, allowing history to unfold.

"A revolution that does not produce new space cannot fully manifest its potential. The failure of revolutions often lies in attempting to change only the ideological consciousness of society, such as its superstructure or political machinery, without addressing the daily lives of individuals. The transformation of society must possess genuinely revolutionary qualities, innovating in the realms of everyday life, language, and space" (He, 2012).

### 3.4 The right to the city

The concept of the "right to the city," introduced by Henri Lefebvre in 1967, represents his critique of the inequitable distribution of urban space in the capitalist era, as well as his advocacy for urban practices. Lefebvre conducted a systematic, phased analysis of the impacts of industrialization and urbanization on cities, addressing issues such as the erosion of urban cores and the exacerbation of the urban-rural binary. He also highlighted the control of the ruling class over the city, extending to culture, art, knowledge, and ideology. Lefebvre emphasized the need to empower citizens to defend their "right to the city" and differences in urban spaces. He stressed the necessity of taking concrete actions to transform urban space, viewing urban space as a means of reasserting use values and creativity over exchange and domination<sup>130</sup> (Butler, 2012).

<sup>127</sup> Lu, C. (2014). *A study on Lefebvre's spatial theory*. [Doctoral dissertation, Fudan University]. 路程. (2014). *列斐伏尔的空间理论研究* [博士学位论文, 复旦大学].

[http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmRoQOILnyKBLcA8EBfJWOW9vxxbH\\_1RKpiC62qN530F9SsZ-4qEjG9aSmDj5QbwibPzx1EHDXdqjDoiWRauFQ7KZOPX02CT8odcCjfh160cTmOU\\_wdD3M2CQEFYFQMBaulJX3dx\\_JtAA==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmRoQOILnyKBLcA8EBfJWOW9vxxbH_1RKpiC62qN530F9SsZ-4qEjG9aSmDj5QbwibPzx1EHDXdqjDoiWRauFQ7KZOPX02CT8odcCjfh160cTmOU_wdD3M2CQEFYFQMBaulJX3dx_JtAA==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS)

<sup>128</sup> He, X. (2012). *Research of neo-marxism urban schools*. [Doctoral dissertation, Jilin University]. 赫曦滢. (2012). *新马克思主义城市学派理论研究*. [Doctoral dissertation, 吉林大学].

[http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLnFP0ftjaWxE4I7b\\_QKmROxs0-8G4B5y1AA6UNFNfqGDrGI6jDo9mftZSn81iTGzImM2z0F3esgX00gqQJmtw2SYavgfTcGI6097Bpvkxw87zM\\_ITT\\_cqilUnfBPJ71qEijDqKS0n0E-A==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLnFP0ftjaWxE4I7b_QKmROxs0-8G4B5y1AA6UNFNfqGDrGI6jDo9mftZSn81iTGzImM2z0F3esgX00gqQJmtw2SYavgfTcGI6097Bpvkxw87zM_ITT_cqilUnfBPJ71qEijDqKS0n0E-A==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS)

<sup>129</sup> Liu, H. (2017). How does socialism allow people to live in modern cities?—Re-reading Lefebvre's "Urban Revolution".

*Marxism & Reality*, (1), 12. 刘怀玉. (2017). 社会主义如何让人栖居于现代都市?——列斐伏尔《都市革命》一书再读. *马克思主义与现实*, (1), 12. DOI:10.15894/j.cnki.cn11-3040/a.2017.01.015

<sup>130</sup> Butler, C. (2012). *Henri Lefebvre, Spatial Politics, Everyday Life and the Right to the City*. Routledge-Cavendish, Oxfordshire.

Regarding the definition of the "right to the city," Lefebvre asserted that it should protect all individuals from urban expulsion:

"To exclude the urban from groups, classes, individuals, is also to exclude them from civilization, if not from society itself. The 'right to the city' legitimates the refusal to allow oneself to be removed from urban reality by a discriminatory and segregative organization. This 'right of the citizen' proclaims the inevitable crisis of city centers based on segregation, which rejects toward peripheral spaces all those who do not participate in political privileges."<sup>131</sup> (Lefebvre & Kofman, 1996)

Lefebvre believed that people should have decision-making power in the construction of urban spaces and proposed self-management. This concept differs from general decision-making models, such as public information campaigns and community consultation processes. Lefebvre argued that mere communication and negotiation with relevant authorities cannot genuinely safeguard the rights of residents. Instead, residents must ensure the diverse cultural and interest needs of their communities through self-management:

"Self-management' is a social practice that can overcome the dissociations of everyday life and can create new institutions going beyond those that simply ratify the dissociations. This social practice may have a name, but it cannot be reduced to a way of speaking." (Butler, 2012)

### 3.5 Conclusion

Lefebvre's work articulates the transformation of the city into a commodity in the capitalist era and the homogenization of lifestyles due to industrialization and consumerism. He advocates for "differential space" to combat the homogeneity and inequality of urban spaces, promoting diversity and autonomy for the urban working class and marginalized populations.

Lefebvre also discusses the urban revolution as a necessary disruption of existing social and production relations, aiming to create a new spatial order that embodies revolutionary changes in everyday life, language, and space. Further, his concept of the "right to the city" challenges the inequitable distribution of urban spaces and calls for citizen empowerment to assert the use of values and creativity over exchange and domination, proposing self-management as a practice to ensure diverse community needs.

## 4. The significance of Henri Lefebvre's theory to China's urban renewal

### 4.1 Housing problems in contemporary China<sup>132</sup>

#### ● Background

China began its transition to a market economy, and since the housing system reform in 1998,

<sup>131</sup> Lefebvre, H & Kofman, E. Lebas, E.(1996). *Writings on Cities*. Wiley-Blackwell, Hoboken, New Jersey.

<sup>132</sup> Feng W.Z. & Wu N. (2010).On the Capital Production of Space and China's Housing Problem——Based on Henri Lefebvre's Critical Theory of Space. *Journal of Wuling*, 35(06), 55-59. 冯旺舟 & 吴宁.(2010).论资本的空间生产与中国的住房问题——以亨利·列斐伏尔的空间批判理论为基础. *武陵学刊*,35(06),55-59.



commercial properties have become the primary form of residential housing. With the expansion of the real estate market and the intensification of financialization, housing prices and rents have seen a rapid increase, exacerbating housing issues for middle and low-income populations, particularly migrant workers, in major cities.

As of October 2023, the average housing price in China's first-tier cities stands at 61,678 Chinese yuan per square meter, while in second-tier cities, it is 18,399 Chinese yuan per square meter. (China Real Estate Association, (2023), "October 2023 Housing Price Index Report".<http://m.fangchan.com/data/135/2023-11-01/7125403715934425992.html>).

Based on a 1% population sample survey data from various regions in 2015, it is observed that the average number of rooms per household in these 20 cities is 2.56, with Shenzhen having the lowest average at just 1.83 rooms per household. Furthermore, the proportion of individuals residing in housing units with a per capita floor area of less than 30 square meters and less than 20 square meters is remarkably high, reaching 51.3% and 27.3%, respectively, in these 20 cities. Shenzhen, in particular, records even higher proportions at 75% and 53%<sup>133</sup> (Wang, Yan, Yang, & Liu, 2021:97).

In recent times, rental prices in several cities have also experienced rapid growth. The main reasons for this surge can be attributed to housing leasing intermediaries and the expanding presence of long-term apartment rentals in the rental market. Furthermore, the rental market has witnessed increased financialization in recent years. The proliferation of long-term apartment rental platforms has led banks to introduce "rental loans." Tenants can apply for such loans from banks to provide one to two years' worth of rent as a deposit to long-term rental platforms. In turn, landlords and platforms can utilize this upfront payment for investments in financial markets, generating compounded returns. This further contributes to the instability of the rental market. The recent defaults of some long-term apartment rental platforms have raised concerns about the stability of this sector.

Migrant workers in major cities primarily rely on rental housing as their mode of accommodation. China's urbanization process has seen a consistent expansion of the urban floating population in major cities. Consequently, the demand for rental housing continues to grow. In the long term, the rising rental prices, housing market instability, and housing cost burdens are likely to contribute to the outflow of front-line industrial workers from major cities.

- The dilemma of housing development in first-tier cities

### **Incomplete Housing Leasing System**

Compared to the protection of property buyers' rights and its connection to household registration, education, healthcare, etc., the leasing market lacks stability. Due to the instability of the leasing market and the inability of local finances to gain a stable income from it, there is a lack of motivation to improve the leasing market. In this environment, the rights of tenants are not adequately protected, and they do not enjoy equal rights. Currently, China's legal framework for housing leasing is limited to the 2010 "Administrative Measures for the Leasing of Commercial Houses," which lacks sufficient

<sup>133</sup> Wang, Y. & Yan, Z. & Yang, C. & Liu, S. (2021). Housing dilemma and policy suggestions in domestic big cities from the perspective of supply and demand. *Construction Economy*, 42(08), 96-100. 王艳飞, 闫志宇, 杨晨 刘释疑. (2021). 供需视角下国内大城市住房困境及政策建议. *建筑经济*, 42(08), 96-100. doi:10.14181/j.cnki.1002-851x.202108096.

legal force. The leasing market is plagued by issues such as unauthorized subleasing, deception of tenants, and arbitrary rent increases, which remain unresolved<sup>134</sup> (Shao, 2020).

Additionally, the persistent shortage of social security housing exacerbates the problem for the new generation of migrant workers. Their income levels often make it impossible for them to afford commercial housing, and the lack of a comprehensive housing security system further hampers their rights. Although national housing authorities introduced regulations in 2010 to promote the development of public rental housing, local restrictions hinder the effective implementation of these regulations<sup>135</sup> (Lin, Zhao & Shi, 2018).

### **Housing Shortages in First-tier Cities**

Over the past decade, first-tier cities have experienced significant population growth, leading to a sustained demand for increased housing supply. However, the data from 2010 to 2019 show that the addition of new housing in first-tier cities is notably lower than in second-tier cities. Moreover, the land area allocated for housing in first-tier cities has decreased by over 25% (Wang, Yan, Yang & Liu, 2021). High land prices in certain areas discourage local governments from allocating land for rental housing with lower returns. Ambiguous standards and regulations also contribute to slow progress in rental housing construction. For instance, in Beijing, the current gap in rental housing is substantial, resulting in cramped living conditions and low per capita living space (Shao, 2020).

### **Excessive Dependence on the Real Estate Economy**

Since the 2003 Real Estate Work Conference, China has excessively relied on the real estate industry as a pillar of the national economy. The area of commercial housing in China increased from 16,570.28 million square meters in 2000 to 70,135.88 million square meters in 2007, accompanied by a rapid rise in housing prices. This economic dependence on the real estate sector has persisted over the years. Despite various measures implemented by the central government to curb irrational price increases, such as emphasizing a "no speculation" policy, effective solutions have yet to be implemented<sup>136</sup> (Lu, Qiu, Ding & Yu, 2021).

#### ● Lefebvre's discussion on housing issues

As presented in "The Right to the City," analyzed the post-World War II housing crisis in Paris. China's current urban development also faces similar issues, such as excessive homogenization in new city planning. In Paris, the state took control of private enterprises managing housing land to curb excessive commodification. Large-scale new cities and residential areas were built with the primary goal of providing a maximum number of housing units at the least cost and as quickly as possible (Henri Lefebvre, "The Right to the City"). However, this focus on functionality overlooked individual

<sup>134</sup> Shao, T. (2020). Development dilemma and policy breakthrough of China's rental market. *Urban Planning International*, 35(6), 16-22. 邵挺.(2020).中国住房租赁市场发展困境与政策突破. *国际城市规划*,35,(06),16-22. doi:10.19830/j.upi.2020.351.

<sup>135</sup> Lin, Y., Zhao, J., & Shi, M. (2018). Research on the solutions path of urban housing problem of new generation migrant workers. *Price: Theory and Practice*, (6), 4,50-53. 林永民,赵金江 史孟君.(2018).新生代农民工城市住房解困路径研究. *价格理论与实践*(06),50-53. doi:10.19851/j.cnki.cn11-1010/f.2018.06.013.

<sup>136</sup> Lu, P., Qiu, J., Ding, F., & Yu, L. (2021). Housing attribute dilemma , property right deficiency and housing system reform: Discussion based on the evolution and adjustment of china's housing policy. *Public Administration and Policy Review*, (05), P.115-127.吕萍, 邱骏, 丁富军, & 于璐源. (2021). 住房属性困境,产权残缺与住房制度改革——基于中国住房政策演变和调整讨论. *公共管理与政策评论*, (005), P.115-127.

differences in residents' environmental needs, leading to the mechanistic expansion of housing areas on the city outskirts.

In Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, at the national level, space is treated as a tool of domination to ensure control over society. Simultaneously, space is produced as a commodity through land allocation, providing a continuous flow of funds for local finances and real estate developers<sup>137</sup> (Feng, Wu, 2010). The shaping of people's living space is fundamentally a means for capital to flow and expand under the control of the state and other interest groups.

## 4.2 The gentrification in urban renewal

### ● Motivations for the Gentrification of Chinese Cities

#### Marketization of Land and Housing Systems

With the reform of China's land system and the establishment of a market-oriented mechanism for land resources, the government has transferred operational land use rights through bidding, auctioning, or listing, generating significant fiscal revenue. According to statistics from 1988 to 2005, the total supply of land in Shanghai reached 475 million square meters, with total revenue exceeding RMB 150 billion.<sup>138</sup> (Dai, X. 2007, P.92) This substantial capital circulation injected powerful economic impetus into urban development, propelling it onto the fast track of progress.

Under the influence of a market economy, the old urban areas located in the central districts have become crucial development targets. These areas generally exhibit environmental deficiencies and fail to meet residential standards. Leveraging the advantageous locations, they can be redeveloped into high-value residential or commercial properties, such as upscale housing or shopping facilities, to yield substantial land profits.

The issuance of the "Notice on Further Deepening Urban Housing System Reform and Accelerating Housing Construction" by the State Council of China in 1998 marked the transition of the housing system from a distribution system to commodification. As public demand surged, the real estate industry accelerated its financial transformation. With a significant influx of investment, the investment forms became more diverse. While the housing market matured, the widening gap in housing prices distinctly segregated populations with different consumption levels. The gentrification of urban spaces, driven by capital, rapidly proliferated (Dai, X. 2007).

<sup>137</sup> Feng W.Z. & Wu N. (2010). On the Capital Production of Space and China's Housing Problem——Based on Henri Lefebvre's Critical Theory of Space. *Journal of Wuling*, 35(06), 55-59. 冯旺舟 & 吴宁.(2010).论资本的空间生产与中国的住房问题——以亨利·列斐伏尔的空间批判理论为基础. *武陵学刊*,35(06),55-59.

<sup>138</sup> Dai, X. (2007). *Gentrification of inner city of metropolis in transitional China, a case of Shanghai*. [Doctoral dissertation, School of Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University].戴, 晓晖.(2007). *转型期中国大都市中心城旧区的中产阶层化研究——以上海为例*. [Doctoral dissertation, 同济大学建筑与城市规划学院城市规划系].

[http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLkbyLjbQf6Mn1TVzr3Lq1yddanq9lWoJaVp5m-rl-ht118V8\\_fmvtjhtczW0t1WpZnjYek13yCzSc9n5LfKeve2r2briiGbaQMitBgjrlsAYdTV6ES8ssK9tI82FWdbez3bmt0tWN4g==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLkbyLjbQf6Mn1TVzr3Lq1yddanq9lWoJaVp5m-rl-ht118V8_fmvtjhtczW0t1WpZnjYek13yCzSc9n5LfKeve2r2briiGbaQMitBgjrlsAYdTV6ES8ssK9tI82FWdbez3bmt0tWN4g==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS)

## Globalization of the Economy

Policy openness has provided a favorable investment environment and abundant investment opportunities for foreign investors in China. Foreign investors can establish foreign-funded companies primarily engaged in real estate transactions. The procedures for purchasing real estate by foreign-funded companies are no different from those for domestic enterprises. In the process of real estate development, intermediary services, and the consumer sector, there are generally no foreign exchange controls<sup>139</sup> (Weng, S., & Liu, H. 2005). Overseas real estate developers have become a significant economic driver in China, improving the capital structure of real estate enterprises and accelerating China's structural transformation from the secondary to the tertiary industry. Large industrial land areas have been replaced by the financial, commercial, entertainment, and other tertiary industries, as well as the real estate industry. Foreign investments are particularly concentrated in high-end residential development. In 2001, approximately 70% of the upscale residential projects initiated were funded by investors from Hong Kong (Dai, X. 2007).

### ● The Impacts of Gentrification

Gentrification directly impacts residents living in the original old urban areas, as they lack equal negotiation and participation rights with the government and businesses during the urban renewal process.

The transformation of living spaces has fragmented the previously community-based lifestyle into atomized family units. The forced dissolution of stable community relationships built over decades within the neighborhood has not only inflicted emotional trauma on residents but has also constrained their developmental rights in the city, including education rights for their children.

Simultaneously, low-income groups who once resided in old neighborhoods, shantytowns, or urban villages have lost their stable sources of income due to significant changes in their living environment. Their income structures typically involve temporary, episodic labor and production through family-based handicrafts, craft workshops, etc. In the overarching context of economic transition, disconnected from their previous social networks, they struggle to find new sources of income. Additionally, there are elderly residents engaged in singular professions or service-oriented roles who find it challenging to secure new job opportunities upon re-entering the labor market (Dai, X. 2007).

The gentrification of old urban areas also has negative implications for urban spatial planning and environmental preservation. Gentrification in the redevelopment of old urban areas often involves the large-scale demolition of outdated housing, resulting in significant resource wastage. The newly constructed commercial housing in old urban areas often clashes with the surrounding urban morphology. Real estate developers, driven by a focus on short-term profits, frequently overlook the impact of mechanically constructed new residential areas on the overall urban form within a very short timeframe.

<sup>139</sup> Weng, S., & Liu, H. (2005). Foreign Participation in and Its Impact on China's Real Estate Industry. *Construction Economy*, (009), 64-68. 翁少群,刘洪玉.(2005).我国房地产行业的外资参与及其影响. *建筑经济*,(09),64-68. DOI:10.14181/j.cnki.1002-851x.2005.09.014

## ● The situation of urban village residents in the process of gentrification

During the urban village renewal process in Shenzhen, a significant number of people were displaced. According to statistics, "In 2008–15, a total of 35 projects covering an area of 1.92 km<sup>2</sup> within the SEZ were initiated by the municipal government. It is estimated that these projects caused the displacement of 247,091 migrants"<sup>140</sup> (Liu, Y., Geertman, S., van Oort, F. and Lin, Y. 2018, p. 490). Migrant populations, lacking membership in village collectives and Shenzhen household registration (hukou), were unable to access rightful compensation during the urban renewal process. They were not recognized as residents of the urban village eligible for policy housing subsidies.

According to a study by Ying Liu in 2018, the forced relocation of residents during the 2015 demolition of Huangbeiling Village reflects the harsh reality faced by these individuals. As expressed by interviewees:

*"At that time, we only had ten days to look for a new place, but we had no choice. We are just migrant workers. Who will listen to our complaints? No one will" (Interviewee 4, Luofang Village, January 2014).*

*"Only the landlord can get compensation, we cannot. We are just outsiders. They asked us to move, we had no choice" (Interviewee 13, Luofang Village, January 2014).*

*"The government wants to demolish the whole area. They want to construct new buildings. What can we do? We are merely renters here. When we are asked to leave, we just leave" (Interviewee 5, Luofang Village, January 2014) (Liu, Y., Geertman, S., van Oort, F. and Lin, Y. 2018, p. 491).*

### 4.3 The meaning of Lefebvre's theories in China

#### ● Background

The current status of Henri Lefebvre, in Chinese academic research, is often recognized as a cultural geographer, urban Marxist, and a thinker on modern urbanity. His academic identity has undergone several transformations in the context of China's developmental background. Starting from the late 1970s, he, along with Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and others, was considered a representative figure of "existentialist Marxism." However, in the 1990s, with the advent of China's "xiaokang era" (a moderately prosperous society), Lefebvre's previous identity weakened. Instead, more emphasis was placed on his criticism of "dogmatic Marxism" and his role as a representative figure of "critique of everyday life." In the 21st century, as issues arising from rapid urbanization in China became apparent, the Western critique of the "spatial turn" also influenced Chinese academic research. Lefebvre, as a key representative of the "spatial turn," is referred to as one of the three Marxist urban theorists, alongside Neil Brenner and David Harvey, in Gao Jian Guo's "New Marxist Urban Theory"<sup>141</sup> (Liu & Lu, 2018).

<sup>140</sup> Liu, Y., Geertman, S., van Oort, F. and Lin, Y. (2018), Making the 'Invisible' Visible: Redevelopment-induced Displacement of Migrants in Shenzhen, China. *Int. J. Urban Reg. Res.*, 42: 483-499. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12646>

<sup>141</sup> Liu, H., & Lu, B. (2018). Dissemination, criticism, application and possible production of lefebvre's thoughts in china—from everydaylife philosopher to postmodern urban thinker. *Theoretical Investigation*, (1), 10. 刘怀玉, & 鲁宝. (2018). 列斐伏尔思想在中国的传播, 批评, 运用与可能的生产——从日常生活哲学家到后现代都市思想家. *理论探讨*, (1), 10. DOI:10.16354/j.cnki.23-1013/d.2018.01.012

## ● Overview of the conclusions from Chinese scholars

This section will first introduce the conclusions of several scholars regarding the application of Henri Lefebvre's theories in China and then provide a summary and further elaboration.

### Construction of Urban Meaning

In his article "Urban Meaning and the Ethical Construction of Contemporary Chinese Urban Order," Chen Zhong argues that the urban meaning in Chinese cities is lost, indicating a lack of inherent spiritual unity in the urban organism. This absence leads to spatial disorder and frequent conflicts of interest. Chen suggests the establishment of an ordered and organic urban community, emphasizing a bidirectional relationship between space and ethics. According to Chen, Lefebvre's spatial dialectics reveal that the city is an organic space organism, and the process of urbanization involves the dialectical interaction and mutual generation of the three-dimensional space with urban meaning at its core<sup>142</sup> (Chen, 2011).

### Globalization Challenges in Chinese Urbanization

Wu Ning, in his article "Henri Lefebvre's Urban Space Sociology Theory and Its Significance in China," explores Lefebvre's analysis of urbanization and industrialization in the context of urban rights. The expansion of cities during the urbanization process exacerbates the rural-urban binary and marginalizes residents, revealing that urbanization, as a manifestation of global capital, erases historical differences and individuality. Wu contends that Lefebvre's theories provide a valuable critical perspective on China's urbanization development, highlighting the production of urban space and its political dimensions<sup>143</sup> (Wu, 2008).

Sun Xiaoyi shares a similar perspective in his article "Production of Space and Urban Rights: Theory, Application, and Its Significance in China." Sun underscores the importance of Lefebvre's theory in understanding China's urbanization, particularly in analyzing conflicts arising from issues such as land development, urban planning, and resettlement. Sun emphasizes the need to localize Lefebvre's ideas, considering the dominant role of local governments in China's urban development<sup>144</sup> (Sun, 2015).

### "Sinicization" of Marxist Theory

In the article "Dissemination, Critique, Application, and Possible Production of Lefebvre's Thought in China," Liu Huaiyu and Lu Bao discuss the mutual influence between Lefebvre and China. They

<sup>142</sup> Chen, Z. (2011). Urban Significance and the Ethical Construction of Contemporary Chinese Urban Order. *Studies and Exploration*, 02, 1-6. 陈忠. (2011). 城市意义与当代中国城市秩序的伦理建构. *学习与探索*, (02), 1-6.

<sup>143</sup> Wu, N. (2008). Lefebvre's Sociological City Space Theory and Its Significance in China[J]. *Society(in Chinese Version)*, 28(2): 112-127. 吴宁. (2008). 亨利·列斐伏尔的城市空间社会学理论及其中国意义. *社会*, 28(2): 112-127. doi:10.15992/j.cnki.31-1123/c.2008.02.008.

<sup>144</sup> Sun, X. (2015). The production of space and the rights of the city: Theories, applications and its implications for China. *Journal of Public Administration*, 8(3), 176-192+205-206. 孙小逸. (2015). 空间的生产与城市的权利:理论、应用及其中国意义. *公共行政评论*, 8(3), 176-192+205-206.

acknowledge the impact of Lefebvre's theories in China and the influence of China's significant transformations on Lefebvre's ideas. The authors propose the need for the "Sinicization" of Lefebvre's theory, using concepts such as spatial production, urban rights, and spatialization to study China's unique issues methodologically and conceptually. The article also analyzes the limitations and potential of applying Lefebvre's theory in China, cautioning against mechanical transplantation due to different historical contexts, ideological backgrounds, and societal challenges. The authors advocate for a nuanced application that integrates Lefebvre's appeal for urban rights with contemporary studies on cyberspace.

In conclusion, the authors strongly support the integration of Lefebvre's ideas with Chinese issues, emphasizing the significant research potential of a Marxist urban theory centered on Lefebvre in a developing socialist country<sup>145</sup> (Liu & Lu, 2018).

### ● The potential applications and limitations of Lefebvre's theory on Modern China

Combining scholars' perspectives, Henri Lefebvre's ideas can serve as a guiding ideology for macro-level urban governance in contemporary China, addressing challenges brought by capitalist globalization. His theories suggest a need to alter the current overreliance of local governments on land for financial gains. The production of urban space by local governments predominantly follows the logic of capital self-expansion, exacerbating spatial inequalities. Centralized government intervention, such as partial power retrieval from local governments or a shift away from prioritizing economic indicators, is essential for macro-level control.

Lefebvre's theory of spatial production also exposes the fundamental contradictions in China's current housing issues. Housing has become a constantly produced commodity to satisfy capital's continuous expansion and the reproduction of spatial and social relations. In China, purchasing commercial housing is portrayed as a necessary life commodity in mass media, yet ordinary workers can no longer afford the exorbitant housing prices in major cities through their labor alone. As housing predicaments become central to China's economy and the struggles of its workforce, Lefebvre's theories deserve increased attention.

Furthermore, Lefebvre's theory of urban rights holds significant reference value for public societal construction in China. Publicness, manifested in citizens' participation in public affairs, has waned as the process of urban space production has become excessively controlled by capital. On the one hand, citizens' willingness to engage in the self-construction of urban living spaces has diminished. On the other hand, exorbitant housing prices indirectly deprive people of their basic rights to survive in the

<sup>145</sup> Liu, H., & Lu, B. (2018). Dissemination, criticism, application and possible production of lefebvre's thoughts in china—from everydaylife philosopher to postmodern urban thinker. *Theoretical Investigation*, (1), 10. 刘怀玉, & 鲁宝. (2018). 列斐伏尔思想在中国的传播, 批评, 运用与可能的生产——从日常生活哲学家到后现代都市思想家. *理论探讨*, (1), 10. DOI:10.16354/j.cnki.23-1013/d.2018.01.012

city. Lefebvre's exploration and reflection on urban rights pinpoint the critical issues regarding publicness in contemporary China.

While Lefebvre's ideas provide valuable insights and reflections on contemporary Chinese issues, they also have limitations. Firstly, the disparity in temporal contexts must be acknowledged, as Lefebvre primarily studied Western capitalist nations in the 1960s and 1970s, whereas the international order has undergone disruptive changes in the 21st century. China's unique context as a socialist country introduces different logics of spatial production in urban construction. Additionally, Lefebvre's theories lack a practical perspective and overly emphasize experiential intuition, lacking a historical dimension<sup>146</sup> (Sun, 2016).

#### 4.4 Summary

By synthesizing research conclusions from different Chinese scholars on Lefebvre's theories and relevant issues in China, it becomes evident that Lefebvre's ideas offer valuable insights into the analysis of Chinese problems. Regarding urban renewal in China, Lefebvre's concepts of spatial production and spatial politics provide a dialectical materialist framework, allowing for a Marxist theoretical perspective on sustainable urban construction within the context of socialist characteristics. Nevertheless, scholars have noted limitations in Lefebvre's theories, citing differences in era and national context, as well as practical shortcomings and an over-reliance on experiential intuition.

Research in Marxist urban theory still lacks sufficient theoretical knowledge, methodological frameworks, and empirical research outcomes. Lefebvre's theories continue to hold substantial research potential in the Chinese academic sphere, emphasizing the crucial research direction of "Sinicizing" Lefebvre's theories. This necessitates further study, thorough reflection on Lefebvre's ideas, and their integration with practical experiences in Chinese urban development. Such an approach allows for the genuine application of Lefebvre's theories to the complexities of urban development in China in the future.

### 5. Conclusion

This chapter introduces Henri Lefebvre's production of space and theories on urbanism, contextualizing them with issues related to urbanization and urban renewal in China. It delves into Lefebvre's dialectical reflections on the relationship between space, society, and individuals, discussing the influence of theorists such as Marx and Hegel on Lefebvre's ideas. The trialectical structure of space and the production of differential space, as proposed by Lefebvre, play a crucial foundational role in Marxist urban theory.

<sup>146</sup> Sun, Q. (2016). The criticism of production of urban space and its inspiration to China's urbanization. *Journal of Shanghai University of Finance and Economics: Philosophy & Social Sciences Edition*, 18(6), 14. 孙全胜. (2016). 城市空间生产批判及其对中国城市化的启示. *上海财经大学学报: 哲学社会科学版*, 18(6), 14. DOI: 10.16538/j.cnki.jsufe.2016.06.007



Lefebvre's concept of the "right to the city" is explored, emphasizing its novel articulation on resisting alienation in space and redefining civic rights, providing a potential practical dimension to his theoretical framework. In the contemporary era of rapid urbanization in China, the study of Lefebvre's theories becomes increasingly significant. His ideas offer a theoretical foundation for the political economy critique of Chinese urbanization. However, the chapter also highlights the limitations of Lefebvre's theories.

Moving forward, the article seeks to apply Lefebvre's theory of spatial production to specific cases of urban village transformation in China, proposing reform strategies aligned with his principles.

## **Part IV. Conclusions**

### **Chapter 5. The study of Nantou City's social space through Lefebvre's lens**

#### **1. Introduction**

This chapter takes Henri Lefebvre's theories as a starting point and explores the spatial production mechanisms of Nantou City by analyzing the roles of various stakeholders and the changes in its social space. Following Lefebvre's advocacy for urban rights and the right to difference, the chapter delves into a more detailed conceptualization of the redevelopment project for Nantou City.

#### **2. The mechanism and process of space production for Nantou City**

##### **2.1 Introduction**

Lefebvre's theory of spatial production reveals the underlying social relations and economic processes behind the transformation of urban spaces. The formation of urban villages, such as "chengzhongcun" in China, exposes the conflicts within the rapid urbanization process stemming from capital accumulation and the exchange of interests. Analyzing the spatial production process of urban village redevelopment in recent years allows us to understand urban spatial transformations through changes in social relations and power struggles among various interest groups.

Focusing on the spatial production process of the Nantou City renewal, the author will primarily examine the Bi-City Biennale held in 2017 and a series of micro-redevelopment projects in Nantou City post-2019. These redevelopment events have played a decisive role in shaping the current state of Nantou City. This study aims to shed light on the transformation of urban spaces in the context of urban renewal by delving into the changes in social relations and power dynamics among multiple

stakeholders during and after these key redevelopment initiatives.

## 2.2 The production of space during the renovation

### ● The change of social identity of Nantou City

Since the establishment of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone in the 1980s, Nantou City has served as a window of opportunity to absorb a large labor force in response to the open policies and rapid urbanization in Shenzhen. During this period, the original self-owned houses of local villagers were transformed into rental properties through successive expansions aimed at maximizing economic benefits. This has led to the current state of high-density urban villages characterized by poor environmental quality. After the relocation of the village's factory by the Village Joint-Stock Company in 1992, Nantou City transformed into a gathering place primarily for migrant populations. The demographic composition is complex, consisting mainly of individuals working in the surrounding areas, such as delivery personnel, janitors, service staff, drivers, etc., with a high degree of population mobility<sup>147</sup> (Li, 2018).

Seizing the opportunity presented by the 2017 Shenzhen-Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture, the government collaborated with professional teams to undertake a comprehensive revitalization of Nantou City. This public cultural event prompted a thematic reflection on the dual identity of Nantou City as both an "ancient city" and an "urban village," initiating a discourse on spatial transformation within the public sphere<sup>148</sup>(Huang & Feng, 2023).

Against the backdrop of the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the significant cultural value of Nantou City to Shenzhen was once again emphasized. In 2019, led by the government and in collaboration with the leading real estate developer in Shenzhen, Vanke Group Limited, a new round of redevelopment was initiated. This transformation extended beyond the main street of Nantou City, as rental housing projects shifted the rental model from individual households to bulk leasing by contractors, who then unified the housing into long-term rental apartments targeting the youth demographic<sup>149</sup>(Zhang, Yang, & Wang, 2023). In recent years, the influx of various new business formats has gradually transformed Nantou City into a commercially oriented cultural hub catering to a younger demographic.

<sup>147</sup> Li, J. (2018). Comparative study on the folk belief space of homogeneous urban village and heterogeneous urban village: The case of hubei old village and nantou old town. *Development of small cities & towns*, (6), 8. 李景磊. (2018). 同、异质型城中村民间信仰空间比较研究——湖贝旧村与南头古城. *小城镇建设*, (6), 8.

<sup>148</sup> Huang, S., & Feng, J. (2023). Nantou Old Town: Diachronic Accumulation and Spatial Transition. *Time+Architecture*, (4), 14-22. 黄燊, 冯江. (2023). 海去潮来: 南头古城的时间层积与空间演替. *时代建筑*, (4), 14-22. DOI: 10.13717/j.cnki.ta.2023.04.014

<sup>149</sup> Zhang, Y., Yang, X., Wang, J., et al. (2023). Micro-upgrading of the Nantou old town from the perspective of urban governance experiment in pursuit of sustainable operations. *Time+Architecture*, (4), 23-29. 张宇星, 杨晓春, 王建明, 刘浩玉卓 戴雅希. (2023). 城市治理视角的南头古城微更新面向可持续运营的“南头实验”. *时代建筑*(04), 23-29. doi:10.13717/j.cnki.ta.2023.04.023.

● Multi-stakeholder game relationship and their production of space

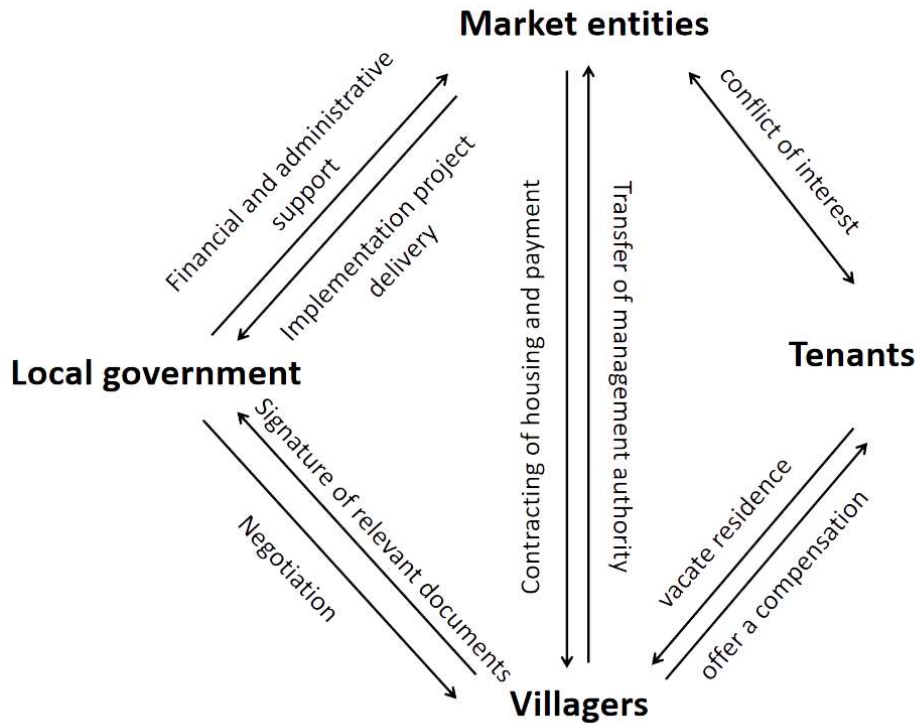


Fig.41 Relationship of relevant interest groups

**Local government**

In the transformation process of Nantou City, the government has consistently played a leading and initiating role. By organizing multiple stakeholders to participate in the redevelopment projects, Nantou City has been a focal point for comprehensive urban village governance since the release of the "Nantou City Cultural Heritage Conservation Plan" in the 1990s. The planning, site selection, and decision-making processes of the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture were spearheaded by the Shenzhen Municipal Planning Bureau, which has consistently acted as a major decision-maker. Apart from the Planning Bureau, around 20 government agencies have participated as co-organizers in each session<sup>150</sup> (Wang, 2018). By introducing public events into the transformation of Nantou City, the government transformed the public spaces of ordinary residents into showcase areas, making this experimental redevelopment a social issue.

Subsequently, in November 2017, the Shenzhen municipal government launched the "Shenzhen Urban Village Comprehensive Governance Action Plan for 2018-2020" and the overall plan for the comprehensive renovation of urban villages in Shenzhen (2019-2025) in 2018 (Wang, 2018). Starting from March 2019, the micro-redevelopment projects of Nantou City received renewed

<sup>150</sup> Wang, Q. (2018). Discourse analysis of 2017 uabb art intervention on Nantou historical city. [Master's thesis, Shenzhen University]. 王强. (2018). 2017 年深港城市\建筑双城双年展 (深圳) 艺术介入南头古城的话语分析. [硕士学位论文, 深圳大学]. [http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmgQflOreWLi5PSjT3urINRbXtKLU1bLbLtar713WSNyY\\_9FjvY79fE7PRvGjCwPzHd0i5qEmenP\\_RvAG\\_ReV3juTSIUl586or7AbUtqK4Esr7OXvxYvW-N2NjYkFbG5gNI3BTsnN-MQ==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NLmgQflOreWLi5PSjT3urINRbXtKLU1bLbLtar713WSNyY_9FjvY79fE7PRvGjCwPzHd0i5qEmenP_RvAG_ReV3juTSIUl586or7AbUtqK4Esr7OXvxYvW-N2NjYkFbG5gNI3BTsnN-MQ==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS)

attention. The government established the Nantou City Protection and Utilization Group to systematically position and plan the ancient city. Guiding planning outlines and design implementation guidelines were developed, and a platform was established to mobilize corporate entities to participate, with Vanke Group Limited being introduced as a market participant<sup>151</sup> (Lu, 2022). In the rental housing transformation of Nantou City, the government formed six negotiation groups to communicate with over a thousand homeowners and more than ten thousand tenants, addressing difficulties and completing the signing of bulk leasing contracts, enabling the successful implementation of the redevelopment project<sup>152</sup> (Ren, 2022). The government also contributed approximately 700 million RMB as the primary funding source for the project.

Undoubtedly, the government played a central role throughout the entire transformation process. As an administrative body, although it did not directly participate in specific decision-making processes and project implementation, it served as the initiator, organizer, and guide for the entire redevelopment process. By introducing policy guidelines, allocating financial resources, coordinating various market entities, and participating in administrative approvals, the government actively engaged in the transformation process, enabling the successful realization of the Nantou City redevelopment project.

### Market entities

The implementation of the micro-redevelopment project in Nantou City, chosen by the district government, is carried out by two enterprises wholly owned by the Shenzhen government: Shenzhen SEG Group and the real estate enterprise Shenzhen Vanke Development Co., Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as "Vanke"). The market-driven motivation for these corporate entities in the urban village transformation is to earn profits, enhance corporate influence, and capture a larger market share (Lu, 2022). Vanke, particularly in the bulk leasing sector, coordinated the comprehensive design of elements such as streets, individual buildings, plants, and small landscapes within Nantou City. It revamped the business formats within the village, incorporating brand storefronts themed around culture, art, and daily life, aligning with the cultural background of Nantou City. Control measures reminiscent of large shopping centers were implemented, and convenience measures were also introduced. The management and maintenance of Nantou City are overseen by Shenzhen Nantou City Management and Operation Limited Company, a collaborative effort between Vanke, Nantou Village Collective, and state-owned enterprises.

Under the banner of Vanke, the long-term rental apartment brand "Boyu" was introduced in Nantou City, involving the transformation of 284 residential buildings on both sides of the main street. The ground floor was designated for commercial use, while the second floor and above were converted into Boyu's long-term rental apartments<sup>153</sup> (Zhang, Yang, & Wang, 2023). Long-term rental

<sup>151</sup> Lu, Q. (2022). *Research on the conflict of interests and measures in the operational model of unified renting in nantou ancient city*. [Master's thesis, Harbin Institute of Technology]. 卢钦 (2022). *南头古城统租运营模式利益冲突与对策研究*. [硕士学位论文, 哈尔滨工业大学]. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2022.000797>doi:10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2022.000797.

<sup>152</sup> Ren, J. (2022). *Collaborative research on ancient city site protection and cultural tourism development based on service design concept — a case study of Nantou ancient city in Shenzhen*. [Master's thesis, Nanchang University]. 任佳颖. (2022). *基于服务理念的古城遗址保护与文旅开发协同研究——以深圳市南头古城为例*. [硕士学位论文, 南昌大学]. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27232/d.cnki.gnchu.2022.004355>doi:10.27232/d.cnki.gnchu.2022.004355.

<sup>153</sup> Zhang, Y., Yang, X., Wang, J., et al. (2023). Micro-upgrading of the Nantou old town from the perspective of urban governance experiment in pursuit of sustainable operations. *Time+Architecture*, (4), 23-29. 张宇星,杨晓春,王建明,刘浩玉卓 戴雅

apartments have become a popular product in the current rental market. As of August 2020, Boyu Apartments had signed contracts for 66.22% of the available units in Nantou City, with a clearance rate of 45.82%. The total leased area within the bulk leasing scope amounted to approximately 103,400 square meters<sup>154</sup> (Lu, 2022). With policy support and favorable initial investment costs, real estate enterprises are keen to secure a larger market share in the rental market through bulk leasing transformations in urban villages. The spatial transformation direction of urban villages has also shifted due to changes in market focus and policy emphasis.

### Villagers and village collectives

The actual owners of land in Nantou City are the village collective and villagers, who seek to maximize income by illicitly expanding residential land and renting out housing. This is achieved through the illicit expansion of homesteads and the leasing of homes, leading to the maximization of income. The reinvestment of capital into the reproduction of productive assets and housing is integral to the accumulation of capital, subsequently channeling resources into the production of new spaces<sup>155</sup> (Fu, 2023). Employing the theoretical framework of spatial production, the urban village undergoes large-scale bulk leasing transformations during the redevelopment process.

Throughout the transformation, villagers collaborate with the government and market entities to ensure stable economic returns. In the micro-redevelopment project of Nantou City, the village collective, government, and enterprises jointly establish a joint venture company to collectively manage security, property management, and cleaning services within Nantou City. The potential impact on the economic interests of villagers is often a direct cause of conflicts of interest. In the bulk leasing transformation, the government needs to coordinate with villagers, providing a one-time compensation payment. Villagers use this compensation to relocate existing tenants, leading to potential conflicts when the compensation is deemed insufficient to cover tenant resettlement, impacting the progress of the redevelopment process (Lu, 2022).

### Floating population<sup>156</sup>

The floating population, as a stakeholder, has been a crucial but overlooked component in the research on the spatial production process during the entire urban village redevelopment. In Nantou City, over 90% of the residents are a floating population, yet they do not directly participate in the

希. (2023). 城市治理视角的南头古城微更新面向可持续运营的“南头实验”. *时代建筑*(04), 23-29.

doi:10.13717/j.cnki.ta.2023.04.023.

<sup>154</sup> Lu, Q. (2022). *Research on the conflict of interests and measures in the operational model of unified renting in nantou ancient city*. [Master's thesis, Harbin Institute of Technology]. P.21-24. 卢钦 (2022). 南头古城统租运营模式利益冲突与对策研究. [硕士学位论文, 哈尔滨工业大学]. 第 21-24 页.

<https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2022.000797>doi:10.27061/d.cnki.ghgdu.2022.000797.

<sup>155</sup> Fu, Q. (2023). Analysis of Large-Scale Unified Renting Transformation in Urban Villages under the Theory of Spatial Production. *In People's City, Planning Empowerment: Proceedings of the 2023 China Urban Planning Annual Conference (Vol. 13, pp. 118-125)*. Overseas Chinese Studies; doi:10.26914/c.cnkihy.2023.049848. 付倩. (2023). 空间生产理论下城中村规模化统租改造分析.

在人民城市, 规划赋能——2023 中国城市规划年会论文集 (13 规划实施与管理) (pp. 118-125). 华侨学;

doi:10.26914/c.cnkihy.2023.049848.

<sup>156</sup> Lai, W. (2018). *Research on the expression of landscape culture based on spatial narrative——taking Nantou ancient city in Shenzhen as an example*. [Doctoral dissertation, Shenzhen University]. P.32. 赖婉仪. (2018). 基于空间叙事的景观文化表达研究——以深圳市南头古城为例. [Doctoral dissertation, 深圳大学]. P.32.

[http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NlMbkHBjB0vvp33nKtNZXW5WY-ybGv61rusBj8u7DwUigYkx-\\_nJ-TQOPHWQOudTMiPI6Di\\_DM9TrLi6Y515Ou5IWRIEYtNujwvuelCYwj\\_k\\_y2HGJ4cMU669KjPVoqNCJZXkCtCppboKQ==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS](http://101.42.170.182:8085/kcms2/article/abstract?v=PkrNiO65NlMbkHBjB0vvp33nKtNZXW5WY-ybGv61rusBj8u7DwUigYkx-_nJ-TQOPHWQOudTMiPI6Di_DM9TrLi6Y515Ou5IWRIEYtNujwvuelCYwj_k_y2HGJ4cMU669KjPVoqNCJZXkCtCppboKQ==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS).

redevelopment process. On the one hand, the high mobility of this population, often residing in the area due to work proximity, results in a lack of emotional connections and shared interests among residents. Even when their interests are infringed upon, the significant power disparity diminishes their ability to voice concerns. On the other hand, the lack of social identity and resident rights further diminishes their willingness to engage in the transformation of urban villages. As newcomers living in Shenzhen for years without a clear sense of belonging and lacking equal citizenship rights compared to local residents, they are less motivated to participate actively. Additionally, many residents expressed minimal interest in the biennale held at their doorstep, as contemporary art seemed distant from their daily lives.

However, as residents of Nantou City, they engage in the minimal form of spatial production, often manifested in shops and self-built venues within the streets and alleys, such as breakfast stalls, retail shops, chess tables, and drying racks. These unitary spaces are established based on the social networks formed by residents. Unfortunately, these self-built spaces are often perceived as negative spaces within the urban village and are erased during the redevelopment process.

Throughout the urban village transformation, conflicts of interest persist between the floating population and the capital stakeholders, characterized by a vast power imbalance during the negotiation process. However, there have been instances of temporary successful resistance. In 2018, an "anonymous labor representative" from Foxconn garnered attention by posting a letter titled "Letter from 130,000 Foxconn Labor Representatives to Vanke, Landlords, and Regulatory Authorities" on the internet. The letter shed light on the bulk leasing transformation plan in Shenzhen's urban villages, revealing residents' dissatisfaction with the renovation of original farmers' housing and the subsequent doubling or tripling of rents. The online uproar drew attention from various sectors and regulatory authorities, leading to the suspension of Vanke's renovation plan (Fu, 2023). In this temporary success, the floating population, through their online voices, protected their living spaces during the negotiation process, highlighting the interconnectedness between the production of social relations and the production of urban village spaces within the context of spatial production theory.

### ● The change of social space in Nantou City

The social relations in Nantou City consist of two main segments: registered villagers and floating populations. Registered villagers primarily derive their income from renting out houses, and their economic status is significantly higher than that of the floating population. The majority of the original residents live outside Nantou City, returning only during rent collection times. The income of the floating population mainly comes from labor and business activities conducted both within and outside the village. They are mostly middle to low-income individuals, and many of the retail shops in Nantou City provide services for the internal residents and are operated by the floating population<sup>157</sup>(Chen, 2020).

Post-redevelopment, due to substantial increases in rent, individual vendors have been displaced.

<sup>157</sup> Chen, S. (2020). *Study on the renewal and reconstruction of urban villages under the "Honeycomb" Theory ——a case study of nantou ancient city area in nanshan district of shenzhen*. [Doctoral dissertation, Northwest Normal University]. 陈绍涵. (2020). 基于“蜂窝式”社会理论的城中村改造研究——以深圳市南山区南头古城片区为例. [博士学位论文, 西北师范大学]. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27410/d.cnki.gxbfu.2020.001659doi:10.27410/d.cnki.gxbfu.2020.001659>.

The updated shop formats are now targeting younger demographic and external tourists, no longer meeting the daily needs of the local residents. The factories originally located in Nantou City were vacated as the main exhibition area for the biennale, leading the original enterprises to relocate under government mobilization. Workers also chose to move away from Nantou City. The renovated factory spaces are now utilized as office spaces for Vanke's Urban Research Institute<sup>158</sup> (Yang, Lin, & Li, 2022). The introduction of the long-term rental apartment brand "Boyu" led to approximately a 10% replacement of the resident population. In the early 21st century, residents were mostly frontline laborers working in factories and construction sites. However, by 2018, there was an increase in the proportion of service industry workers among the residents, alongside white-collar workers commuting to nearby technology parks<sup>159</sup> (Lisaya, 2023).

The commercialization of Nantou City has resulted in conflicts between the private living spaces of internal residents and the commercial spaces catering to external visitors. Public spaces previously used by villagers have been transformed into tourist spaces<sup>160</sup> (Zhang, Yang, & Wang, 2023).

## ● Conclusion

In examining a series of redevelopment projects in Nantou City led by the government in collaboration with market-driven stakeholders and the spatial production processes involving various interest entities, we observe the intricate dynamics and the reproduction of social relations and spaces during the negotiation. The original social networks of residents in Nantou City undergo fragmentation and dissolution with the injection of new spatial production driven by capital, gradually being replaced by the emerging social networks of a new middle class.

Through analysis, we discern the limitations of this redevelopment model, where, despite the proactive role of the government, irreconcilable conflicts persist between market entities and residents of Nantou City. The interests of the floating population are largely neglected in this transformation model, placing them in a passive position in the spatial production process.

This study provides profound insights into the social relations and spatial reproduction within urban village redevelopment. In future urban renewals, there is a need to focus more on the interests of vulnerable groups, including the floating population, to achieve a more comprehensive and sustainable urban development. Simultaneously, establishing more effective negotiation mechanisms among the government, market entities, and residents is essential to facilitate the realization of mutually beneficial urban renewal models.

<sup>158</sup> Yang, X., Lin, Q., & Li, B. (2022). Research on the Micro-renewal of Historical Districts from the Perspective of Spatial Rights: A Case Study of Nantou Old Town in Shenzhen. *Architecture and Culture*, 1, 3. 杨晓川, 林勤, & 李彬彬. (2022). 空间权利视角下的历史街区微更新探究——以深圳市南头古城为例. 《建筑与文化》, 1, 3. DOI: 10.19875/j.cnki.jzywh.2022.01.041

<sup>159</sup> Lisaya, D. (2023). Socio-demographic changes in Shenzhen's nantou old town brought by the Conservation and adaptive reuse project. *Time+Architecture*, 04, 43-51. 达丽娅·丽萨雅. (2023). 社会人口结构转变视角下的深圳南头古城保护与利用. 《时代建筑》, 04, 43-51. doi:10.13717/j.cnki.ta.2023.04.043.

<sup>160</sup> Zhang, Y., Yang, X., Wang, J., et al. (2023). Micro-upgrading of the Nantou old town from the perspective of urban governance experiment in pursuit of sustainable operations. *Time+Architecture*, (4), 23-29. 张宇星, 杨晓春, 王建明, 刘浩玉卓 戴雅希. (2023). 城市治理视角的南头古城微更新面向可持续运营的“南头实验”. *时代建筑*(04), 23-29. doi:10.13717/j.cnki.ta.2023.04.023.

### 3. The proposition for urban space from Henri Lefebvre

#### 3.1 The right to difference

Lefebvre argues that the urban right lies in the pursuit of the right to differential space. The right to difference is far more crucial than simply introducing another human right. In fact, he sees this right as providing a mechanism for the general transformation of traditional human rights beyond the narrow confines of liberal humanism. According to Lefebvre, rights today cannot be presented as a closed list of legal or moral principles but as practical maxims with the capacity to alter everyday life. This requires a societal project, and such a right and project must be conquered through political struggle, not just proclaimed through discourse alone <sup>161</sup>(Butler, 2012).

Unlike individual differences, Lefebvre contends that differences should not be maintained through the isolation of individuals and the existence of conflicts between them. Properly defined differences should be embedded in social relations, constituting a societal whole. Individuality does not disappear through the generation of difference; instead, it is incorporated into liberating political actions. Unlike the pursuit of uniqueness and diversity in pluralistic liberalism, Lefebvre's description of difference arises from repetition, with each repetition reinforcing difference. The right to differential space emerges as a result of the splintering opposition to the homogeneity and repetition inherent in abstract space itself (Butler, 2012).

For Lefebvre, the pursuit of urban rights and the right to difference are both part of an overarching societal transformation. Everyday life space is the source of constructing differential justice, and people need to return to their living conditions. By transforming their daily lives, they can construct a rich, diverse, and autonomous space for everyday life, fostering their own free development <sup>162</sup>(Sun, 2013).

Lefebvre contends that urban rights must be achieved through collective regional autonomy, not like welfare institutions belonging to the state but through social self-organization in spontaneous social struggles. He believes that only through regional autonomy, formed through diverse spatial forms and diversified power forces established through social struggles, can true life transformation be achieved beyond the changes in political structures brought about solely by class revolutions <sup>163</sup>(Chiodelli, 2013).

<sup>161</sup> Butler, C. (2012). *Henri Lefebvre, Spatial Politics, Everyday Life and the Right to the City*. Routledge-Cavendish, Oxfordshire.

<sup>162</sup> Sun, Q. (2016). The criticism of production of urban space and its inspiration to China's urbanization. *Journal of Shanghai University of Finance and Economics: Philosophy & Social Sciences Edition*, 18(6), 14. 孙全胜. (2016). 城市空间生产批判及其对中国城市化的启示. *上海财经大学学报: 哲学社会科学版*, 18(6), 14. DOI: 10.16538/j.cnki.jsufe.2016.06.007

<sup>163</sup> Chiodelli F. (2013). Planning and urban citizenship: Suggestions from the thoughts of Henri Lefebvre. *Planning Perspectives*, 28:3, 487-494, DOI: 10.1080/02665433.2013.800717



### 3.2 City as oeuvre

Henri Lefebvre asserts the necessity for cities to safeguard their artistic essence, a crucial component that must be reinstated as part of the restoration of urban rights. In the context of further capitalist development, the importance of the use value of urban space often becomes obscured by the dominance of exchange value, transforming the construction of cities into a process geared towards the production of commodities. Through technological and scientific advancements, cities undergo rationalization and mechanization, a shaping process that occurs within the backdrop of affluent consumerist hedonism. Consequently, individuals find themselves lacking the capacity to transform and innovate within these spaces, with the scientific portrayal of cities in ideological terms contributing to their depoliticization (Biagi,2020).

For Lefebvre, urban life was once a vibrant creative process that should rediscover the potential for creative and collective existence in space. The city itself is considered an 'oeuvre,' a characteristic in stark contrast to the irreversible trends toward monetary pursuits, commerce, exchange, and products. Urban spaces, as he contends, encompass not only monuments and institutional headquarters but also areas appropriated for entertainment, parades, strolls, and celebratory activities<sup>164</sup> (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 66). Additionally, Lefebvre emphasizes that art in service to the city does not entail a mere imitation, where existing artworks are simply placed within the urban landscape. Instead, it involves treating time-space itself as the canvas for artistic creation (Biagi,2020).

## 4. Conclusion

This chapter examines the spatial transformation of Nantou City, utilizing Henri Lefebvre's theories to understand the roles of different stakeholders in this process. It scrutinizes the changes in social space due to urban redevelopment, with a focus on events like the 2017 Bi-City Biennale and post-2019 micro-redevelopment projects. The chapter investigates the interplay of local government, market entities, village collectives, and the floating population within the urban village transformation, highlighting the impact of social relations and power dynamics on the production of space in Nantou City.

Lefebvre's advocacy for the development of urban space is a revolt against the centralization of power. He hoped that the citizens of the city should have the right to transform the space, and in the perspective of the contemporary urban villages in Shenzhen, China, it is embodied in the rights that the floating population should have so that the urban space is not as the power of the game and the tool of production. The production of urban space often lacks thinking about specific people, showing the characteristics of homogenization; the differentiated production of space by individuals is what urban space needs now.

<sup>164</sup> Lefebvre, H & Kofman, E. Lebas, E.(1996). *Writings on Cities*. Wiley-Blackwell, Hoboken, New Jersey.

## **Chapter 6. Conclusions and theses**

### **1. Reflection and discussion**

The article focuses on two issues: how to correctly understand and improve the problems of China's urban renewal and urban village transformation, and what is the significance of Lefebvre's theory for China's urbanization development and conducts a comprehensive study of China's urban renewal and Lefebvre's theory, and focuses on a more targeted analysis of the more representative of China's urban renewal, the transformation of urban villages.

#### **1.1 Reflection on China's urban renewal and urban villages nowadays**

China's urban renewal has undergone a notable evolution from large-scale demolitions to nuanced regional updates against the backdrop of a progressively increasing urbanization rate reaching 70%. The dynamics include ongoing progress in theoretical research on urban renewal and a growing governmental emphasis on this domain. However, a central argument posits whether current urban renewal measures can genuinely address the structural challenges arising from urbanization. The intertwining processes of urbanization and urban renewal suggest a mutual influence, with urbanization propelling urban renewal and the evolving urban renewal activities shaping the trajectory of urbanization. It is crucial for individuals to recognize that urbanization fundamentally serves as a necessary stage for modern nations entering industrial development, revealing societal contradictions that are irreconcilable within the framework of the capitalist social system.

In his book "The Production of Space," Henri Lefebvre once described the relationship between cities and villages: cities themselves originate from rural spaces, but conversely, urban spaces dominate rural spaces and become the center of spatial production. The relationship between cities and villages is characterized as a center-periphery dynamic, where there exists a perceptual distance and an imaginative unity between the two. Both cities and villages need each other to delineate their boundaries.

The complexity of China's urban villages stems from the dual nature of China's land system, and during the process of urbanization, the contradictions in spatial and social relationships between cities and villages are concentrated in urban villages. A large influx of the new generation of rural residents enters major cities, relying on urban villages as their initial foothold, while the extensive industrial construction in cities absorbs a significant amount of cheap labor from these urban villages. The specialized study of urban villages contributes to a deeper understanding and reflection on China's urbanization and urban renewal.

#### **1.2 Reflection on Lefebvre's theory and its meaning to China**

Lefebvre's spatial theory elucidates the dialectical relationship between space and society. In modern capitalist societies, space is no longer an absolute concept in the natural world but serves both as a

site of production and an object produced, driven by the logic of capital accumulation. Lefebvre contends that spatial production is a reconstitution of Marxist theory, expanding the spatial critique within Marxist thought. His works, such as "The Urban Revolution" and "The Right to the City," showcase a practical stance, opposing top-down urban development controlled by government and academic authorities. Lefebvre advocates for the full expression of people's spontaneity in reshaping urban space to meet diverse spatial needs. He believes that laborers must engage in struggles through community autonomy to attain urban governance rights, thus producing entirely new spaces and propelling comprehensive urban transformation.

Lefebvre's penetrating analysis of the homogenization of space and labor alienation in capitalist society provides a critical perspective on the social contradictions arising from China's urbanization, offering valuable theoretical foundations for the future direction of Chinese urban development. However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of his ideas, characterized by a lack of practical experience and an inclination towards utopianism. Additionally, his overreliance on the spontaneity of the masses may overshadow the role of the party as a vanguard, implying that resolving contradictions solely through worker autonomy may not fundamentally address the issues.

It is imperative to note the contributions of other core Marxist urban theorists, such as David Harvey, Manuel Castells, and Edward Soja, who have reconstructed and developed Lefebvre's theories. Harvey's spatial justice theory further elucidates the social nature of globalized capitalist space, criticizing the relativistic stance on justice in postmodernism. Castells, combining Lefebvre's urban revolution with Althusser's structuralism, introduces the concept of "collective consumption" to protect public interests at the level of consumer goods. Inspired by Lefebvre's spatial triad, Soja introduces the concept of the third space and makes significant contributions to postmodern theory and urban studies. While the constraints of time prevented a deeper exploration of these scholars in this article, their crucial roles in Marxist urban theory and the "spatial turn" movement cannot be overlooked.

### **1.3 Reflection on Nantou City and its space production**

Furthermore, through an in-depth exploration of Nantou City, an urban village in Shenzhen, this study delves into the practical transformation process, examining the spatial morphology, demographic shifts, and changes in social functions.

From the study of the spatial production process in the transformation of the old city of Nantou or the transformation of urban villages from a broader perspective, we can see that a community of interests consisting of the government, market players, village collectives, and academic authorities has carried out a successful transformation that seems to have solved the existing deadlock in the urban villages by refurbishing the original dirty and occluded living environment of the urban villages into a space that conforms to the standards of a modern urban environment, through a replicable path that conforms to the laws of commerce, sweeping up the housing stock and absorbing it into the rental market. Through a replicable approach that works to the laws of business, the houses in the village are swept up and absorbed into the rental market, in which the interests of the government, the developer, and the village

collectives are jointly satisfied. Undoubtedly, this mode of transformation has dramatically enhanced the efficiency of urban renewal and, in the short term, the potential for economic development.

However, a large group of local tenants did not participate in the whole process of spatial production of Nantou City's renovation. The monopolization of voice by the interest groups has squeezed out the voice of the residents who have the most direct interest in the transformation of the village. The Shenzhen-Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Nantou City can be seen as an urban regeneration through public events and a social experiment. It has successfully promoted the phased regeneration of Nantou Ancient City. Still, we should also see that local residents have not been involved in this overly experimental and professional activity, and some of the residents are even disturbed by it. In the latest renovation project led by the Nanshan District Government, Nantou City has been further transformed into a commercial and residential space that caters to the cultural needs of mainstream young people, and we need to reflect on whether such a transformation has once again squeezed the living space of the original residents.

Such capital proliferation and political achievements as the dominant transformation model ignore the right to survival of the majority of the floating population and will ultimately force them to leave; Shenzhen has been through the absorption of a large number of advantages of cheap labor to grow rapidly into a mega-city, the floating population as the city's construction and development of the most important force, Shenzhen has the responsibility to protect their right to survival and development, so that they really become a member of the city.

## **2. Suggestions and policy recommendations for urban village redevelopment**

### **2.1 Suggestions on urban village transformation based on protecting the right of tenants**

Based on the research findings, several recommendations are proposed for China's urban renewal, particularly in the context of urban village transformations.

- Maintain the public nature of renewal spaces, preserving the public nature of social spaces.

The public nature of space is fundamental in guaranteeing the basic rights of the public, where space becomes a public service item, highlighting its utility value. This is the most fundamental urban right. Preserving the public nature of space also protects the cultural aspect of the place. Public spaces provide the right to expression and communication to the public, as well as a space to establish stronger interpersonal relationships. Public nature does not imply commercialization or entertainment but rather a space that is inclusive, free, and non-discriminatory.

- The public should be actively involved in the transformation of their living spaces.

In the process of urban renewal, the public's will should play a decisive role, moving away from the previously dominant economic-centric ideologies. The elitist decision-making approach should be

abandoned. The government also needs to decentralize more power and responsibilities to the public. During the decision-making process, public opinions must be thoroughly considered and implemented. Policies should actively promote and encourage the public to participate more in the transformation of their living spaces, breaking the previous pattern of interest groups formed by the government, developers, and village collectives, thus steering urban spaces towards spatial justice.

- Encourage social self-organization.

Citizens can manage their communities and protect their rights through organized models. This not only enhances cohesion among citizens but also facilitates the accumulation of strength to safeguard their rights and improve their living environment. In the urban renewal process, social self-organizing forces within society have the capability to negotiate with local government entities and businesses to ensure the rights of the public.

- Address housing issues for vulnerable groups in the city.

The rise in property prices, rent, and displacement of indigenous populations resulting from urban renewal directly threaten the housing and livelihood rights of the lower class of society. The government should implement targeted housing welfare policies and provide timely and effective assistance. Simultaneously, considerations for the community environment and the development of supporting facilities for the displaced population are vital. This ensures that people can continue to have affordable housing, maintain stable interpersonal relationships, and secure a steady income during the urban renewal process.

- Prioritize the preservation of regional culture and history.

Urban spatial development cannot be divorced from its specific cultural context. Ensuring the preservation of historical and cultural elements in urban renewal is not only a restraint against the ongoing homogenization of urban construction but also allows people to collectively construct memories within a shared cultural space, fostering cohesion and societal stability. Preservation efforts should reject the mere formal preservation of historical and cultural elements and focus on retaining the cultural foundations for the public.

## **2.2 Policy Recommendations for urban village redevelopment**

- Advocate for the establishment of an efficient compensatory system that addresses actions by capital encroaching upon spatial rights:

Establish a more explicit and publicly transparent regulatory framework that incorporates the disclosure, registration, and assessment processes on a platform, encompassing negotiations between administrative authorities and residents, compensation agreements, as well as subsequent relocation and employment support services. Publicize these services to prevent the proliferation of unfair and corrupt practices. Streamline unnecessary steps in the audit process to enhance the implementation efficiency of the entire compensation mechanism, providing effective safeguards to displaced residents in the short term.

- Encouraging and Facilitating Social Self-Organization to participate in the process of renovation:

Promote and enhance the organizational capacity of society by delegating authority to local social welfare organizations in spatial governance. This decentralization allows for mutual checks and balances, preventing the formation of a closed-loop decision-making structure involving the government, developers, and village collectives in the urban village redevelopment process.

Introduce relevant policies that grant a certain degree of autonomy to community organizations for self-management of residential environments within defined parameters. Provide financial support for community-initiated small-scale renovation or social projects.

For government-led redevelopment projects, initiate the registration and enrollment of associated community organizations in each urban village. Establish a platform and conduct meetings to inform residents about various aspects of the redevelopment, ensuring their participation in the decision-making process from the early stages. Conduct regular meetings with resident representatives to report on the progress of the redevelopment, promptly providing feedback on residents' opinions. When making significant decisions related to the redevelopment, grant voting rights to resident organizations. Establish transparent and publicly accessible online and offline platforms, enabling all citizens to easily express their opinions and receive timely feedback. Additionally, it disseminates the ideology of collaborative governance.

- Provide effective housing security for the floating population:

Given the current housing preferential policies in Shenzhen, which are contingent upon factors such as education, age, marital status, and stringent social security payment requirements, coupled with the scarcity of affordable housing resources, the annual provision of public housing lags behind the increasing number of applicants. These factors result in limited housing benefits for the floating population. In recent years, the unified rental projects in urban villages have further encroached upon the living space of some tenants. It is imperative to reduce the entry barriers for affordable housing in policies and establish a graded security system, offering varying subsidy policies for different categories of housing security beneficiaries. Moreover, ensure a certain proportion of affordable housing in urban renewal projects and adopt more flexible forms of land development to enhance land efficiency, ultimately guaranteeing an ample supply of affordable housing resources.

### **3. Design Proposals for Nantou City's public space**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

From Henri Lefebvre's theoretical framework, several significant propositions can be distilled. Firstly, there is an emphasis on safeguarding the public nature of urban space, providing places for people to interact and express public discourse. Secondly, in the process of urban redevelopment, it is essential to protect the agency of the populace. As the group is directly affected by the consequences of redevelopment, they should have a comprehensive understanding of redevelopment plans and receive timely feedback. Lastly, people should actively engage in the transformation of their living

spaces. Henri Lefebvre believed that urban planning and development should prioritize the well-being and participation of the urban population. In his view, everyone, regardless of their social or economic status, should have the right to shape and use urban spaces, which are considered the minimal spatial production of daily life.

Considering the practical issues involved in the transformation of Nantou Ancient Town, we can propose a redevelopment approach:

1. Design public spaces within residential communities to provide residents with venues for public activities.
2. Introduce local markets tailored to the needs of the resident population, addressing the challenge of residents' access to daily necessities.
3. Utilize street spaces and pocket spaces to install public facilities and guide residents to take the initiative to transform the environment.

This approach aligns with Lefebvre's emphasis on protecting the public nature of urban spaces, empowering the voices of the local populace, and involving them in the transformation process to enhance the overall quality of urban life.

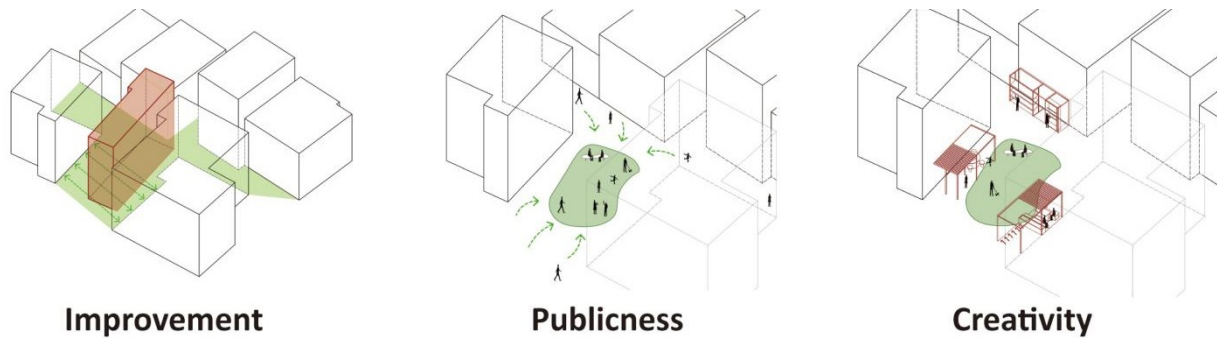


Fig.42: Idea introduction

### 3.2 Replicable Public Facility Design, the case of Xingming Street

#### ● Introduction

Xingming Road is a major thoroughfare for residents, with Nan Tou Village Elementary School located to the north. In response to the overall demands of the community and the utilization of public spaces within Nan Tou Ancient Town, various measures have been implemented for different types of alleyways.



Fig.43: Xingming Street location

- Replicable public facilities design

For narrow residential alleys, measures include the installation of nighttime lighting systems. For secondary roads in daily life, amenities such as benches, streetlights, and trash bins have been added. In addition, modular facilities, combined with architectural corridors, have been introduced to supplement the daily public spaces accessible to the community.

For the main thoroughfare of daily life, larger modular designs have been employed, taking into consideration that this route is a crucial pathway for children. Modular designs tailored to children and parents have been incorporated.

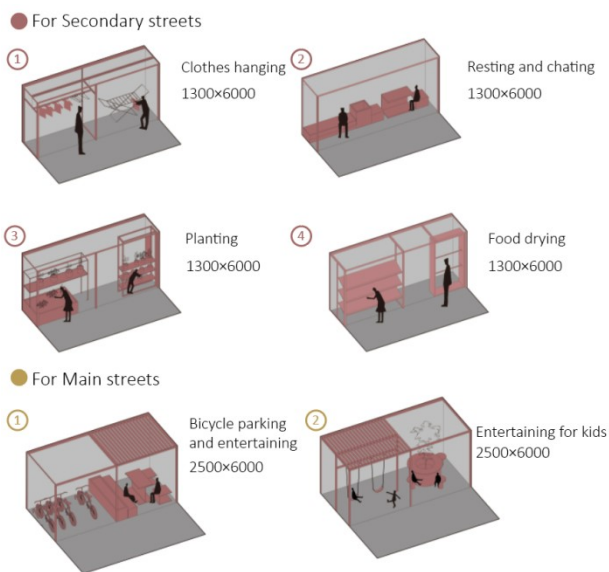


Fig.44: Modular facilities design

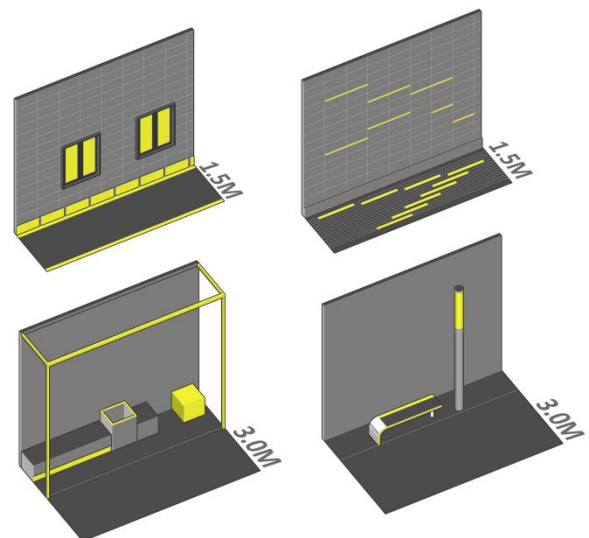


Fig.45: Lighting Design





Fig.46: Design of pocket space

the ideas are drawn from Lefebvre's propositions for urban practice, emphasizing justice for differential space and the right to the city. This redevelopment proposal seeks to address the specific needs of residents' daily lives by undertaking micro-transformations of alleyways and pocket spaces within the urban village. Through the modular customization of space, residents are encouraged to design and actively participate in the creation of their living environment and neighborhood spaces.

- Proposals on Xingming Street

For the urban revitalization of Xingming Street, the focus will primarily be on the following interventions: 1. Installate modular facilities, 2. Illumination Infrastructure Deployment, 3. Partial Ground-Floor Setback for Selected Buildings, and 4. Reutilize the pocket spaces

The adjacent street blocks along Xingming Road will be categorized into four distinct zones, ensuring adequate deployment of facilities in each area. Using the intersection as the central point, a radiating scheme of 30 meters and 45 meters will be implemented to guarantee accessibility for facilities. Lighting infrastructure will be installed within the narrow roads at the third level. Considering accessibility within the block, certain overly narrow sections will undergo a ground-floor setback, and buildings with subpar quality will be subject to removal.



Fig.47: Site plan of Xingming Street

### 3.3 Renovation of the Community Park

#### ● Introduction

Regarding the design of public spaces and market-oriented towards community residents, I have selected a park located in the southwest area of Nantou City. The original redevelopment plan for this site was also tailored to the local residents. The central area of the plot possesses a favorable natural environment, and the existing vegetation contributes to providing a degree of privacy for the extensive public space.

The original community park on the site is a rare large green space within Nantou City. Previously, a wall separated the park from the residential buildings, disrupting its connection to the surrounding environment and community and also wasting valuable land. Additionally, the park suffered from a variety of plant species arranged in a disorderly manner, lacking designated spaces for community gatherings.



Fig.48: Community park before renovation

Source: Lab D+H . (2017). *Nantou Community Park* By Lab D+H. moool. Retrieved from <https://moool.com/en/nantou-community-park-by-lab-dh.html>

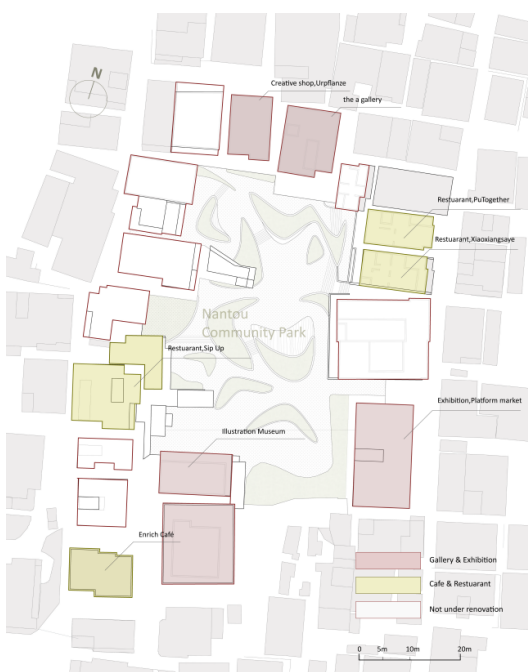


Fig.49: Current Situation of Community Park

- Proposal

The purpose of establishing the community market is to provide places to fill the shortage of commercial formats such as food, daily necessities, and clothing brought by the transformation so as to solve the problem of inconvenient purchasing by residents. The flexible spatial layout is conducive to the community residents to organize trading activities by themselves.

By renovating the façade of the original building and connecting the indoor and outdoor marketplaces, the indoor market space is opened to the outside, and ramps and stairs are installed to solve the problem of height difference between the two sides so that the building can become a passageway for residents to enter the community park.

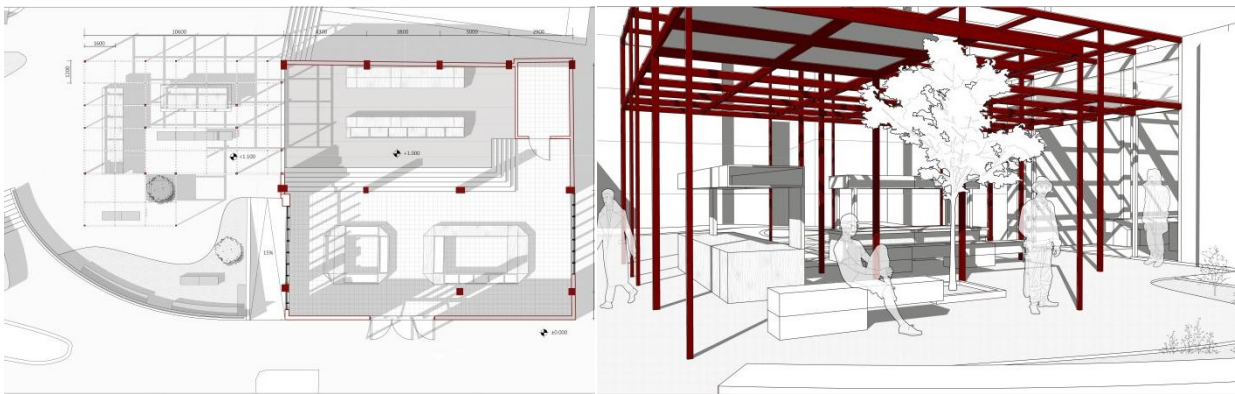


Fig.50: Design of the community market

#### 4. Conclusion

This thesis analyzes the challenges of urban renewal and urban village transformation in China through the study of literature and with a cross-disciplinary research approach, as well as combining Lefebvre's theories with Chinese issues. It discusses the significance and application of Lefebvre's ideas produced in contemporary China. The paper also provides a practical application of Lefebvre's theory of spatial production, with an in-depth analysis of the urban village renovation of Shenzhen's Nantou City as a case study.

Through the whole learning process, the author believes that Lefebvre's theory has an excellent critical power and revelation for the urbanization problem, and it also has a tremendous theoretical research space in the application of urban renewal and urban village transformation in China. At the same time, we need to focus on the background of China's urban development and practical experience and thoroughly study and reflect on his theories to effectively carry out the subsequent research work.

Due to the author's lack of knowledge and time, there are limitations to the study of the research object; first of all, the article does not explore other Marxist urban theories enough and fails to understand Lefebvre's theories from multiple perspectives, and also consider its potential impact on China's urban regeneration practice. In addition, the knowledge of the research case is only confined to the study of the relevant literature. There is no sufficient fieldwork and communication with local residents; for the case of this article, the case study is only limited to the relevant literature. There is no adequate fieldwork and communication with local residents. In addition, the understanding of the case study is only limited to the study of the relevant literature, without sufficient fieldwork and communication with local residents, which requires further testing and improvement of the transformation practices and recommendations of the case study in this paper.

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