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Master's Degree Thesis

Urban Regeneration：Gentrification in Genoa and Tianjin

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Abstract

Urban regeneration is increasingly emerging as a central strategy in contemporary urban governance, as cities grapple with accelerating digital transformation, challenges to environmental sustainability, and profound shifts in demographic structures. Defined as a comprehensive strategy aimed at reversing urban decline and constructing sustainable urban futures, urban regeneration encompasses physical renewal, economic revitalization, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. However, its implementation often yields unintended and paradoxical outcomes. Among the prominent of these is gentrification—a process in which the revaluation of urban space displaces economically marginalized populations and transforms the social and cultural fabric of cities.

This thesis analyses the relationship between urban regeneration and gentrification, drawing upon a comparative study of Genoa and Tianjin, two port cities with distinct political, economic, and cultural contexts. By situating gentrification within the broader framework of urban political economy, investigates the transformative effects and challenges posed by gentrification in both cities. Genoa exemplifies a European context characterized by culture-led regeneration strategies and decentralized governance, whereas Tianjin represents a state-led model of renewal driven by rapid economic transformation and an authoritarian planning system. Urban regeneration initiatives manifest differently across these contexts, revealing tensions between growth-oriented objectives and considerations of social justice.

Through a combination of historical analysis and case study discussion, the thesis illuminates the socio-spatial impacts of regeneration in Genoa and Tianjin. A perspective reveals the necessity of context-sensitive regeneration policies capable of addressing the recurrent reproduction of urban inequalities inherent in current practices, while advocating alternative approaches that prioritize participatory governance, social equity, and environmental sustainability, fostering an ongoing discussion on the importance of coordinating urban development and building more just and inclusive cities.

Contents

Introduction

Urban regeneration has been given a new connotation and a complex mission under the multiple contexts of global capital restructuring, technology-driven innovation, and deepening social inequality. This phenomenon reflects the need of cities in various places to improve their competitiveness and improve residents' quality of life by repositioning their economic and social roles in response to shifts in financial structure and societal challenges. Early urban interventions primarily focused on transforming the material environment, overlooking the social and economic aspects of urban life, which led to the forced relocation of existing communities and the disruption of local networks. Criticism of such practices has promoted a shift to a more holistic framework to a certain extent, taking into account economic development, environmental protection, and social cohesion, while taking into account the adjustment of physical structure.

In modern urban policies, urban regeneration is often regarded as one of the tools to enhance urban resilience and adaptability to cope with the pressure of global economic restructuring. However, the implementation process of urban regeneration strategies is generally complicated. The interaction of diverse subjects, including the public sector, private developers, and community organizations, in different governance models has led to the results of diversification in different urban contexts. In some cases, regeneration has contributed to the revitalization of neglected areas, the improvement of infrastructure and public services, while in others, it has triggered the reorganization of social space, further exacerbated inequality and strengthened patterns of exclusion and displacement. Against the background of neoliberal globalization, the increasing rise of market-oriented urban governance has further affected the trajectory of urban regeneration and highlighted the symbolic and aesthetic value of attracting investment and enhancing urban space.

As a potential by-product of urban regeneration, gentrification has become one of the goals in some planning paradigms and is closely related to urban regeneration. Gentrification is not limited to the relocation of residents, but also involves the extensive transformation of urban identity and consumption patterns. The introduction of public space, high-end retail and cultural facilities, and the reshaping of regional brands are accompanied by the upgrading of the physical environment. These changes are sometimes considered to promote urban vitality and economic growth, but are also often criticized for favoring the needs and preferences of wealthy groups at the expense of long-term community interests. These changes have sparked discussions on the fairness and inclusiveness of urban regeneration policies.

This thesis adopts a comparative research method to discuss the process of urban regeneration and gentrification of two port cities with different histories and governance models, Genoa and Tianjin. By placing the case in a broader socio-political and economic context, the uniqueness and commonality of urban transformation are studied and analyzed. Topics such as social justice, community participation, and spatial equity are discussed under the topic of regeneration. Although urban regeneration has the potential to revitalize the environment, its combination with market orientation and growth often limits the ability to achieve truly inclusive and sustainable results. In order to meet the challenges and development of contemporary urbanization, it is more meaningful to discuss under the alternative methods that prioritize the needs and rights of the existing communities.

The thesis is divided into three parts. The First Chapter introduces the relevant concepts of urban regeneration and gentrification, and sorts out their historical evolution and theoretical basis. Drawing on Roberts and Sykes (2000) and other important documents, it summarizes the evolution of urban regeneration policies from the post-industrial era to the present, and the transformation of the governance model from state-led renewal to public-private cooperation under neoliberal urbanism (Harvey, 1989), and builds an integrated political economy. The analytical framework of learning, urban sociology, and planning research perspectives. Since Ruth Glass (1964) first proposed the concept of “gentrification", this process has been understood as a dynamic of class change, population migration, and cultural restructuring in urban space. Based on Smith's (1979) rent gap theory and Ley's (1996) theory of cultural preference, the chapter puts the discussion of gentrification in the political and economic framework of urban restructuring, emphasizing that it is both a renewal result and a driving factor.

The Second Chapter shows the case studies of Genoa and Tianjin, and analyzes the urban regeneration path, the transformation of social space and the resulting forms of struggle. Discuss the development process of urban regeneration strategy in practice and its mutual influence with gentrification. Through the differences in the design, implementation and experience of renewal policies in different cities, the thesis helps to explore the trajectory and results of how local political economy, cultural norms and institutional structures affect urban changes. This chapter lays the foundation for the analysis of subsequent chapters when discussing the conflict between growth-oriented strategies and "urban rights" (Lefebvre, 1968). By integrating the concepts of spatial justice, governance mechanisms, and community mobility, it provides perspectives for comparing the process of urban regeneration and gentrification in different contexts.

Genoa, located in northern Italy, experienced a recession at the end of the 20th century due to deindustrialization and the decline in the importance of port infrastructure. The local government adopted a culture-led renewal strategy, such as the reconstruction of the old port (Porto Antico) and the 1992 World Expo project, positioning Genoa as the center of tourism and cultural consumption (Indovina, 1990). In this part, the thesis discusses how these measures can revitalize urban characteristics and attract investment, while bringing about the consequences of residents' displacement and community identity reshaping, and the impact on planning and decision-making in the decentralized governance model in response to the grassroots struggle of rising house prices and social space exclusion.

Tianjin is a nationally-led regeneration model in China and has been included in the broader modernization agenda. The rapid urban reconstruction in Tianjin includes large-scale demolition and reconstruction in order to improve the global competitiveness of the city. These measures often lack public participation, causing low-income groups to move to the suburbs, and traditional communities are replaced by high-end residential and commercial development (He & Wu, 2009). The Tianjin case discusses how authoritative governance can shape the renewal process while limiting the possible forms of community struggle, while highlighting the role of state-owned enterprises and policy tools in urban transformation and "state-led gentrification " (Hsing, 2010).

The Third Chapter conducts a comparative analysis by integrating the research results of Genoa and Tianjin, and discusses the issues of urban regeneration and social justice. The chapter focuses on several key factors that affect the results of different updates, including governance patterns, economic priorities and community participation. Analyze the impact of urban regeneration on exacerbating social space inequality, intensifying exclusion and displacement, or whether it has the potential to promote a fairer urban future. On this basis, the feedback brought by participatory governance and affordable housing policies to alleviate the negative effects of gentrification and promote social cohesion is discussed. Emphasize the importance of local conditions, show the experience of Genoa and Tianjin, and increase the number of cases of global cities seeking a balance between economic growth and social justice. Summarize the empirical research related to the two cities, combine the discussion of urban regeneration and gentrification, and understand how different political, economic and social backgrounds shape the process of urban transformation and promote the future of more inclusive and equal cities by connecting specific cases with theoretical frameworks.

Chapter 1 Exploring Urban Regeneration and Gentrification

1.1 Background and Significance

Urban regeneration has gradually become one of the key strategies for global cities to meet the intertwined challenges of deindustrialization, economic restructuring and urban recession. Many formerly industrial cities experienced a significant economic contraction in the late 20th century, resulting in a deterioration of infrastructure, an increase in unemployment and a decline in social cohesion. To cope with these changes, urban regeneration has slowly shifted from focusing on the renewal plan of the urban physical environment to developing a comprehensive approach that integrates economic, social and environmental goals. The goals include revitalizing decaying areas, enhancing the global competitiveness of cities and improving the overall quality of cities, so as to promote sustainable development.

At the beginning, urban regeneration was the restoration of tangible assets such as abandoned industrial land, old housing and dilapidated infrastructure. With development, the limitations of this method gradually emerged, especially in the inability to solve deep socio-economic problems, such as persistent poverty and unemployment, and spatial isolation. And spatial isolation. The contemporary urban regeneration strategy has been extended to areas such as economic rejuvenation, social inclusion, cultural promotion and environmental sustainability, reflecting a more comprehensive policy vision (Roberts & Sykes, 2000; Couch et al., 2003). Globalization has further strengthened the urgency of urban regeneration, because the competition between cities in terms of investment, talent, tourism and cultural influence is increasingly fierce, and it is necessary to consciously strive to show vitality and an innovative image (Harvey, 1989). Against this background, flagship projects such as waterfront transformation, cultural areas and iconic public facilities are not only the actual symbol of urban regeneration but also the embodiment of its symbolic meaning (Gospodini, 2002).

At the same time as the goal of urban regeneration, it may also have complex social consequences. Large-scale investment and market-oriented reconstruction often led to unexpected consequences, including demographic changes, housing affordability challenges, and destruction of existing communities (Atkinson & Bridge, 2005). These consequences are closely related to the phenomenon of gentrification. Gentrification is a social spatial process, which refers to the influx of more wealthy residents into low-income communities, leading to rising house prices, residents' displacement and cultural identity

changes (Glass, 1964). The phenomenon of gentrification was first discovered in the inner city of London, and has since been analyzed from multiple theoretical perspectives. For example, Neil Smith's theory of rent gap emphasizes the role of the current difference between property value and potential land use in promoting reinvestment and population displacement (Smith, 1979). Cultural interpretation emphasizes the preferences of middle-class consumers for specific urban lifestyles, convenience facilities and cultural capital, and shows how symbolic and consumption-oriented factors shape community transformation (Ley, 1980; Zukin, 1989).

The interaction between urban regeneration and gentrification is complex and sometimes even contradictory. On the one hand, urban regeneration can stimulate economic activities, improve urban infrastructure, and improve environmental and cultural conditions. On the other hand, these interventions tend to accelerate the gentrification process, exacerbating social inequality and population migration pressures (Lees, Slater & Wyly, 2008). The political economy behind the governance structure and urban renewal policy is the core of this dynamic. Under the neoliberal urban system, cooperation with private developers and market-oriented approaches often prioritize capital accumulation and competitive status over social equity, thus promoting the gentrification process (Harvey, 1989; Smith, 2002). These phenomena highlight the importance of Lefevre's concept of urban rights, which regards urban space as a collective resource shaped by the participation of residents. Gentrification challenges this right by expelling the marginalized population and giving rise to various forms of resistance and struggle (Purcell, 2003).

The social consequences of urban regeneration and gentrification are reflected on many levels. The improvement of the urban environment may inadvertently disrupt social networks, lead to the long-term displacement of residents, and change local commercial, public space and cultural customs (Freeman & Braconi, 2004; Zukin, 1998). Some scholars point out that urban renewal may bring many potential benefits, such as reducing the crime rate, improving the level of public facilities and enhancing social capital, but these impacts are unevenly distributed, and the trade-off between urban regeneration and population displacement still exists (Ley, 1996). An effective analysis of urban regeneration requires placing it in a broader political and economic context, including globalization, labor market restructuring and neoliberal urbanization (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). Recognizing the subjectivity of local communities is also crucial. Grassroots movements, advocacy and participatory governance can challenge exclusive practices and help build a fairer and more inclusive urban future while safeguarding the rights of residents (Purcell, 2003; Slater, 2006).

1.2 Urban Regeneration: Concepts, Evolution and Characteristics

Urban regeneration has gradually become one of the key strategies for global cities to meet the intertwined challenges of deindustrialization, economic restructuring and urban recession. Many formerly industrial cities experienced a significant economic contraction in the late 20th century, resulting in a deterioration in infrastructure, an increase in unemployment and a decline in social cohesion. To cope with these changes, urban regeneration has slowly shifted from focusing on the renewal of the urban physical environment to developing a comprehensive method of integrating economic, social and environmental goals. The goals include revitalizing decaying areas, enhancing the global competitiveness of cities and improving the overall quality of cities, in order to promote sustainable development.

The classification system adopted in this section is primarily grounded in two theoretical foundations. The first is the classic multidimensional framework of urban regeneration outlined by Roberts and Sykes (2000) in "*Urban Regeneration: A Handbook*". The second is the interpretative and integrative approach proposed by Couch, Sykes and Börstinghaus (2011). These influential works provide the mainstream basis for explaining and discussing how regeneration strategies have evolved across different historical periods and governance models.

Roberts and Sykes (2000) initially conceptualized urban regeneration as a whole process, which is not limited to reconstruction at the material level nor limited to economic growth. They advocate a multi-dimensional approach, including four interrelated dimensions:

1. Economic revival through investment, employment and infrastructure construction;
2. Aimed at enhancing community cohesion, improving well-being and promoting inclusive social improvement;
3. Emphasizing sustainable resource use, reducing pollution and creating environmental improvement in high-quality public spaces;
4. Transformation at the spatial and material levels, including adaptive reuse, building renovation and street landscape improvement.

Couch et al. (2011) expanded this framework, proposing a long-term planning perspective and the role of institutional governance in coordinating between public and private subjects. Their research places urban regeneration in a broader trend, including deindustrialization, capital globalization, and a shift in policies from welfare-state intervention to more market-oriented approaches. The framework classifies and compares urban regeneration strategies at different times and spaces, providing a structured

perspective through which we can better understand the historical evolution of urban regeneration practice.

These frameworks were originally proposed as analytical tools rather than a rigid chronological order. Urban regeneration will go through several landmark stages, each its own logic, economic conditions and planning methods. Based on these documents, this section divides the discussion on the development of urban regeneration into five interrelated phases:

1. Physical reconstruction and bulldozer urbanism (mid-20th century). It is characterized by large-scale post-war reconstruction, top-down planning and a focus on physical modernization;
2. Social orientation and comprehensive approach (from the 1970s to the 1980s). The reflects the growing recognition of socio-economic inequality, industrial recession and the need for coordinated interventions in housing, employment and community services;
3. Market-led neoliberal urban renewal (1990s). This emphasizes the role of globalization, private investment and public-private cooperation in reshaping the urban landscape;
4. Sustainability and comprehensive renewal (2000s to 2010s). It marks the transformation to environmentally conscious and socially inclusive planning, integrating green infrastructure, low-carbon strategies and participatory governance;
5. Smart cities and data-driven governance (from the 2010s to the present). It reflects the latest developments in digital technology, real-time monitoring and information-driven urban management.

Through the discussion of each period, we can discuss the evolution of urban regeneration more systematically, and analyze how each phase draws on the experience, challenges and successes of the previous phase. This helps to analyze the origin of the framework, adopt a positive perspective of the mainstream, and present the development, policies and innovation of urban regeneration in various periods.

The First Phase: Bulldozer Urbanism and the Limits of Physical Renewal

The historical roots of urban regeneration can be traced back to the large-scale post-war reconstruction plans of Western countries in the mid-20th century. The first generation of urban regeneration, commonly known as "bulldozer urbanism", focuses on the physical reconstruction of dilapidated or outdated urban areas. In the United States, this method is

characterized by a high reliance on central government power, technical rationality, and a firm belief in modernization through large-scale demolition (Gans, 1962). Planners implement the strategy of "clearing slums" to replace dilapidated neighborhoods with high-rise residences, main roads and commercial development projects. Influenced by Le Corbusier's vision of utopia, the modernist concept guides these transformations, promoting functional zoning, geometric urban layout and standardized architectural forms (Jacobs, 1961).

The driving force of the early urban regeneration plan mainly came from the state or municipal authorities. Centralized planning dominates the decision-making process, and the participation of residents or grassroots organizations is limited. Planners and technical bureaucrats generally believe that modern architectural and engineering solutions can solve urban problems more effectively than social projects or community interventions (Harvey, 1989). The construction of high-rise residential areas, trunk highway networks and special commercial complexes has become the standard means to realize urban modernization. Influenced by Le Corbusier's utopian vision, these strategies give priority to functional zoning, geometric layout and standardized architectural forms, reflecting people's belief in the power of environmental change.

The importance of physical transformation exceeds social participation, which has a multi-faceted impact on the trajectory of urban development. The assumption that modern infrastructure and housing will automatically bring about social improvement is too simplistic, and upgraded buildings and roads themselves play a relatively role in improving the quality of life of residents or promoting social cohesion. Top-down planning marginalizes local voices and limits the opportunities for community participation. Decisions on demolition, reconstruction and resource allocation often lack effective consultation, reflecting a planning culture that prioritizes efficiency and technical expertise over inclusiveness. This exclusion exacerbates the inequality in the distribution of urban resources and lays the groundwork for future challenges associated with gentrification (Harvey, 1989; Fullilove, 2004).

The first phase focuses on the material level, and housing and infrastructure construction take precedence over economic or cultural development. Newly built residential areas have solved the problem of overpopulation at the material level, improved living conditions, and ignored issues such as employment, local enterprises and community identity. Industrial recession and economic restructuring are separated from urban regeneration, and the standardized design of newly built residential areas often creates monotonous urban landscapes, lacking the historical and cultural characteristics of the

replaced blocks. This uniformity weakens people's attachment to the place and local identity, highlighting the limitations of urban transformation purely at the material level (Jacobs, 1961; Couch et al., 2011).

Fig.1 Chrysler Construction Project, Detroit, Michigan, USA,1950.

Fig.2 Shoreditch, Scrutton Street and Surrounding Areas, England, 1947.

Urban regeneration cannot rely solely on material improvement. Lessons learned at this stage guide subsequent policy development, which requires a more comprehensive strategy to integrate economic, social, cultural and environmental goals. People realize that cities are not a neutral space, but a complex social system, which has contributed to the emergence of a multi-dimensional urban regeneration framework. These frameworks advocate the harmonization of infrastructure with social equity, community participation and cultural heritage (Couch et al., 2011; Roberts & Sykes, 2000).

The Second Phase: Socially-Oriented Strategies and Integrated Approaches

From the 1970s to the 1980s, urban regeneration entered a stage characterized by increased attention to the social dimension and a comprehensive policy framework, reflecting the response to multiple pressures, including industrial recession, economic restructuring, and welfare state challenges. Unlike the early focus on the physical transformation of urban infrastructure, this stage emphasizes the coordination between economic revival, social inclusion and community development. It strikes a balance between material renewal and the reconstruction of social structures (Roberts, 2000). Part of the driving force at this stage comes from the structural consequences of deindustrialization, such as widespread unemployment, fiscal tightness, and the gradual hollowing out of urban centers in traditional manufacturing cities (Bluestone & Harrison,

1982). These conditions exacerbate urban poverty, unemployment and declining living standards, forcing local governments to seek innovative governance methods that can promote economic vitality and improve the welfare of residents at the same time.

The reasons for this shift can be traced back to the general industrial recession in Western Europe and North America, rising unemployment, fiscal tightening, and the shrinking of traditional manufacturing areas (Bluestone & Harrison, 1982). The increasing poverty and social vulnerability of residents in urban centers have prompted local governments to seek innovative governance mechanisms to ensure the well-being of residents while promoting economic activities. Against this background, urban regeneration began to adopt a multi-dimensional perspective and integrate material, economic and social intervention measures into an overall strategy.

The key to this stage is to deepen people's understanding of social space inequality in urban areas. The acceleration of global capital flows and the restructuring of the industrial economy have exacerbated the spatial separation, with wealth and investment concentrated in specific communities, while low-income communities are marginalized (Sassen, 1991). The urban regeneration plan needs to consider not only the improvement of infrastructure, but also the social consequences of urban transformation, such as population migration, employment opportunities and the maintenance of existing community networks. Early material intervention was not enough to meet these multi-level challenges, and the relevant policies began to clearly focus on social inclusion and local empowerment (Fullilove, 2004). At the same time, environmental issues have also become one of the core discussions in urban regeneration. Industrial legacy problems include air and water pollution, aging infrastructure, and the decay of public spaces, the existence of which sparks a public demand for a healthier and more sustainable urban environment (Hall, 1988). Urban policymakers began to explore ways to integrate physical, social and environmental interventions, and began to bring a more comprehensive understanding of urban sustainable development.

Practical experiments have emerged in Western Europe and North America, and cities in these regions have gradually introduced participatory methods and social interventions to achieve economic and social goals (Healey, 1997). This period witnessed the formation of the concept of "comprehensive revival" to combine improvements in housing, public services, employment opportunities, education and community cohesion with broader infrastructure and economic renewal. For example, in the 1980s, the British Urban Development Corporation (UDC) used public-private partnerships to stimulate economic

growth in an attempt to solve social contradictions and urban inequality. These developments set a precedent for multi-dimensional strategies, recognized the interdependence between economic vitality, social justice and community resilience, and laid the foundation for later urban regeneration practices.

Fig.3 Children playing in a residential area after factory closures, Pennsylvania, USA, 1974.

Fig.4 Rochdale city center, one of the UK's most innovative municipal housing projects, 1971.

Despite the theoretical commitment to inclusiveness and social goals, the second phase of urban regeneration still faces many practical challenges, including governance fragmentation and uneven results (Musterd & Ostendorf, 1998). For example, residents' participation is mainly at the procedural level, which has a limited effect on enhancing community trust or having a substantial impact on decision-making. The growing role of private capital has enhanced the market-oriented logic and limited the ability of policies to benefit vulnerable groups. The implementation of social orientation and multidimensional integration as the core principles of this period emphasized the importance of intra-community cooperation for sustainable urban development. Although the focus on reshaping governance emerged in the early days of the neoliberal market tendency, this stage is still a transitional stage, which lays the basic theory and provides more thinking for the subsequent model of emphasizing the inclusiveness and resilience of urban regeneration.

The Third Phase: Neoliberal Urbanism and Market-Led Regeneration

During the rise of neoliberal urbanization in the 1990s, the urban regeneration model began to develop rapidly. Against the backdrop of globalization and capital flow restructuring, urban regeneration policies became increasingly dependent on market mechanisms and public-private cooperation models. The rise of neoliberal governance influenced the theoretical direction and practical direction of urban regeneration, and promoted the strategy of prioritizing economic competitiveness and attracting investment (Peck & Tickell, 2002). The role of local governments shifted from direct intervention to coordinators and facilitators, overseeing urban transformation while developing rapidly in global capital dynamics (Jessop, 2002). Harvey (2001)'s analysis of neoliberal urbanization emphasizes that urban space is a key place for capital accumulation, and urban regeneration is both a means of environmental improvement and a mechanism for socio-economic stratification.

One of the characteristics of this stage is the increasing integration of urban regeneration with urban branding and image-shaping strategies. Local governments use cultural industries, creative industries and high-end real estate development projects to enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of cities (Zukin, 1995; Florida, 2002). The iconic reconstruction project, the waterfront transformation plan and the creative block project have become the core of urban marketing, showcasing the modernization and economic vitality of the city to the global audience. Urban regeneration is no longer limited to material reconstruction, but covers multiple levels such as society, culture and symbolism, thus shaping people's perception of cities around the world.

Although a multi-stakeholder participation mechanism has been formally established, actual participation is often limited to advisory or symbolic roles. Socially disadvantaged groups have limited influence in the decision-making process, and the prioritization of market-oriented results sometimes marginalizes community interests (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). However, the integration of private investment and entrepreneurial governance has enabled municipalities to mobilize previously difficult resources and expertise, thus accelerating the scale and speed of urban transformation.

Within the framework of emphasizing cooperative governance, market logic dominates the governance pattern. Public participation rarely changes the overall policy focus dominated by economic growth, and the issue of social equity still exists. This stage has witnessed the intensification of social polarization and inequality in the process of urban regeneration. Smith (1996) pointed out that urban transformation during this period often led to the gradual expulsion of long-term residents, especially low-income groups, from the

city center, exacerbating social exclusion and spatial isolation. Lees et al. (2008) further pointed out that market-driven renewal strengthens the internal social stratification, promotes the emergence of a new urban class structure, and reveals the contradiction between economic revival and social equity.

Governance of Urban Regeneration in Barcelona

During the 1992 Olympic Games, Barcelona underwent extensive urban transformation, the government not only advanced infrastructure construction but also actively involved community organizations in the planning process. Residents, NGOs, and cultural groups participated in consultation meetings and community planning, promoting social inclusion and mitigating the exclusion of vulnerable populations (Marshall, 2004). This pluralistic participation mechanism partly alleviated social fragmentation caused by purely market-driven approaches.

Fig.5 Barcelona: Coastline under construction in 1990 and the Olympic Village at the end of 1991.

Fig.6 Development area of the 22@ district (blue line: overall perimeter; red line: commercial and other non-residential zones), 2000.

Community Participation in Hamburg's HafenCity Project

As one of Europe's largest urban redevelopment projects, Hamburg's HafenCity established a community advisory board, inviting residents, environmental groups, and business representatives to participate in discussions. Despite controversies, this mechanism provided a platform for various stakeholders, helping balance economic development and social equity (Huning & Siebel, 2011).

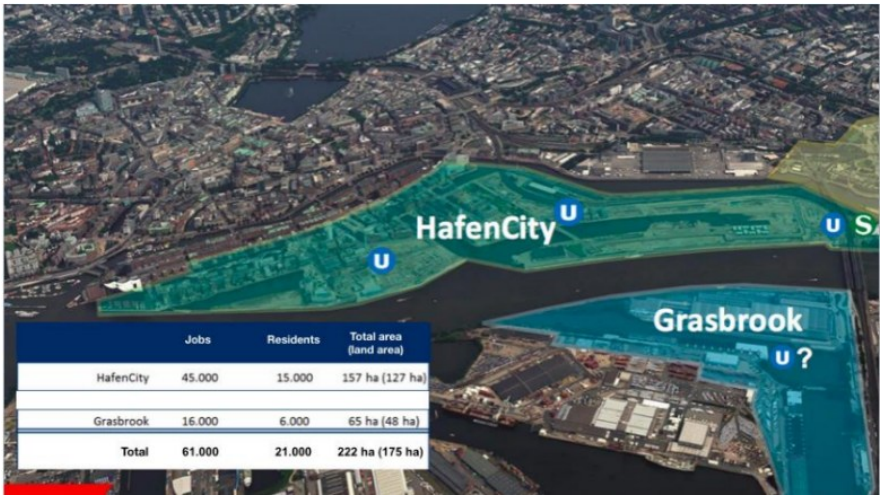

Fig.7 HafenCity New Port City

Areas under development: HafenCity and Grasbrook. The master plan was first established in 2000 and revised in 2010 to guide the area's development.

The Fourth Phase: Sustainability and Integrated Urban Regeneration

At the beginning of the 21st century, after being influenced by neoliberal-oriented practices for a long time, urban regeneration has undergone a significant paradigm shift. Cities are increasingly facing urgent global challenges, including climate change, environmental degradation and growing social inequality, making it necessary to integrate sustainability and multidimensional strategies into urban regeneration plans. Unlike the previous methods, which were mainly oriented by economic growth or physical reconstruction, this stage is more of a comprehensive and eco-friendly urban regeneration perspective. The urban regeneration strategy pays more and more attention to achieving a balance between economic rejuvenation and ecological sustainability, social inclusiveness and participatory governance (Rydin, 2010; Beatley, 2000).

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) proposed by the United Nations in 2000 and the subsequent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 emphasize the simultaneous search for economic development, environmental protection and social equity in the urban environment (UN-Habitat, 2016). Directives such as the Aarhus Convention (1998) and the Leipzig Charter (2007) also emphasize that participatory governance, cross-departmental cooperation and locally driven innovation are key elements of effective urban regeneration. The concept of "ecological city" gradually emerged during this period, and environmentally sustainable urban design was promoted as the guiding principle of urban regeneration projects (Beatley, 2000).

This period of urban regeneration is developed in a direction commonly known as "

integrated regeneration", and environmental planning, social policy and economic revitalization are discussed in one framework. Unlike the second stage, which focuses on social inclusion or the third stage, which is market-oriented, this stage tries to adopt a balanced approach, taking into account environmental, economic and social goals. Rydin (2010) described this period as a period of "governance transformation" in which municipalities changed from coordinators to active promoters of sustainable and inclusive urban agendas.

Fig.8 Vauban District, Freiburg: Sustainable neighborhood focusing on community engagement and low-carbon living. Germany, 2012.

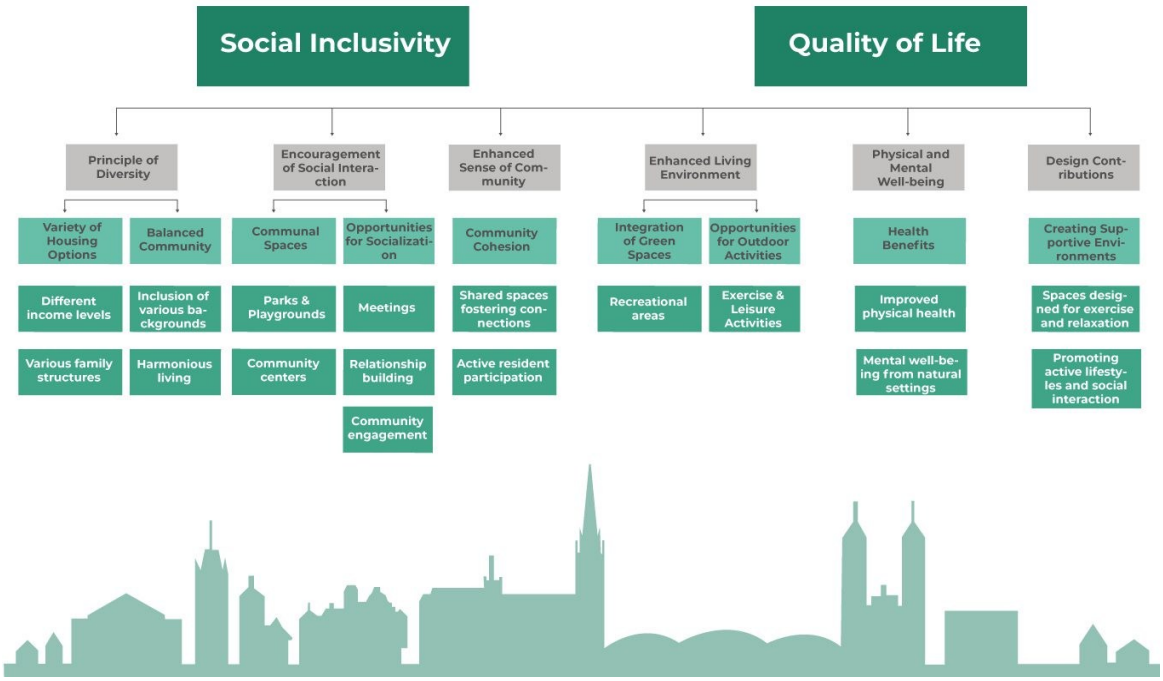

Fig.9 Conceptual framework for social and community impacts in the Vauban Eco-District. Germany.

Compared with the previous period, environmental sustainability and low-carbon development have become the core focus of this stage. The urban regeneration strategy pays more and more attention to green infrastructure, energy-saving building practices, walk-friendly communities and measures to reduce urban carbon emissions (Jabareen, 2006). These measures are in line with the international decarbonization target and are also an effective means to improve the global competitiveness of cities. The importance of social inclusion is becoming more and more apparent, especially in alleviating the problem of residents' displacement caused by urban transformation. The concept of "Just City" (Fainstein, 2010) puts forward policy formulation to protect vulnerable residents and cope with the unexpected social consequences of urban regeneration. The multi-stakeholder governance model is increasingly institutionalized, with municipalities, private sector partners and community organizations participating in the planning and decision-making process to improve transparency and responsiveness. At this stage, a progressive and flexible urban regeneration method is introduced. It no longer relies solely on large-scale reconstruction, but implements interventions such as "tactical urbanism" to adapt to the environment and adjust the way to activate public space and minimize social interference while meeting local needs (Lydon & Garcia, 2015).

The concept of toughness has become very important. The goal of the comprehensive urban regeneration strategy is not only to revitalize the community, but also to enhance its ability to withstand environmental, economic and social shocks (Couch et al., 2011). This includes the adaptive reuse of buildings, flexible public spaces, and multifunctional infrastructure that can meet changing urban needs. By integrating the principle of resilience into renewal projects, cities can enhance their capacity for sustainable development while reducing their vulnerability to climate, economic or social crises. Urban regeneration also pays increasing attention to the cultural and symbolic meaning of the city. Heritage protection, creative industries and cultural projects are not only used to attract investment and tourism, but also to enhance local identity and social cohesion (Zukin, 1995; Florida, 2002). By attaching importance to cultural heritance in the process of modernization, urban renewal not only respects historical heritage but also supports contemporary economic and social goals.

The fourth period reflects the strategic evolution of urban regeneration, from narrow economic or material goals to an overall model that integrates ecological sustainability, social equity and participatory governance, providing a framework for a more resilient and inclusive urban future. These characteristics mark the transformation of the urban

governance model from an economic growth-oriented and diversified cross-goal-oriented model, and the city has made remarkable progress in practice. Green infrastructure and ecological restoration measures have improved the quality of the environment and the living conditions of residents. At the social level, the community-centered participation mechanism introduces multiple perspectives into public space planning and housing supply, promoting an inclusive decision-making process. The sustainable urban strategy attracts environmentally conscious investment, which is conducive to the reshaping of the city's brand and identity. Model cases such as Copenhagen and Freiburg show that the development of ecological blocks can enhance local social cohesion while significantly reducing carbon emissions.

The sustainable and comprehensive period of urban regeneration represents a major innovation in the early model. Contemporary urban development promotes social equity and environmental protection while achieving economic growth. By adopting inclusive governance measures, emphasizing ecological sustainability and promoting resilient urban design, cities can make urban regeneration benefit the majority of residents. This stage has laid a solid foundation for contemporary and future urban planning, showing that urban regeneration will harmonize growth with equity and sustainability, and eventually develop into a more inclusive, resilient and environmentally responsible city.

The Fifth Phase: Smart Urbanism and the Challenge of Social Justice

Since the 2010s, urban regeneration has entered a new stage, which has been influenced by the rise of digital technology, data-driven governance and smart city frameworks. This stage does not replace the previous model, but is superimposed on new tools and concepts, emphasizing efficiency, coordination and long-term resilience. Cities are increasingly relying on digital infrastructure, such as real-time sensors, open data platforms, travel tracking systems and automated administrative services, to support updated strategies and optimize urban management. Batty (2013) and Kitchin (2014) described this transformation as a process towards "algorithmic urbanism", in which data becomes a practical resource for planning and decision-making.

At this phase, urban regeneration is regarded as a process of combining spatial renewal with digital transformation. Many cities use intelligent transportation projects, integrated transportation platforms and digital monitoring to revitalize congested or underutilized areas. Intelligent lighting, energy-saving systems and data-driven environmental management are increasingly used in the transformation of public spaces. These measures enable local

governments to coordinate urban regeneration activities more accurately, track progress, and adjust policies in real time. The mainstream view emphasizes that data-driven tools enhance the effectiveness of urban regeneration by improving service availability, reducing infrastructure costs and supporting more flexible urban governance.

Fig.10 Nighttime cityscape of Songdo International Business District, Incheon, South Korea (2020), showcasing its high-tech urban fabric and data-driven environment.

Fig.11 Digital visualization of Barcelona's smart urban grid, Barcelona, Spain (2018), demonstrating the integration of ICT and public space planning.

Using big data for demographic statistics and housing market analysis, local governments and private developers often use predictive analysis to monitor population trends, assess land use potential and simulate future community needs. These tools help identify which areas of reconstruction can bring the greatest economic and spatial benefits. Digital governance affects the way communities participate in urban regeneration projects. Online participation platforms, digital feedback systems and geographic information system (GIS)-based consulting tools enable government departments to efficiently collect residents' opinions. These mechanisms complement traditional participatory planning by expanding participation channels and accelerating communication between institutions and communities. Although there are inevitably differences in the level of participation between different cities, mainstream research emphasizes that digital systems can serve as an effective tool for enhancing transparency, supporting consensus building, and improving the consistency between urban renewal priorities and the expectations of residents.

Smart urban regeneration shifts the focus of the narrative from reconstruction projects to an integrated urban system. Urban regeneration is in line with the sustainable development agenda, climate adaptation goals and long-term investment frameworks.

Data-driven environmental monitoring enables cities to manage air quality, green space and energy consumption more effectively, and integrate urban regeneration into a broader urban resilience strategy. Urban regeneration is no longer only about physical transformation or economic revival, but also coordinates multiple dimensions of urban life through data-driven governance.

The fifth phase of urban regeneration shows how digitalization and data-driven management have become the core of contemporary urban policies. Smart city tools do not fundamentally change the goal of urban regeneration, which is, to improve infrastructure, improve economic performance and enhance urban competitiveness. They provide new methods for diagnosing spatial conditions, implementing interventions and evaluating results. The rise of smart urban regeneration is one of the important supplements to historical development, providing cities with new capabilities to shape urban transformation in a coordinated and future-oriented way.

Concluding Remarks

The historical evolution of urban regeneration is a gradual process, from initially focusing on material reconstruction to gradually expanding to a governance-oriented multi-dimensional framework. The five stages not only reflect the historical trajectory of policy and practice, but also discuss the potential tension between social, economic and political logic in different periods. From the tough " bulldozer-style " intervention in the mid-20th century to today's strategy that balances technological innovation and social equity, urban regeneration has always sought a balance between growth needs and inclusive goals. The five stages outlined in this section discuss the historical evolution of urban regeneration, showing not only a series of policy transformations but also the broader conceptual transformation of urban decline, opportunities and social space changes. Each stage reflects different political and economic conditions, institutional arrangements and planning concepts. Together, they form a coherent vein, explaining how urban regeneration has become one of the core pillars of modern urban governance.

The first phase is characterized by post-war reconstruction and material modernization. As a basic principle of a state-led and infrastructure-centered activity, urban regeneration mainly focuses on the transformation of the material level, and also provides lessons learned for the social level of urban regeneration, demonstrating the importance of urban space in the economic and cultural network.

The second phase includes a comprehensive, socially oriented approach in the 1970s

and 1980s. Urban regeneration takes into account social inclusion, economic feasibility and environmental sustainability. While promoting local economic recovery, we also pay attention to community cohesion and public service supply.

The third phase is usually related to the neoliberal urbanization process in the 1990s, and market-dominated strategies and public-private cooperation models have become one of the main tools of urban regeneration. The practicality of classifying and analyzing interventions combined with economic and spatial goals shows the flexibility and resilience of the urban regeneration strategy with the evolution of urban challenges.

The fourth phase is from the beginning of the 21st century to the 2010s. The transformation of the urban regeneration strategy to sustainable development and comprehensive strategies, including the interaction between environmental management, social inclusion, economic growth and spatial transformation, provides a comprehensive perspective for understanding the scope of contemporary urban regeneration. Effective urban regeneration should be as consistent as possible with the global sustainable development agenda and local needs.

The fifth phase, which is also the latest time, is the process of integrating the principles of smart city and data-driven governance into the practice of urban regeneration. The urban regeneration strategy prioritizes efficiency, accuracy and adaptability, and uses real-time data to optimize resource allocation, improve service levels and strengthen environmental management.

These five phases constitute a "spiral development" process. The discourse emphasizes social equity and collaborative governance more and more, and practice is still constrained by market-oriented logic. Urban regeneration is not only a strategy to cope with complex urban challenges but also a mechanism to strengthen power hierarchies and resource inequality. From a policy perspective, urban regeneration helps to improve global competitiveness, adjust the internal social structure, and enhance community resilience. From another perspective, if participation and inclusiveness are ignored, urban regeneration may produce a new "regenerative rejection". As proposed by Lefebvre (1968) in his theory of " right to the city ", urban space not only contains material structures but also reflects social relations and daily life. Sustainable and equitable urban regeneration requires transcending technocratic and market-centered frameworks, putting the needs of marginalized groups at the heart of policy, and promoting a comprehensive transition from spatial governance to social relationship reconstruction. On this basis, Section 1.3 will trace how "gentrification" itself evolved from a local phenomenon unique to London to a widely

used concept, thus helping to discuss the social and spatial consequences of the global urban regeneration strategy.

1.3 Gentrification: Definitions, Drivers and Impacts

The concept of "gentrification" originated in London in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and was mainly used to describe the transformation of social space in working-class communities driven by the influx of middle-class residents (Glass, 1964). At that time, gentrification was considered a local phenomenon, rooted in the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of Western cities in the post-industrial era. The process was initially small-scale and mostly self-organized, usually led by cultural pioneers such as artists, writers and young professionals seeking affordable housing in the heart of the city. These early transformations combined the improvement of housing conditions with the reshaping of community cultural identity (Zukin, 1982).

Although originating from specific Western contexts, the concept of "gentrification" has developed into one of the global analytical frameworks for understanding urban change. The scope of application goes beyond the origin of London, thanks to the prevalence of certain urban dynamics, such as deindustrialization, housing market pressure, social differentiation, and the pursuit of urban quality of life. Post-industrial cities around the world have experienced a similar decline in central urban areas, followed by investment-driven urban regeneration, which often targets historical blocks or central locations. Transformation involves not only economic capital, but also cultural capital and symbolic capital, which helps to attract middle-class residents and investors (Bourdieu, 1984). Discussing "gentrification" from this perspective can help find similarities in cities in different urban environments, including southern Europe and East Asia.

From the unique phenomenon of the West to the universal analytical concept, the transformation of the concept of gentrification puts forward a perspective for comparative urban research. Although cities around the world have significant differences in governance structure, economic system and socio-cultural background, they all show that gentrification is a similar process, including middle-class settlement, upgrading and transformation of urban texture, and reorganization of social space. By taking gentrification as a conceptual bridge, we can analyze how urban regeneration reshapes the cross-cultural similarities and differences of neighborhoods and communities (Lees, Shin and López-Morales, 2016).

Several factors prove that the gentrification framework can be extended to non-Western contexts. The fundamental drivers of gentrification are economic restructuring, housing

market dynamics and cultural consumption patterns becoming increasingly obvious in global cities. In different contexts, rapid industrialization or deindustrialization creates surplus urban space, which can then be used for new residential, commercial or mixed-purpose development projects. These changes usually follow patterns similar to those originally observed in London: investment inflows, facility-oriented housing upgrades, and changes in social structures (Smith, 1979). Contemporary urban policies often use similar tools in different contexts, such as tax incentives, public-private partnerships, and planning regulations that promote underutilized regional redevelopment. These tools operate under different political and institutional frameworks, but their impact on community change can usually be interpreted in the analytical vocabulary of gentrification.

Another reason for supporting cross-cultural applications is the globalization of urban culture and lifestyle preferences. As cities become nodes in the global economic and cultural network, the consumption patterns, housing preferences and living strategies of the middle class and professionals tend to be consistent. International mobile professionals, creative people and investors seek communities that combine historical authenticity, convenience value and social vitality. These standards are similar to those that originally attracted cultural pioneers to London in the 1960s. Regardless of the local governance structure or cultural background, gentrification provides a coherent framework for analyzing how these transnational capital and population flows shape urban space (Sassen, 1991).

In the context of urban regeneration, gentrification can be used as a perspective to understand the social and spatial consequences of reconstruction initiatives. Gentrification can be regarded as one of the results of urban regeneration, and it can also be regarded as its mechanism: it is the process of a community experiencing social upgrading, investment increase and rising property value, which is often a direct or indirect result of the strategy of urban regeneration. The direct or indirect results of the strategy. This dual relationship shows one of the important positions of gentrification in the study of urban transformation under the broader framework of urban regeneration.

The Phase One: Cultural Pioneers and Spontaneous Renewal

Since the 1960s, the first wave of gentrification was local and spontaneous, which is different from the later capital-intensive and institutionalized middle-class form. This early stage was mainly led by a group of cultural pioneers, including artists, writers, intellectuals and young professionals who were looking for neighborhoods with moderate prices and deep history. As Zukin (1982) pointed out, these pioneers not only transformed the physical

space but also reshaped the cultural characteristics of their living areas and turned them into centers of creative experiments. This bottom-up renewal reflected a form of cultural resistance, which was in stark contrast to the suburbanization trend at that time, and laid the foundation for a more formal gentrification process that followed.

Fig.12 "Pneutube", Frederiksplein, Amsterdam, Netherlands (1969). The design emphasized a static and "rational" division of space (residential, commercial, transport, etc.), rather than engaging with the complex and dynamic relationships between different urban functions.

During this period, the main driving force for gentrification was cultural capital rather than systematic economic investment. Bourdieu (1984) conceptualized cultural capital as knowledge, skills, artistic ability and symbolic status, which together give individuals influence in social space. Applied to the urban context, cultural pioneers use daily practice, creative output and moderate property transformation to give new symbolic meaning to marginalized communities. Unlike later profit-oriented interventions, most of these activities are experimental and aim to influence social space and local identity rather than generate direct economic returns. Under the theoretical framework of urban revival, this stage represents the initial activation of the central urban area, which promotes cultural vitality, social interaction and an emerging concept of "creative-led revival".

The impact of gentrification at this stage at the social and spatial levels is local and progressive. Early urban transformation improved the physical space through building

renovation, street improvement and public space upgrading, but the social consequences were relatively mild. Lees (2003) emphasized the concept of "potential exclusivity". Low-income residents were not directly expelled, but gradually displaced due to rising rents and living costs. This stage represents a slow evolution of social space reorganization, with limited geographical scope and minimal public policy intervention. At this time, urban regeneration is characterized by experimental and gradual improvement, rather than comprehensive or top-down urban planning.

Fig.13 Docklands Redevelopment, London, United Kingdom (1970s–1990s).

Utilizing large tracts of land in the Docklands area to address housing, social, environmental, employment/economic, and communication deficiencies, this project aimed to provide a model for similar improvements across East and Inner London. Phase 3 focused on addressing the lack of open space available to residents of the Isle of Dogs and Poplar.

The transformation of community lifestyle and symbolic meaning. Cultural pioneers not only changed the material environment but also shaped the social identity of the community through their daily practices and cultural activities. Initiatives such as local art studios, small galleries and informal cultural events have created new models of social interaction and promoted the revaluation of urban space. Under the broader framework of urban renewal,

these developments have a double meaning: they foreshadow the potential for future capital investment and policy participation, and also launch the gentrification process that may promote market-driven in the future (Smith, 1979). Despite its small scale and lack of institutional support, this early stage played a significant role in the process of urban regeneration.

The first phase of urban regeneration is famous for its cultural pioneering, community-driven and local characteristics. Positive results include the revival of urban core areas, the enhancement of cultural activities and the enrichment of social interaction; while the limitations are reflected in the gradual displacement of residents and the potential disintegration of existing social networks. As the prologue of the subsequent institutionalization and market-dominated stage, this stage shows the theoretical and practical significance of culture in the early urban regeneration process. It shows how localized, non-capital-intensive interventions can activate a broader urban transformation path.

The Phase Two: Institutionalization and Capital-Led Growth

From the late 1970s to the 1990s, gentrification was increasingly structured and subject to extensive intervention by capital markets, policy frameworks and urban planning mechanisms, unlike the relatively spontaneous and localized influx of middle-class residents in the early days. It goes beyond Ruth Glass's (1964) original description of gentrification, which is mainly influenced by the community-level phenomenon of the middle-class neighborhoods in working-class settlements, and evolves into a process rooted in neoliberal urban governance. According to Smith (1987), the gentrification of this period was not just the spatial reorganization of economic interests; on the contrary, it was the result of the intertwining of market forces and state power, affecting the model and trajectory of urban reconstruction. The scale and social impact of gentrification have further expanded and spread to a wider urban space.

Unlike the first phase, the second stage shows mutual integration between market dynamics and policy tools. The initial gentrification are often developed by the lifestyle choices of individuals or small middle-class groups, while the second stage is characterized by the systematic participation of developers, financial institutions and municipalities. Recognizing the economic potential of urban renewal, the government has introduced policy incentives such as tax relief, land-use reform and zoning adjustment to attract private capital. The close cooperation between public institutions and private developers has given rise to

a governance structure in the form of public-private cooperation (PPP). Roberts and Sykes (2000) believe that as cities face deindustrialization, this comprehensive governance model has become the core mechanism for implementing urban regeneration, which raises concerns about social equity and inclusiveness while improving efficiency. The government should actively participate in urban reconstruction, not just supervision, and transform urban policies into a market-oriented driving force for gentrification.

At this stage, the role of market forces makes real estate developers and investors the core participants. They respond to changes in housing demand and use new financial instruments to maximize profits. The combination of policy support and speculative investment has accelerated the transformation of urban communities, often leading to a sharp increase in house prices and rents (Freeman, 2005). This, in turn, has an impact on existing residents, who face pressure from rising housing costs and a gradual influx of high-income families. Although the phenomenon of population migration at that time was not as common as in the later stage, early signs of social stratification and spatial inequality had begun to emerge.

Integrate the concept of "gentrification" into a broader urban economic and governance framework. Harvey (1989) and other scholars emphasized the connection between "gentrification" and neoliberal urbanization, pointing out that reconstruction projects not only serve capital accumulation but also improve urban competitiveness. Policies and measures increasingly reflect economic logic, giving priority to investment-friendly environments and high-value land use, rather than purely social or community-oriented goals. Therefore, the interaction between state power and market dynamics has become the core driving force of "gentrification", and also reflects the institutionalization of urban regeneration through regulatory frameworks and financial mechanisms.

The cultural and social forms have undergone significant changes. Cultural facilities, creative industries and lifestyle services are often used to attract middle-class residents and investors (Zukin, 1995). The gentrification at this stage includes tangible infrastructure improvements and shaping the image of cities that is conducive to the investment and migration of high-income groups. The governance mechanism has also been adjusted to support this process. Urban planning departments and municipal institutions have formulated guidelines for land use, building standards and project approval. While promoting large-scale intervention, they also effectively supervise urban development. The coordination between multiple participants, including developers, financial institutions and community representatives, reflects the transformation of the urban renewal management

model to integrated management. Citizen participation mechanisms are beginning to emerge, but their influence is often limited by the dominance of economic goals (Atkinson, 2004). Local communities can participate in the consultative process, but the ultimate direction of reconstruction depends to a large extent on market and policy priorities.

Fig.14 Renovation of SoHo, Mercer and Prince Streets, New York City, United States,1975.

Fig.15 Intersection of Fifth Avenue and 110th Street, part of the Lower East Side area. East Harlem, New York City, United States, 1975.

This institutionalized gentrification process has brought several obvious results. The improvement of housing, commercial facilities and public infrastructure has improved the overall urban environment, promoted economic recovery, and enhanced the competitiveness of the city. Cultural facilities and aesthetics have been upgraded to create a livable urban space that attracts residents and tourists. This process has also exacerbated social differentiation. Rising house prices and the cost of living have put pressure on long-term residents, heralding the beginning of systematic population migration. Although these impacts are not consistent in all communities, they mark a shift in the impact of the urban renewal strategy from the first phase of accidental social impact to more predictable and structural outcomes.

The second phase of gentrification shows the transformation of cities from an informal, culture-dominated model of improvement to a structured, policy-supported, capital-intensive process. Institutional intervention, market dynamics and coordinated governance have made gentrification a predictable feature of urban regeneration, which has an economic and social impacts. The improvement of the material environment, the increase of investment and the improvement of urban competitiveness have formed a balance with the emerging

social stratification and spatial differentiation models. This stage lays the foundation for the subsequent development of gentrification, showing how the integration of capital, policies and planning can systematically reshape the urban environment and establish a lasting social space transformation model.

The Phase Three: Negotiated Governance and Social Inclusion

From the 1990s to the beginning of the 2000s, the development of the third stage reflects the thoughtful development of urban governance in an inclusive direction, emphasizing the participation of multi-stakeholders, social integration and consultative decision-making. This stage is a response to the shortcomings of the early market or state-led urban regeneration model, marking the maturity of governance structures and strategies (Lees, Slater & Wyly, 2008; Atkinson, 2004). Rebalancing economic goals and social equity, and addressing the limitations and consequences of the previous top-down or capital-dominated model.

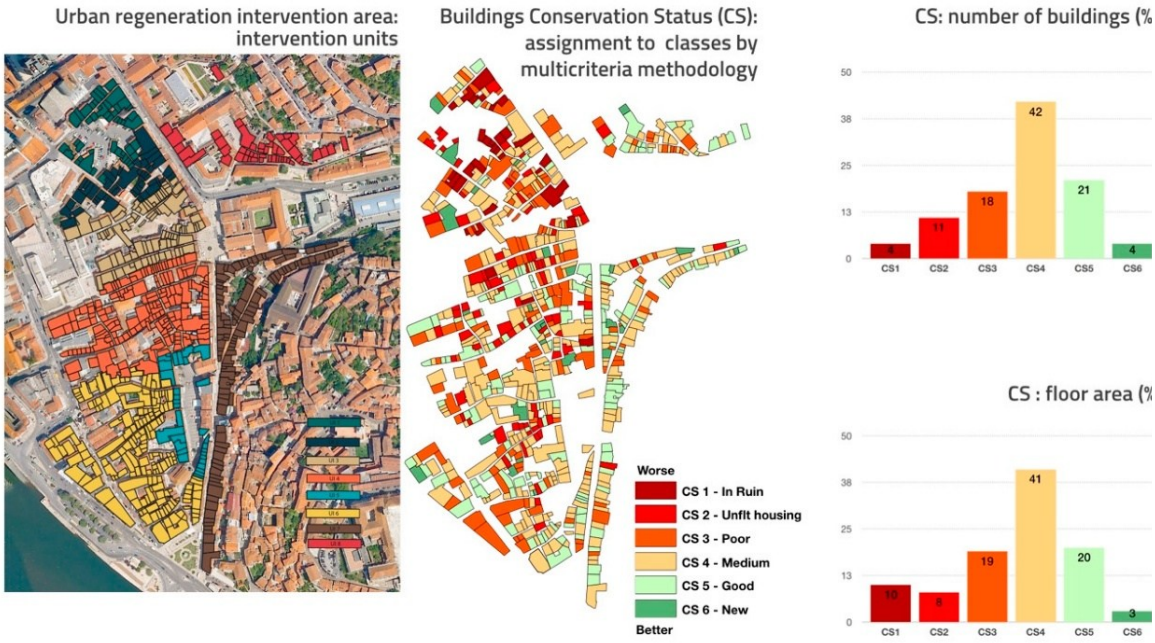

Fig.16 Diagram of Brownfield Regeneration in Europe,2000s.

Illustrating the collaborative involvement of civil society organizations, government, and businesses in urban regeneration, highlighting multi-stakeholder interaction and integrated governance models. Residents of the Isle of Dogs and Poplar.

Urban regeneration places more and more emphasis on social benefits and fairness. Early reconstruction initiatives were generally characterized by large-scale, top-down

intervention, which led to widespread population displacement and the disintegration of the original community, triggering social contradictions and critical evaluation of long-term impact. In order to deal with these problems, grass-roots organizations, neighborhood associations and other forms of community self-organization have been born, which have become an important force in shaping the direction of urban regeneration. Fainstein (2000) and other scholars pointed out that this transformation reflects the increasing emphasis on participatory governance, making previously marginalized groups have greater influence in planning and decision-making. Civil society actors not only participate in procedural consultations but also actively advocate substantive protection measures, including the right to housing and social equity. During this period, the development of cities no longer focused only on material improvement, but also on the relationship level, community cohesion and the recovery of social networks (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Moulaert et al., 2010).

During this period, urban policies adopted a diversified strategy, integrating economic, social and environmental goals into the planning and renewal framework. Early-stage reliance on market-driven mechanisms exacerbated the income gap and spatial isolation, prompting policymakers to take countermeasures. For example, affordable housing projects aim to protect low-income residents from displacement (Atkinson, 2004), while community development projects and social capital investments aim to strengthen community identity, promote cultural heritance and strengthen social networks (Putnam, 2000). These interventions highlight the deepening of people's understanding of gentrification, emphasizing that urban regeneration is not limited to the material environment, but also covers the social and interpersonal dynamics of urban life.

Each city formulates corresponding strategies according to its own unique historical, cultural and socio-economic background. In Europe, urban regeneration usually uses cultural heritage protection and public participation planning as a mechanism for culture-led revival (Tallon, 2010). In North America, relevant initiatives often give priority to ecological restoration and green infrastructure to achieve sustainable development goals (Porter, 2002). These different methods reflect the adaptability of revival strategies, marking that urban development is shifting from a unified top-down model to solutions based on specific situations and local conditions.

Policy tools to promote social equity play an important role. Housing policies protect vulnerable groups, often through the provision of affordable housing or subsidized housing in urban transformation areas. Urban renewal incorporates social infrastructure such as schools, medical services and public spaces into the reconstruction plan to enhance

community resilience. To strengthen local identity and promote social cohesion, the implementation of cultural projects and heritage protection measures reflects the view that urban renewal not only changes the material structure, but also affects the social and cultural dimension.

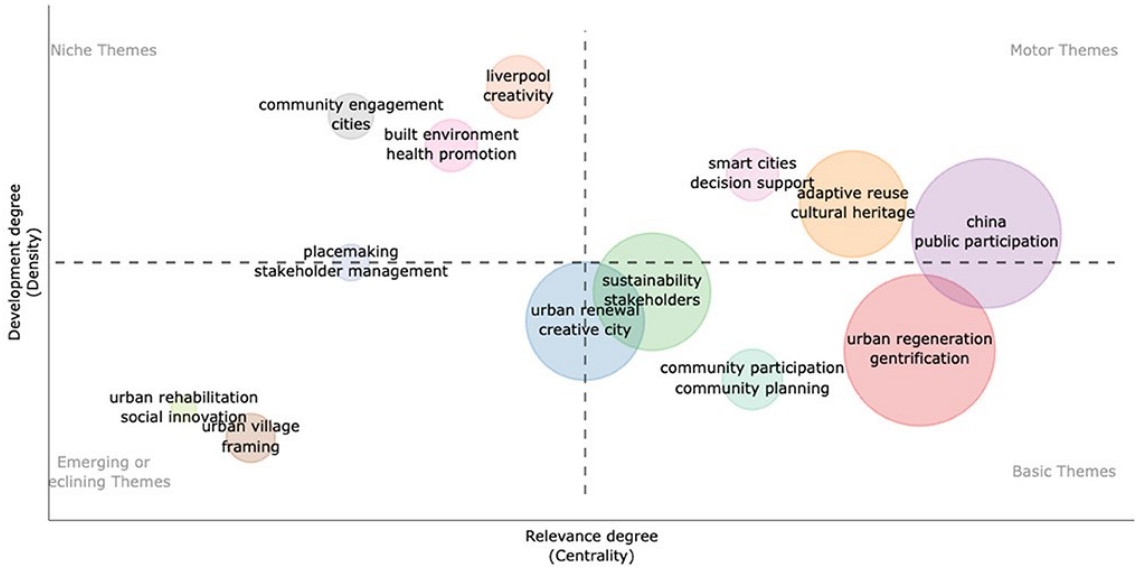

Fig.17 Global Bibliometric Chart in 2000.

Focusing on keywords such as public participation, gentrification, and stakeholders, reflecting research trends on multi-level governance and social engagement in the third phase of urban regeneration.

The integration of social inclusiveness into the high-end strategy is a manifestation of progress, but challenges still exist. Power asymmetry continuously affects the decision-making process and economic needs often limit the community's right to speak. Although the policy measures and participation framework have alleviated some of the social consequences of the early stage, the pressure on population migration has not subsided. Sustainable urban reconstruction requires economic recovery, paying attention to social dynamics, fairness and local autonomy.

The third phase of gentrification reflects the trend of incorporating governance and social inclusion into the practice of urban regeneration. Multi-stakeholder participation, participatory planning, and policy measures aimed at balancing economic and social goals. Economic growth and urban competitiveness are still important, but urban reconstruction strategies pay more and more attention to the needs of existing residents, social cohesion and community resilience. This stage lays the foundation for the follow-up stage. In the

follow-up stage, environmental sustainability, financialization and technological innovation will be further intertwined with urban renewal and strengthen the multidimensionality of urban transformation.

The Phase Four: Financialization and Green Transition

The global financial crisis in 2008 gave rise to a new chapter in urban regeneration, and the traditional governance framework was slowly replaced by the strategic role of cities in the global capital cycle. Instead of preventing it, urban regeneration intensifies this process, bringing complex financial and policy tools for sustainable development-oriented urban strategies (Peck, 2012). Urban regeneration is connected with enhancing urban resilience, integrating environmental restoration, social inclusion and economic revitalization. It has become an effective mechanism to meet governance challenges, attract investment and improve urban competitiveness, and financialization has become a feature of this stage.

Gentrification exhibits the characteristics of financialization. Housing and land are viewed as tradable financial assets and are included in the scope of consideration of global portfolios (Aalbers, 2012). In North America and Europe in the post-crisis era, expansionary monetary policies injected a large amount of money into the real estate market, promoting rising house prices, rising rents and urban restructuring. High-end residential projects in cities such as London and New York have become the target of global investors, leading to the emergence of the phenomenon of " empty gentrification " (Lees, 2012). The rise of the platform rental economy, represented by Airbnb, has accelerated the exclusion of space, transforming the original residential areas into financial instruments and commercializing urban space. The gentrification of financialization has changed the model of home ownership, exacerbated the homogenization of business, and affected the local social network.

In the global south, large-scale gentrification projects are often related to international sports events or global conferences, showing a different but equally profound gentrification logic. Cities such as Rio de Janeiro and Cape Town have experienced "event-driven gentrification", and the displacement of low-income residents is in the name of urban branding and attracting global investment (Gaffney, 2010). These cases show that in emerging economies, gentrification is inseparable from global popularity and economic competitiveness, and the complex social consequences are different from the market-driven gentrification in Western metropolises.

Fig.18 Participants of Airbnb gather before the New York City Hall hearing, 2015.

Fig.19 On-site photo of the "Anti-Airbnb" protest in New York, 2016

Grassroots resistance movements are increasing. For example, the movement against short-term rental platforms in New York and the movement against the financialization of housing in cities such as Barcelona and Berlin, residents are making efforts to protect the " right to the city ". While these initiatives rarely shake the capital-driven dominant structural logic, they still prompt targeted interventions by municipalities, including rent controls and restrictions on short-term rentals. The gentrification at this stage is characterized by the readjustment of the governance mechanism, and public-private cooperation (PPP) has become a core strategy. Local governments cooperate with private developers, multinational financial institutions and enterprises to re-plan urban space (Harvey, 2012). In China, urban regeneration in Shanghai and Shenzhen has been included in the national strategic development agenda, encouraging land intensification and space modernization, triggering controversy over large-scale demolition and relocation (He & Wu, 2009). This state-led and market-oriented "national gentrification" (Hsing, 2010) contrasts with the Western market-driven model, resulting in similar exclusionary results and social divisions.

This phase of the urban regeneration strategy often incorporates green and sustainable development goals. While integrating the green city strategy into gentrification, a new social differentiation model has also emerged. Environmental improvement has improved urban quality and enhanced urban resilience, but it has also had an impact on the affordability and inclusiveness of housing. Green-oriented reconstruction often leads to "ecological

gentrification", that is, environmental improvement pushes up the value of real estate and the cost of living, indirectly leading to the displacement of low-income residents, and reshapes the community composition (Checker, 2011). Urban regeneration needs to operate in a delicate balance: not only to promote environmental and infrastructure goals, but also to strive to mitigate adverse social impacts.

The global connectivity of gentrification has been significantly enhanced. Cities in Europe, North America and parts of Asia have become nodes of transnational investment networks, attracting capital inflows from institutional investors, sovereign wealth funds and private equity. The gentrification process is affected not only by local policies and economic conditions, but also by global financial trends, including interest rate fluctuations, investment preferences and cross-border portfolio strategies. The urban regeneration project has become a tool for local rejuvenation and global capital circulation, placing gentrification in a broader financial and environmental paradigm (Sassen, 2001).

At this phase of urban regeneration, it is evident that gentrification is an increasingly complex aspect of the social space process. Financial needs, sustainable development goals and social equity considerations are intertwined, forming a governance environment that requires fine coordination. Public-private cooperation, regulatory tools and strategic planning frameworks are crucial to the transformation of this multi-dimensional transformation of management. Gentrification is not a purely market-driven phenomenon; it is constrained by policy tools, financial innovation and environmental agendas, which together shape the trajectory of urban reconstruction. The fourth stage of urban regeneration is the dual influence of financialization and green urbanism. In the context of urban regeneration, gentrification embodies the integration of investment-driven reconstruction and sustainable development-oriented planning. Economic recovery and environmental improvement are core goals, and social inclusion is still a key consideration, and policy tools are needed to balance the affordability and accessibility of housing.

The Phase Five: Smart Governance and Spatial Justice

In the 2020s, urban gentrification has entered a complex and multi-dimensional stage, characterized by the integration of intelligent technology and attention to social justice. This stage copes with many pressures from around the world, including technological innovation, climate change, COVID-19 and other public health crises, and the rise of social movements, which have triggered discussions about "smart cities" and "inclusive cities" (Batty et al., 2012; Harvey, 2020). Unlike the previous stages that mainly focused on physical

reconstruction and green infrastructure, this stage prioritizes the integration of technology, environmental resilience and social equity, reflecting the improvement of multi-scale governance and urban quality.

Intelligent technology has become a key tool for urban management. The application of artificial intelligence, big data analysis and the Internet of Things has promoted the optimization of transportation, energy distribution and public service delivery. The smart city framework is increasingly integrated into urban renewal projects. Digital platforms, artificial intelligence-driven analog and digital twin technologies have enhanced planning capabilities. For example, Amsterdam's smart city plan uses real-time data for traffic management, energy monitoring and urban space utilization, thus improving operational efficiency (Albino et al., 2015). These initiatives have potential benefits and have also raised concerns about the marginalization of citizens' opinions in centralized control of urban data, privacy risks, and technology-led governance.

Social justice and spatial equity have been repositioned as one of the important positions on the urban gentrification agenda. In the context of the post-financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, issues such as housing accessibility, residents' inclusiveness and equitable urban development are increasingly prominent. The commercialization of housing as a financial asset has prompted people to try different governance models, including community land trusts and expanded public housing programs. Vienna and other cities have developed non-profit housing cooperatives to relieve market pressure, and Seoul has promoted space sharing and innovative public service models to cope with housing restrictions (Shin, 2020). These initiatives are allowing people to gradually realize the "right to housing" and the broader "right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1968), balancing market logic and social needs.

This period also reflects the trend of increasing integration of environmental and social goals. The climate-adapted urban regeneration strategy, represented by New York's Resilient Waterfront Plan and Copenhagen's Blue-Green Infrastructure projects, aim to enhance urban resilience while reducing carbon footprints. These measures are forward-looking, but may also inadvertently trigger "ecological gentrification", that is, environmental improvement increases the value of real estate, leading to the displacement of long-term residents (Checker, 2011).

The fifth phase of urban regeneration and gentrification reflects the complex interaction between innovation, social equity and market forces. Although it takes into account inclusiveness, technological progress and environmental sustainability as much as possible,

the structural dependence on capital accumulation and the logic of financialized cities still affects the final result, and the continuous tension between social justice goals and economic needs in contemporary urban transformation.

Concluding Remarks

Through the exploration of the phenomenon of "gentrification" in the five phases of urban regeneration, gentrification is placed under a broader urban regeneration framework, as a multifunctional analysis tool for interpreting community change, social restructuring and policy dynamics, and the interaction between material reconstruction, socio-economic processes and governance structures is discussed, and how these interactions jointly shape contemporary urban life are discussed.

In the early period, cultural pioneers and grassroots actions played a central role in urban areas underutilized by gentrification. These early processes are characterized by small-scale intervention, driven by lifestyle preferences, artistic practice, and the pursuit of affordability. Gentrification has emerged organically, bringing subtle and far-reaching impacts on the material and symbolic levels of urban space.

Then the gentrification changed to institutionalization and market-oriented. Public-private cooperation, zoning planning and incentive policies have played an important role in guiding investment flows to target areas and promoting physical reconstruction and social upgrading. By integrating gentrification into the strategic framework of urban regeneration, governance and market coordination play an important role in shaping contemporary urban dynamics.

The third period is characterized by collaborative governance and social inclusion, which represents an important evolution of the concept of gentrification. Policymakers, community organizations and local stakeholders increasingly emphasize participatory planning, social equity and community cohesion, and strike a balance between economic goals and inclusive social outcomes. The trajectory and impact of gentrification are influenced by local governance structures, social and cultural norms and civic participation. The interaction of the system.

The fourth period reflects the growing impact of financialization and sustainable development-oriented urban strategies. The stage of financialization and sustainable development-oriented complex interaction between economic, ecological and social goals shows the multidimensionality of gentrification, indicating that social spatial changes are increasingly affected by global economic pressure, ecological priorities and urban brand

strategies.

In the fifth period, the integration of smart city initiatives and spatial justice considerations reflects the continuous evolution of the gentrification process in the process of urban regeneration. Technological innovations such as artificial intelligence, data analysis and digital planning tools make the monitoring and management of urban space more accurate, while the new governance model strives to achieve a balance between technical efficiency and social inclusion.

Combining these five periods, we can have a holistic understanding of the continuous evolution and multidimensional process of gentrification. Gentrification is jointly influenced by economic, social, cultural and institutional factors, reflecting the interdependence between material reconstruction, governance frameworks and social dynamics. Gentrification can adapt to different times, geography and policy environments conceptually and analytically, and strengthen its practicality as a comparative framework for understanding urban changes. Under the framework of urban regeneration, there are many insights to understand the phenomenon of gentrification.

Gentrification shows the importance of incorporating social equity into the urban regeneration strategy to avoid the adverse impact of economic upgrading on vulnerable groups. The need to establish a governance mechanism that can balance the interests of all stakeholders, incorporate community views and promote inclusive planning. The role of financial and technological innovation in shaping the process of urban development reveals opportunities to improve efficiency and also points out the potential risks of aggravating inequality.

1.4 Rethinking Through Comparison: The Cases of Genoa and Tianjin

By analyzing Genoa and Tianjin from a comparative perspective, we can provide more insight into understanding how urban regeneration and gentrification are affected by the local environment in an interrelated global system. This comparison does not take a city as a normative model, but as an analytical tool to discuss how to affect the process and results of urban transformation by examining different political systems, institutional structures and socio-economic histories. By comparing European post-industrial port cities with fast-modern Chinese old port cities, it shows that the urban regeneration strategies of different cities respond to global pressures (including market integration, cultural commercialization and infrastructure modernization), and adjust according to the specific situation. Detailed measures are involved.

In the discussion on Genoa, urban decline can be addressed through local consultations and gradual interventions that combine heritage protection with cultural and economic revitalization. Tianjin, on the other hand, has demonstrated the ability of the state-led mechanism to coordinate large-scale urban restructuring, including urban reconstruction, housing and infrastructure construction. Through the analysis of these two cities, we can understand how the governance models, planning tools and policy concepts shape the social and spatial dimensions of urban regeneration. This perspective is not a simple binary opposition, such as " market-driven versus state-led " or " Western versus non-Western ", rather about the interrelated interactive process in the process of urban transformation.

Comparative research focuses on multiple dimensions: governance and institutional arrangements, spatial and infrastructure reorganization, and social and cultural impact. The governance framework shapes the decision-making process, stakeholder participation and resource allocation; spatial analysis shows reconstruction, land use changes and community transformation models; the social and cultural dimensions highlight the impact of urban regeneration on the community, including transportation convenience, population migration and public Participation and other issues. The integration of these dimensions enables comparative research to produce a global perspective that takes into account the local actual situation, and discusses how similar policy tools such as waterfront revitalization, heritage management, or creative economy projects can produce different results in different institutional contexts. These research methods that discuss relational and situational sensitivity bring a closer thought to the development of cities under the influence of local incidental factors and the flow of global knowledge, investment and policy paradigms.

Why Compare Italy and China?

In the context of globalization, comparative urban research has become one of the main means to understand the methodology and conceptual framework of urban transformation. By examining cities with different political, economic and cultural backgrounds, we discuss how global pressures such as neoliberal governance, market integration and urban commodification interact with local institutional arrangements and historical trajectories. The comparison between Italy and China compares two different urban change paths. Italian cities, represented by Genoa, have experienced the decline and population stagnation of the post-industrial era, and have adopted a revival strategy dominated by cultural heritage, tourism and creative economy. Chinese cities represented by Tianjin have experienced

rapid expansion under state-led development and market transformation, and large-scale central coordinated intervention has reshaped urban form, infrastructure and social space. Compare and discuss how the urban regeneration and gentrification of these two cities are influenced by the local governance structure and broader global forces.

Robinson (2011, 2016) and Roy (2016) advocate the adoption of a pluralistic and relational urbanization method, and regard cities as interrelated actors rather than models of strict hierarchy. From this perspective, the comparison between Italy and China discusses how similar global logics show different appearances in different political economies. Italy has demonstrated a decentralized and participatory urban regeneration model, which takes into account heritage protection and social cohesion, while China has shown a centralized, state-led model that prioritizes economic modernization and infrastructure integration. Both showcase the diversity of urban development trajectories, and also provide a comparative and complementary governance environment for the study of urban regeneration and gentrification. In Italy, local governments, private institutions and civil society organizations are interdependent, and public participation, although uneven, is integrated into the planning process. In China, municipal and state institutions implement centralized control, which allows large-scale projects to be implemented but restricts community participation. Despite these differences, both systems face similar challenges: how to strike a balance between economic modernization and social equity, how to balance economic growth while protecting cultural heritage, and how to deal with spatial inequality caused by market forces. Comparing and discussing these issues helps to analyze how institutional logic affects the results of urban regeneration and gentrification, the potential and limitations of participatory methods and state-led methods.

Spatial and symbolic factors provide analytical value for the comparison of the two cases. Genoa and Tianjin are both port cities, historically closely linked to global trade, population migration and cultural exchanges. The transformation of the waterfront in the post-industrial era of Genoa reflects the European concept of sustainable urban development and cultural revival. Tianjin's Haihe and Binhai New Area projects reflect the choice of strategic integration of China's modernization, industrial transformation and global competitiveness. Both cases illustrate the continuous tension between heritage protection, economic development and social inclusion.

From a theoretical point of view, it is helpful for critical reflection on urban transformation and revival. Concepts such as global urban transformations (Lees, Shin and López-Morales, 2016) emphasize the global cycle of urban regeneration practices, while also recognizing

the importance of local political, institutional and cultural backgrounds. In Genoa, urban regeneration is achieved through gradual initiatives formulated by local consultation, which emphasize cultural renewal; in Tianjin, urban regeneration is achieved through a comprehensive top-down strategy that achieves macroeconomic goals. The comparative analysis reveals the relevance of urban change, showing that similar policy tools such as heritage brand construction, creative industries, or waterfront transformation will produce different results due to different governance, institutional capabilities and community dynamism. It emphasizes interconnection, mutual learning and situational sensitivity rather than hierarchical generalization. As the analytical anchors of Italy and China, Genoa and Tianjin are used to explore how urban policies, governance structures and social space practices affect the results of urban regeneration and gentrification. Effective urban regeneration depends not only on economic revival but also on an inclusive and participatory framework that can address social inequality and enhance local resilience.

How to Compare Genoa and Tianjin?

Urban regeneration policies in different cities often produce comparative results that can cross national, institutional and cultural backgrounds. Their planning systems or governance traditions are not exactly the same. Take Genoa and Tianjin, two cities with different historical trajectories and policy frameworks, as examples, and analyze the observable results generated by urban regeneration initiatives and how these results gradually shape the model of gentrification. This analysis can be based on common mechanisms that link material, economic and social transformation with changes in population composition, land value and urban function.

One common point between the two cities is the material transformation of the environment. Urban regeneration often begins with physical interventions, such as the transformation of abandoned industrial areas, the re-planning of traffic corridors, the improvement of accessibility of waterfront areas or the restoration of historical buildings. Specific design intentions vary, but these interventions have the ability to reshape the characteristics of regional space. Enhanced connectivity, improved public space and updated building structures enhance the attractiveness of the region and strengthen the concept of urban upgrading. With the improvement of urban structure and the emergence of new real estate opportunities, investors, developers and new middle-income residents often believe that the region has a higher potential value. These dynamics have created conditions for the development of the gentrification process.

Closely related to these spatial changes is the trend of land and real estate value. Both cities have experienced rising house prices and commercial rents in the urban regeneration policy area. This rise reflects the recovery of market confidence, the upgrading of supporting facilities and the combination of new functions to enhance regional attractiveness. Market changes inevitably lead to the overall adjustment of the population structure. Urban regeneration often attracts new residents with different socio-economic backgrounds, interests and consumption habits. Population transformation is one of the important parts of the relationship between urban regeneration and gentrification. It not only changes the social structure but also strengthens the cultural and economic orientation of the region, making it more and more in line with the consumption and lifestyle patterns of the middle class. The transformation of public space and urban services also constitutes a common comparative basis. The improvement of public space is often accompanied by new rules and regulations, management methods and commercial activities, which will implicitly change their use and tilt them towards specific groups.

The development processes of the cities of Genoa and Tianjin are different, but they both show how similar reconstruction strategies can trigger similar social space adjustments. The common model of land value dynamics, demographic changes, economic restructuring and changes in public life provides a methodological basis for examining how urban regeneration leads to new forms of urban inequality or differentiation. By focusing on results and mechanisms, rather than cultural or institutional differences between countries, maintaining clarity in the analysis is directly related to understanding contemporary urban transformation, showing gentrification as a useful interpretive framework to help understand urban regeneration in the context of different cities.

Chapter 2 Case Studies: Genoa and Tianjin

Against the backdrop of global urbanization and post-industrial transformation, urban regeneration has become one of the key strategic tools for governments to cope with economic recession, industrial restructuring and population mobility. As one of the significant social effects of urban regeneration, gentrification shows that urban renewal can enhance the image of the city, attract investment and create new economic opportunities, while also leading to the gradual relocation of the original residents and the rupture of community networks, as well as the intensification of social space inequality. And the intensification of social space inequality. Understanding the specific results of urban regeneration policies and how these results are related to gentrification is an important entry point for analyzing urban change, spatial equity and social participation.

Genoa and Tianjin are located in Europe and East Asia respectively, with different historical backgrounds, governance systems and cultural traditions, but they have both experienced spatial and social transformation in different forms of urban regeneration, relying on the development of the port economy and traditional industrial development, and thus facing challenges such as industrial recession, population loss and the weakening of central urban functions. Under the pressure of globalization and modernization, urban regeneration has become the core strategy to reshape the image of cities, attract investment and enhance competitiveness. The urban regeneration process in Genoa emphasizes the revitalization of cultural heritage, the regeneration of historical blocks and the revival of waterfront areas, trying to enhance the attractiveness of the city through culturally oriented development. Tianjin's urban regeneration relies more on state-led planning and policies, carrying out large-scale spatial restructuring and industrial upgrading, and consolidating urban governance and development goals with modern narratives.

Through the analysis of Genoa and Tianjin, this chapter explores how urban regeneration and gentrification have evolved in different historical, institutional and cultural contexts. The analysis includes four main aspects: first, the historical evolution of the urban economy and spatial structure and the core driving force of urban regeneration; second, the impact of urban regeneration on the spatial pattern and social structure; third, the performance of gentrification in the process of renewal and its social spatial effect; fourth, the interaction between the response strategies and governance of communities and residents on gentrification. Through these dimensions, the multi-level mechanism of urban regeneration and its social impact are presented, providing a conceptual basis for subsequent comparative analysis, and providing theoretical support for understanding the

tension of economic growth and social equity in urban development.

2.1 Genoa: From Maritime Decline to Culture-Led Gentrification

The transformation of Genoa is often regarded as one of the cases of culturally dominated urban regeneration of European port cities. The city, which was once plagued by the decline of shipping, aging infrastructure and population outflow, has now reshaped its image through strategic investment in heritage, tourism and cultural facilities. Genoa's urban regeneration does not blindly pursue growth, but combines the renewal of urban appearance with cultural identity, the revitalization of historical blocks, and the reconstruction of the connection with the waterfront.

Urban regeneration in Genoa shows a similar hybrid model, with cultural initiatives, public-private cooperation and strategic planning jointly leading spatial and social transformation. Large-scale investment, adaptive reuse of historical buildings, and the reconstruction of waterfront areas have reshaped industrial and port areas, enhancing the attractiveness and economic vitality of cities. To understand the urban regeneration of Genoa, it needs to be examined in the context of the broader post-industrial era and European port cities, including deindustrialization, the transformation of maritime trade and the rise of culturally dominated economic strategies. These projects aim to improve the competitiveness of cities while improving the built environment and public facilities. In addition to material achievements, the experience of Genoa also provides valuable references for European cities to balance heritage protection, community participation and local socio-economic dynamics while coping with global urban development pressures.

To better analyze the specific results brought about by Genoa's urban regeneration policy and how these results are related to gentrification, this section is divided into four thematic parts:

2.1.1 It shows the historical and structural conditions of urban regeneration, including economic restructuring, population changes and the decline of maritime activities, as a prerequisite for becoming the core tool of later urban policies.

2.1.2 The main strategies and interventions related to culture-led urban regeneration, their goals, design principles and expected contributions to the long-term development of the city are discussed.

2.1.3 Discuss how the urban regeneration plan affects the social and spatial changes of historical blocks and the various ways in which residents participate in the continuous transformation

2.1.4 It explains the governance mechanism that supports the urban regeneration process, and explores the institutional framework, the public participation process, and the practical challenges faced in harmonizing the goal of rejuvenation with the interests of the community.

These four parts discuss urban regeneration as a complex process shaped by multiple participants, aspirations and constraints. Instead of a normative assessment of these processes, they are used as an integral part of the urban governance model, balancing innovation, heritage protection and social cohesion. Genoa's contemporary development trajectory shows how culture, space and governance interact in urban transformation. Culture-driven measures are not only regarded as a mechanism to enhance the attractiveness of the city, but also as a catalyst for reshaping the cityscape after industrial restructuring. These changes have also introduced new social spatial dynamics, triggering thoughts on how gentrification, community adaptation and heritage-oriented planning are intertwined in an urban environment with a deep historical background.

2.1.1 Context and Background: Economic Decline and Culture-Led Strategies

Genoa has historically been an important hub of Mediterranean trade, and its architectural environment and urban identity have been deeply influenced by it. From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, the influence of Genoa as a maritime and financial center continued to expand, and prosperity was closely related to the huge trade network. In the late 20th century, deindustrialization, globalization and technological change disrupted Genoa's marine economy, and the spatial and social structures were under great pressure.

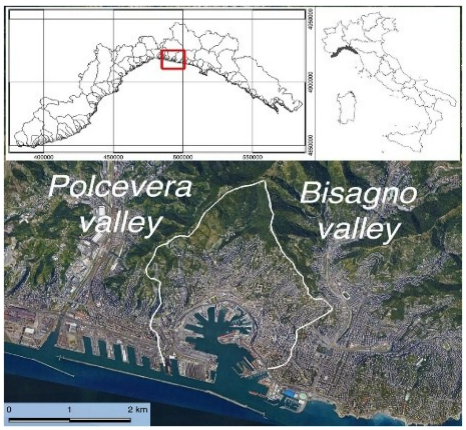

Fig.20 Map of Genoa's location in 2020 (Francesco,2023)

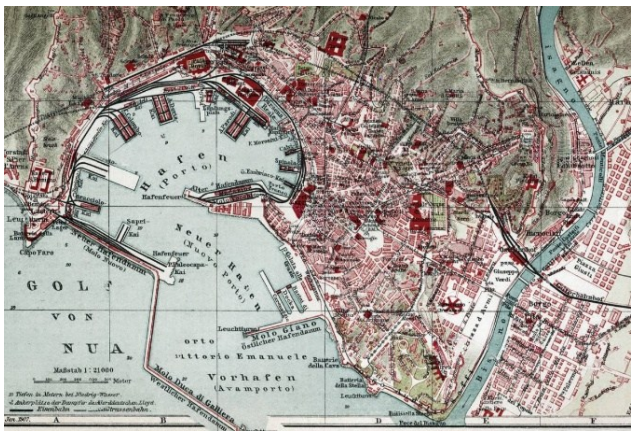

Fig.21 Historical city map of Genoa and harbor around 1900 (Brockhaus Lexicon, 1908)

From the 1970s to the 1990s, the activity of the Genoa port continued to decline. The city was once one of the major industrial and shipping centers in Italy, but shipbuilding, logistics and related heavy industries have been shrinking. With the advancement of containerization and global trade restructuring, many port functions have been transferred to other locations, leaving behind large areas of underutilized waterfront land (Gastaldi, 2013). Abandoned docks and warehouses have become witnesses to the economic recession, and the surrounding neighborhoods once inhabited by dock workers and craftsmen have experienced unemployment, population decline and increasing marginalization. The old port (Porto Antico), which used to be a symbol of the vitality of Genoa, is increasingly synonymous with stagnation and decay.

This decline is not only a sign of global structural transformation but also an embodiment of structural transformation at the national level. From a broader perspective, the situation in Genoa reflects the pattern of industrial shrinkage faced by many European port cities, with the imbalance of the Italian regional economy and the fragmentation of urban governance exacerbating the predicament. The slow response of policies and the rigidity of the system have jointly created the effect of "urban hollowing out": the port area is declining day by day, and the surrounding communities are troubled by economic and spatial exclusion. Unlike cities such as Rotterdam which achieved structural transformation through early port modernization, the transformation process in Genoa is slower.

By the 1980s, local authorities generally believed that the restoration of traditional industries could not solve the crisis. Genoa began to explore a cultural and image-oriented reconstruction model. As a new development path, similar to other European port cities seeking post-industrial revival, the city government of Genoa takes the symbol of capital and creative economy as the core of the revival work (Moretti, 2020). The adaptive reuse of historical buildings, the optimization and upgrading of public space, and the activity-driven revival of urban policies have achieved obvious results in improving the external image and internal livability of the city. Culture has become one of the ways to reposition Genoa in the global urban system.

The International Expo held in 1992 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Columbus's crossing of the Atlantic Ocean, under the guidance of architect Lorenzo Piano and his team, laid the conceptual framework for the large-scale transformation of the waterfront. New public spaces, museums and leisure facilities have changed the appearance of the old port area (Porto Antico) and restored the symbolic connection with the ocean (Grassetti, 2023). In the following years, this cultural shift was further

strengthened. Public-private cooperation has become a core financing mechanism, and there is a broader shift in the direction of corporate governance in urban policies (Fusero, 2005). These developments have formed a "cultural and economic governance" model, but they are also driven by market rationality.

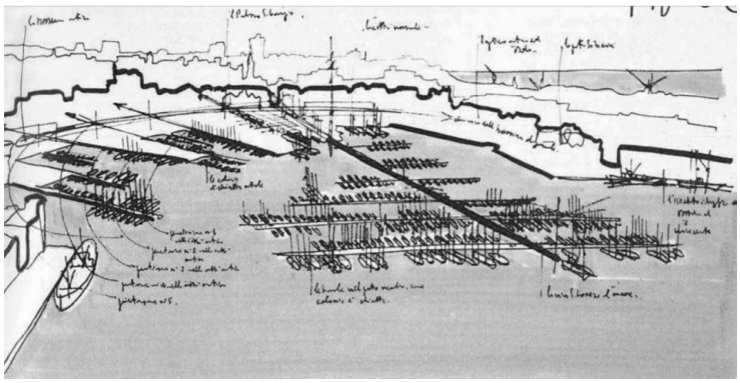

Fig.22 Renzo Piano's sketch of Via S. Lorenzo al mare (Renzo Piano © Renzo Piano)

Fig.23 Porto Antico of Genoa in 2023

The post-industrial transformation of the city is understood as a process of intertwining cultural appeal with market-driven urban transformation. The revival of Genoa shows that efforts to improve competitiveness and reshape global influence will not only reshape the material environment, but also change the social composition of the community. Policy discussions emphasize heritage, culture and urban regeneration, and the resulting changes may also lead to some population migration, rising housing demand and the transfer of commercial activities.

2.1.2 Urban Regeneration and Consequences: Physical Changes and Socio-Economic Shifts

Since the end of the 20th century, Genoa's urban regeneration program has reshaped the natural landscape and socio-economic structure of the city. It integrates the restoration

of historical buildings, the improvement of infrastructure and the upgrading of public spaces. These initiatives attracted tourism and private investment and contributed to the city's economy (Lees et al., 2010). The improvement of public space has improved the urban environment, and the reconstruction of ports has affected the population composition and community networks. The renovated area has attracted middle-class families, creative professionals and external investors, pushing up the value of real estate and giving rise to new lifestyles and consumption habits (Vicari Haddock, 2010). These changes reflect the dynamics of population, the evolution of social interaction, and the long-standing neighborhood network is adapting to the new urban pattern. This gradual process is in line with the concept of "gentle gentrification" proposed by Atkinson (2004), which is characterized by economic pressure rather than obvious population migration.

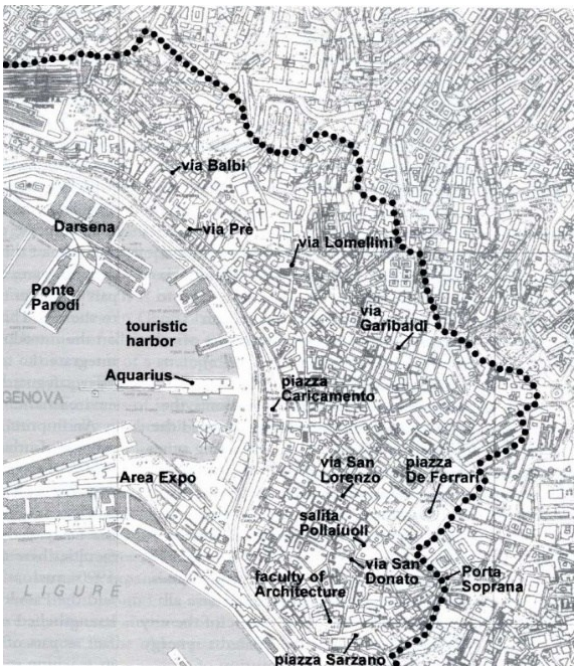

Fig.24 The historic port basin connected to an urban system with a medieval matrix (Francesco,2013)

Symbolism and cultural economy played a role in Genoa's recovery strategy. Large-scale cultural activities, urban brand promotion programs and high-end commercial development have repositioned Genoa as the "Cultural Capital" (Zukin, 1995). It has improved the popularity of Genoa, created an urban space conducive to the development of tourism and the integration of new residents, and met the needs of local communities (Degen, 2004). The development of cultural and creative industries has created opportunities for public participation and citizen participation, and has enhanced the social and cultural vitality of the city. Urban regeneration promotes economic growth by increasing tourism income, expanding employment in the service industry and improving municipal

finances. These developments have enhanced the economic strength and competitiveness of Genoa, and also enhanced the overall urban experience of residents and tourists (Harvey, 2008).

Different stages of urban regeneration have also triggered social conflicts. The city has experienced unprecedented demonstrations. Protesters clashed with law enforcement officers, and even caused casualties, creating a collective trauma that affected residents and national consciousness (Bosi, 2013). Public spaces have temporarily become highly controlled areas, restricting the passage of residents and disrupting their daily lives. These measures are packaged as necessary actions to maintain security, demonstrating the contradiction between the vision of global urban development and the rights and autonomy of residents.

Fig.25 Development of a new water channel that would create a sort of blue buffer between the urban and port realities, giving a more clear separation between the different industrial, sport and urban areas.

(Renzo Piano Building Workshop,2015)

In addition to direct interference, relevant measures have also accelerated the process of having a broader social and spatial impact. For example, investment in public space, upgrading infrastructure and the improvement of the street landscapes have pushed up the value of real estate in the affected areas and indirectly exacerbated gentrification. The middle class and professionals are increasingly attracted to redeveloped areas, while low-income residents and long-term communities face greater economic and social pressures.

The experience of Genoa shows the dual characteristics of culture-oriented and market-oriented urban revival. Material renewal and economic revival may coexist with social vulnerability and exclusion. Effective urban planning requires not only investing in

infrastructure, but also paying attention to community needs, social inclusion, and the impact of large-scale events on people. In Genoa, this means integrating participatory governance, affordable housing policies and social security mechanisms into cultural and economic development strategies to ensure that urban transformation does not come at the expense of residents' daily lives, memories and well-being.

Effective urban governance continues to balance economic competitiveness and social inclusiveness, and maintains a diverse and participatory community. Urban space is not only a carrier of economic value, but also a carrier of social relations and collective memory. Policies that support community participation, rent control and affordable housing help to ensure that the benefits of urban regeneration benefit and promote sustainable development.

2.1.3 Pathways to Gentrification: Cultural Branding and Socio-Spatial Transformation

Genoa's urban regeneration experience shows the role of culture-driven strategies at multiple levels, such as vision, economy and society, while generating subtle exclusion mechanisms and social space transformation. As the renewal plan reshapes the port and its surrounding neighborhoods, culture-led reconstruction has led to gradual gentrification, which is the result of the interaction of culture, symbolism and market forces. These processes have improved the attractiveness and competitiveness of cities, but they have also introduced new dynamics of inequality and marginalization (Beriatos & Gospodini, 2004).

Cultural Economy: Selective Consumption and Class Dynamics

Since the late 20th century, Genoa has attracted investment and tourism to cope with economic stagnation by developing cultural infrastructure, festivals and creative centers. However, the cultural economy itself tends to certain social groups, such as the rise of galleries, cafes and boutiques, catering to the tastes of the middle and upper classes, indirectly promoting the settlement of this part of the population and marginalizing low-income residents. The revival of ports and historic neighborhoods has also stimulated tourism, short-term leasing and high-end commercial development, linking cultural projects with real estate capitalization. Population migration does not always occur directly, and rising house prices and rents put economic pressure on long-term residents, gradually reshaping the demographic structure and social networks of the community (Vicari Haddock, 2010). This kind of "soft migration" quietly changes the community in the absence of public

eviction under market-driven cultural initiatives.

Symbolic Economy: Urban Identity and Branding

In addition to the material and functional upgrading, urban regeneration in Genoa relies to a large extent on symbolic expressions. Cultural activities, exhibitions and iconic buildings together build a unique resource that attracts tourists and external investors. This symbolic economy has reshaped the identity of the city and redefined who can truly participate in urban life. Although public spaces are nominally open, they increasingly cater to the needs of tourists and middle-class consumers, marginalizing long-term residents and eroding traditional community culture (Lanzani & Zanfi, 2017). The interdependence of symbolic logic and economic logic has exacerbated the pressure on real estate, linking the aesthetic improvement with the rise in house prices.

Social Exclusion: Spatial Restructuring and Everyday Marginalization

The social consequences of gentrification are not limited to the housing market but also extend to a broader spatial restructuring. Economic pressures have forced low-income residents and immigrant groups to move to marginal areas, while new commercial and cultural facilities are more favorable for people with higher purchasing power. Even if the aborigines remain, their daily habits and sense of belonging will be disrupted, leading to a feeling of being out of place in the newly renovated urban space (Vicari Haddock, 2010). This "non-material exclusion" highlights how subtle changes in the urban environment make space fit with mainstream consumption norms, thus limiting the effective participation of Aboriginal communities.

Cultural and Market Interactions: Capital-Driven Gentrification

The case of Genoa shows the interaction between culturally dominant strategies and market demand. Cultural initiatives have enhanced the vitality and global popularity of the city, and are closely intertwined with the process of capital accumulation. The reconstruction of the port area has promoted the prosperity of specific areas, benefiting investors, tourists and newly relocated middle-class residents. Similar patterns have been observed in other European port cities such as Barcelona, Paris and Hamburg. The symbolism and cultural economy of these cities and urban regeneration have jointly promoted broader urban transformation (Novy & Colomb, 2013).

Gentrification in Genoa is the result of the joint role of cultural production, symbolic branding and real estate capitalization. Even if there is no direct forced relocation, urban regeneration will bring economic and social pressure, change the composition of the community, affect the traditional network, and then affect the daily autonomy of residents.

The case highlights the challenge of balancing economic and cultural goals with social equity, and the importance of integrating housing protection, participatory governance and redistribution measures into culture-led urban strategies. A people-oriented approach is still crucial. It can ensure that urban regeneration promotes inclusiveness and protects the daily life experience of long-term communities.

2.1.4 Community Resistance: Grassroots Advocacy and Limitations

In the process of culture-led urban regeneration in Genoa, local governments and planners strive to improve the attractiveness and competitiveness of cities to promote tourism development and attract investment. While improving the image of the city, the urban regeneration strategy also has a practical impact on the community structure and the daily life of residents, triggering discussions and responses at the social level. With the systematic transformation of the space and function of ports and historical blocks, the socio-economic composition and cultural characteristics of the community have gradually changed, and residents and local organizations have also shown adaptability and participation in the ever-changing governance environment.

The culture-driven revival not only improves the material and symbolic image of the city, but also brings some unexpected consequences, such as rising house prices, land value reassessment and increasing the number of tourists, thus forming a tourist-oriented urban pattern, which has a certain impact on the lives of long-term residents (Clementi, 2013). The community actions in Genoa are reflected in daily micro-practice and organized advocacy activities. Scholars such as Briata (2019) call these actions "anti-rejuvenation practices", with concerns including housing rights, public space protection and participatory governance. Residents strive to influence or participate in the discussion of large-scale development projects through street activities, media publicity, legal proceedings and transnational networks.

Daily micro-resistance

Long-term residents have resisted the pressure of space to a certain extent by maintaining the traditional lifestyle, reasonably reflecting the needs of relocation, and negotiating and managing short-term leases. Community cohesion is strengthened through neighborhood interaction, markets and cultural activities, maintaining social networks and local identity. Although such moderate and adaptive actions are not confrontational, they effectively support the resilience of communities in the process of urban transformation.

Advocating and institutional participation

Some groups actively cooperate with local governance agencies to ensure that residents have a say in planning. They strive for affordable housing, restrict short-term rentals, and prioritize public spaces for community needs. In Porto Antico, some alliances have successfully won the commitment to build inclusive cultural facilities instead of developing commercial projects (Briata & Tosi, 2019). There are also differences within the community: new middle-class residents usually support urban transformation as part of urban improvement, while low-income long-term residents oppose transformation, and there are tensions within the community (Dines, 2012).

In the neighborhoods that have undergone significant urban transformation, residents establish cooperation with students, cultural practitioners and activists to organize public activities. These actions include holding art installations, festivals and creative interventions in neighborhoods such as Vico Mele and Via Prè, giving urban spaces more meaning to community participation (Tulumello, 2016). These measures show that culture is not only a means of urban regeneration but also a channel for communities to fight for urban rights.

Community participation has a positive impact on urban regeneration practices, such as promoting more public space construction and social housing security, but its long-term effect is still subject to structural resource constraints and growth-oriented policies. Action has raised public awareness and sparked discussions about urban rights, but grass-roots organizations often lack the ability to continuously confront large economic and administrative actors (Lees et al., 2016). Genoa's community appeal is consistent with the concept of "urban rights" proposed by Lefivre, which covers the participation and control of housing, cultural symbols and social identity.

Although urban regeneration strategies usually prioritize global image shaping over residents' needs, residents' participation plays an important role at the micro-political level. It has not only promoted urban regeneration but also stimulated the participation of residents. Persistent structural inequality and limited participation mechanisms demonstrate the importance of inclusive planning, community participation and spatial justice policies. Effective urban regeneration should strike a balance between the use of cultural capital and social equity, and ensure that the results of revitalization benefit a wider population rather than exacerbating social and spatial exclusion.

2.2 Tianjin: State-Led Regeneration and Social Migration

Tianjin provides a case showing how urban regeneration is carried out under the rapid economic transformation and highly coordinated governance structure, and how the state-led urban regeneration is in harmony with spatial reconstruction, social mobility and emerging gen The form of gentrification interacts in China's political and economic system. As one of the important port cities in the history of northern China, Tianjin has long played the role of a bridge connecting the domestic development strategy and the global economic trend. It has developed from a former trade center to an important industrial base. In recent years, it has transformed into a city dominated by the service industry, reflecting the broader transformation of national development priorities and Tianjin's own efforts to reshape its urban identity.

China's urban transformation is neither purely market-driven nor completely administratively dominated. It is a hybrid model in which the state coordinates land, capital and infrastructure to guide spatial change. The development trajectory of Tianjin's gentrification fits this framework. Large-scale investment, institutional reform and strategic planning have promoted the upgrading of industrial areas, waterfront areas and historical blocks. These measures aim to improve the competitiveness of cities while improving their built-up environment. To understand the urban regeneration of Tianjin, it must be examined in the context of the national development agenda, including the reorganization of old industrial bases, the rise of the economy around the Bohai Sea, and the integration of Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei. These policies encourage cities like Tianjin to modernize their industrial structure, diversify their economic functions and expand their international influence. From infrastructure renewal to the transformation of historical blocks, the urban regeneration project has become an important tool to achieve these goals. These projects also provide material for broader discussion on how Chinese cities can adapt to the development trend of global cities while taking into account their own institutional and social environment.

In order to better analyze the specific results brought by Tianjin's urban regeneration policy and how these results are related to gentrification, this section is divided into four thematic parts:

2.2.1 Show the historical and structural conditions of urban regeneration in Tianjin, including industrial transformation, economic restructuring and population migration

2.2.2 The main strategies and intervention measures for the reconstruction of Tianjin are discussed. Policy-oriented, it expounds the planning principles, governance structure

and expected contributions to the long-term development of the city.

2.2.3 Discuss the urban regeneration project to shape the social and spatial dynamics of the city. The interaction between new urban functions, demographic changes and local community adaptation, and a variety of ways in which residents participate and cope with top-down reconstruction.

2.2.4 Outline the governance mechanism to support Tianjin's urban regeneration. The practical challenges of institutional frameworks, procedural channels for residents' participation, and how to harmonize renewal goals with community interests as components of a broader urban governance model

From a spatial perspective, urban regeneration in Tianjin involves the large-scale reconfiguration of land use, especially in the old city that used to be dominated by industrial activities. With the decline of the manufacturing industry and the expansion of the service industry, Tianjin has launched a number of plans to reshape its urban texture. In addition to material improvement, Tianjin's urban regeneration also includes various forms of state-led "gentrification". This concept originates from Western literature, but is interpreted in the Chinese context. Unlike the market-driven "gentrification" characterized by speculative investment and spontaneous community transformation, Tianjin's experience focuses more on coordinated reconstruction plans. These processes are managed through institutional channels rather than pure market pressure, thus forming a unique urban change model.

Social transformation is an important part of Tianjin's urban regeneration. Social transformation plays an important part in Tianjin's urban regeneration. Cultural strategy is not only derived from market demand, but also integrated into the country's planning. In the planning. The rapid transformation of cities has also triggered thinking about social inclusiveness and spatial equity. Tianjin's development model highlights how large-scale planning, administrative coordination and economic goals are intertwined with daily urban life experiences.

2.2.1 Context and Background: Industrial Transition and Policy Framework

As an important port and industrial center in northern China, Tianjin has long occupied an important position in the process of national modernization and industrialization. Historically, Tianjin was known as the "Northern Gateway" in the late Qing Dynasty, and later became the core base of the manufacturing industry in the 20th century. Its development benefited from a strong industrial foundation and maritime trade. Tianjin's spatial and economic evolution was linked to the transformation of national policies and

global economic trends. In the late 20th century, in the process of reform and opening up policies and transformation to a market economy, Tianjin faced serious challenges of economic adjustment, industrial upgrading and spatial transformation. The traditional manufacturing industry has gradually lost its competitiveness, and the industrial areas and old communities in the city center have shown obvious signs of decline. As Wu (2015) pointed out, during this period, many industrial cities in China experienced deindustrialization, characterized by urban decay, aging infrastructure and weakening of community functions.

During this transition period, China joined the World Trade Organization and integrated into the global market, prompting the country to redefine Tianjin's position in the national urban system. Strategies such as the Bohai Sea Economic Circle Initiative and the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Integration Plan have repositioned Tianjin as a regional economic pole and an international gateway, transforming from a production-oriented industrial city to a service-oriented and financial center. This strategic positioning has laid the foundation for the comprehensive revival of Tianjin, using spatial reconstruction to stimulate land value, promote capital accumulation and realize the modernization of urban governance (Ye & Wu, 2006).

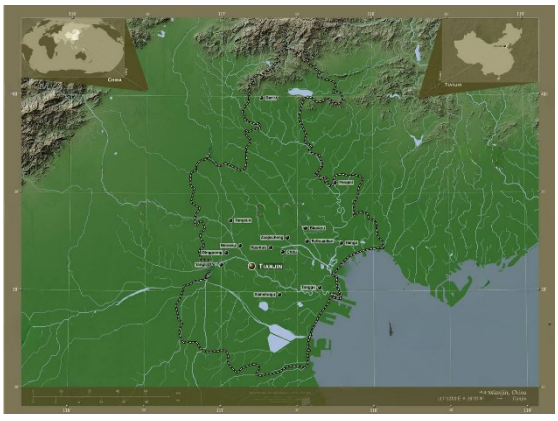

Fig.26 Topography and Geographical Location of Tianjin

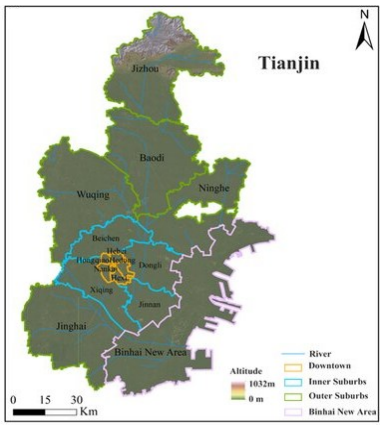

Fig.27 altitude and administrative districts of Tianjin areas. (2020)

The cityscape of Tianjin is traditionally composed of industrial areas, old towns and historical blocks. In order to meet the needs of globalization and administrative modernization, the municipal government has implemented a centralized planning model. Urban regeneration projects typically follow the model of "demolition, land acquisition and reconstruction" and are implemented by government agencies and state-owned enterprises (He & Wu, 2009). This top-down framework enables the rapid upgrading of infrastructure

and urban environment, especially in areas such as Binhai New Area, where industrial restructuring, infrastructure expansion and large-scale capital investment have come together to create a demonstration area for urban regeneration.

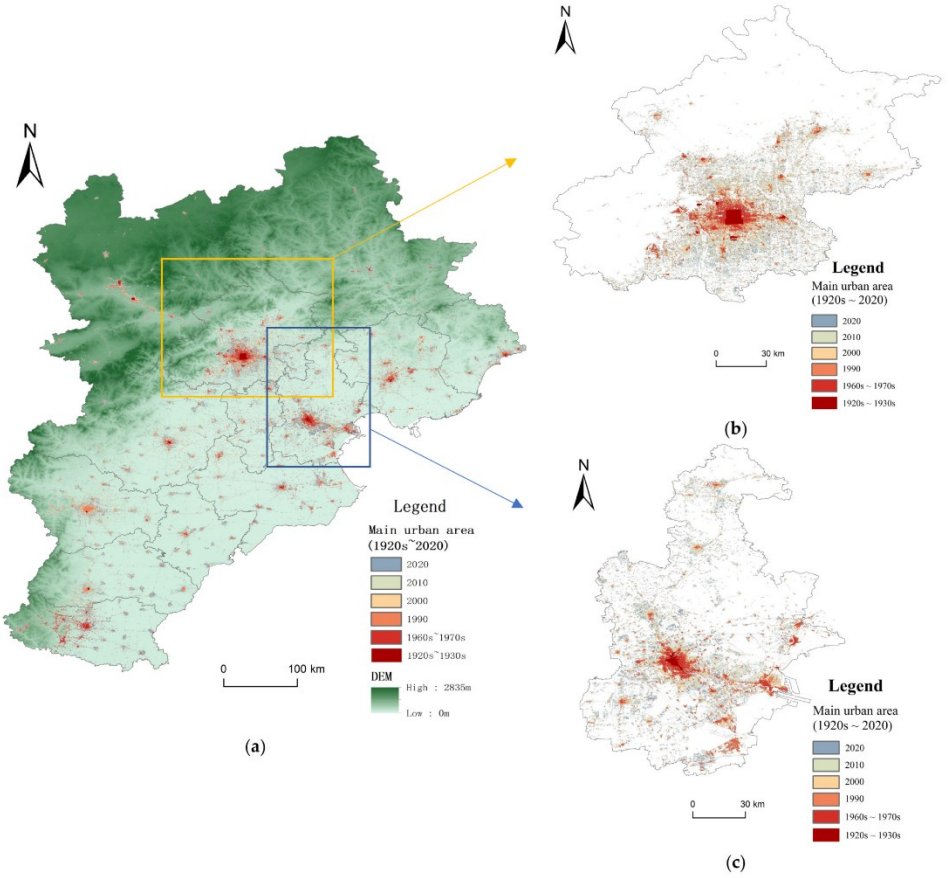

Fig.28 The reconstruction result of urban built-up area: yellow for Beijing and blue for Tianjin（Li&Sun, 2021）

The social consequences of these policies are apparent. The demolition of the downtown block has displaced tens of thousands of residents and destroyed the original community and social networks. Between 2005 and 2015, more than 300,000 people moved from the central city to the suburbs (Li & Song, 2017). Commercial, financial and high-end residential development projects have attracted new social groups, including middle-class families, private investors and multinational companies, which have accelerated the restructuring of society and exacerbated spatial and class differentiation. These processes reflect the top-down transformation of urban society, and the new population and economic subjects have reshaped the social structure and daily life.

From a theoretical perspective, urban regeneration in Tianjin embodies a concept of treating urban space as economic assets and governance tools. The municipal government

uses land commercialization, aesthetic upgrading and spatial reconstruction to re-produce urban value. Public participation is generally limited, and most decisions are made through administrative procedures. The original industrial and residential areas are often transformed into "creative industry clusters" or cultural business areas, giving priority to consumption and urban image, rather than long-standing local community life. This transformation has sparked ongoing discussions about spatial equity and inclusiveness, especially in the context of rising house prices and remodeling pressures affecting long-term residents. This process echoes Zukin's (1995) concept of symbolic economy, although the process in Tianjin is mainly state-driven rather than market-dominated.

Tianjin's urban regeneration reflects the double pressure of globalization and domestic urban competition. Compared with China's first-tier cities, Tianjin's policy strategy pays special attention to attracting foreign investment and promoting open-ended development. This model brings short-term economic benefits and employment opportunities, but it also brings challenges in endocrine development and spatial cohesion. The development trajectory of Tianjin shows that urban policies respond to the pressure of economic transformation, pursue international recognition, reshape urban functions and promote residential continuity (Wu, 2020).

Tianjin's state-led urban renewal has reshaped the urban environment, attracted new social groups, and improved the value of land and housing. This process reflects the gradual model of urban transformation, in which spatial restructuring, population change and market-driven development interact, eventually leading to social and economic differentiation. These developments are similar to the model of European port cities such as Genoa, highlighting the interaction between governance, economic goals and community impact in urban regeneration.

2.2.2 Urban Regeneration and Consequences: Spatial Restructuring and Displacement

As Tianjin's large-scale Urban regeneration plan enters the implementation stage, the spatial organization and social structure of the city have changed. These changes reflect the complex game between government power, capital investment dynamics and local administrative mechanisms, eventually forming a highly centralized spatial production model (He & Wu, 2009). Large-scale demolition and reconstruction projects have changed most of the city's texture, giving rise to new commercial centers and modern residential areas. This planning practice has created a clear gap between central urban areas and

marginalized suburbs. Urban regeneration is regarded as an important step in repositioning Tianjin from an industrial manufacturing base to a competitive and service-oriented global metropolis, focusing on improving the image and competitiveness of the city (Chen & Sun, 2020).

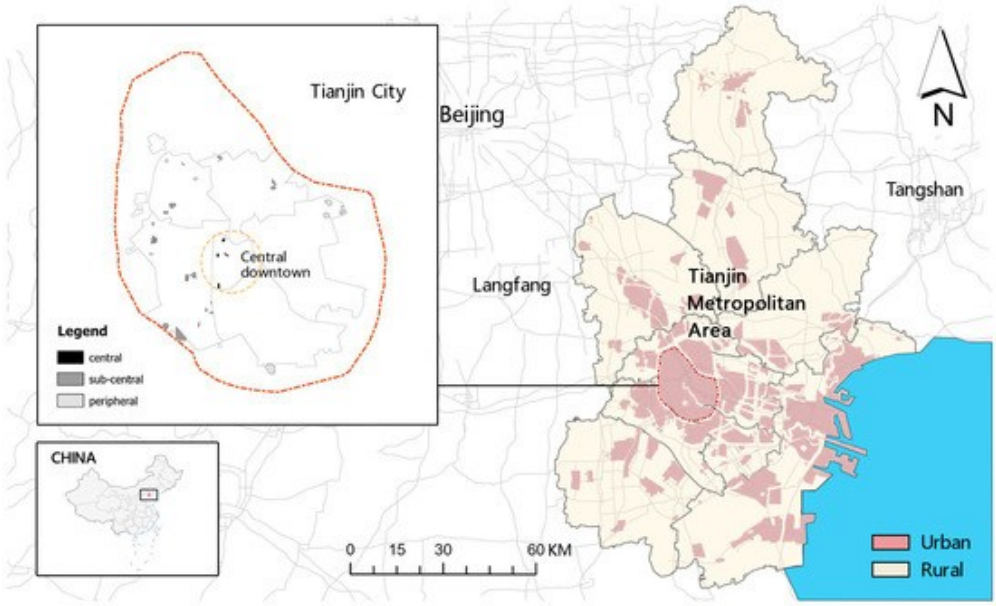

Fig.29 Tianjin's location and the urban communities surveyed within the city area.

（Wang&Du, 2024）

The process of spatial reconstruction brings social and economic impacts. Large-scale relocation has disrupted existing communities and reshaped urban social relations. A large number of low-income families are settled in suburban residential areas, leading to "secondary marginalization" (Liu et al., 2019). The burden of weakening social support networks, extending commuting time and increasing the cost of living (Qian & Zhu, 2020). Long-standing neighborhood relationships and daily cultural customs have been destroyed. Although the new settlements provide better housing conditions, they lack the cohesion and common identity of the old community. The core areas of the city are preoccupied by wealthy residents, corporate elites and the consumption-driven middle class, resulting in "selective urban inclusion ". Traditional small-scale enterprises and community markets are gradually replaced by chain stores, high-end shopping malls and brand consumption spaces, and the continuous stratification of urban economic activities (Zhang & He, 2021).

Under the government-led planning framework, urban regeneration strives to strike a balance between efficiency and public interest. Administrative coordination and resource management enable cities to quickly improve infrastructure and optimize the urban

environment. While improving urban functions, we also pay attention to the daily life experience of residents and the continuity of the community. State-led urban regeneration effectively promotes economic growth, enhances the image of the city and optimizes public services. Under the guidance of the government, gentrification is not only a material-level renovation, but also a reconfiguration of the relationship between power and inequality.

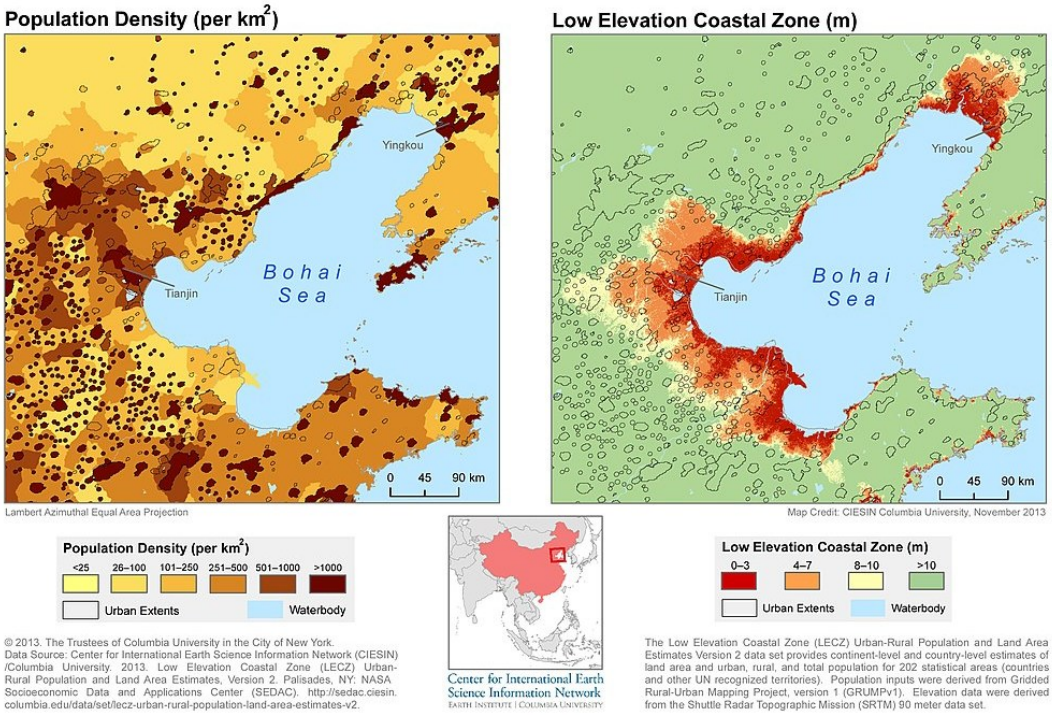

Fig.30 Population density and low elevation coastal zones in the Tianjin area. Tianjin is particularly vulnerable to sea level rise（2013）

State institutions coordinate investment and land use changes to achieve the rapid implementation of policies, but the daily needs and rights of residents are often ignored. Tianjin's urban regeneration not only reflects the advantages of government-led urbanization, but also reveals its contradictions: while improving economic competitiveness and modernizing the urban environment, it also exacerbates spatial inequality and social exclusion. How to strike a balance between efficiency and equity, growth and inclusion, and how to promote meaningful community participation, cultural protection and social justice remains the core challenges facing urban transformation.

Under this governance framework, cities are mainly regarded as economic engines, while social diversity and cultural inheritance are overlooked. The hybrid model of combining administrative control and technocratic planning is very effective in resource

mobilization, but has limitations in promoting inclusiveness. The new urban landscape conceals the persistent inequality. The soaring land prices and house prices in the central urban area have effectively priced out low-income groups, forming a de facto screening mechanism in the urban hierarchy. Tianjin's urban regeneration exhibits the state-led gentrification characteristics.

2.2.3 Pathways to Gentrification: Top-Down Planning and Class Geography

Tianjin's urban regeneration focuses on the physical upgrading of the built environment, which also involves the systematic improvement of urban functions, social structure and residents' lifestyle. As an important part of China's modernization strategy, Tianjin's experience presents a different model from the transformation of Western market-led cities. Compared with the market-based gentrification process in London, New York, etc., Tianjin's urban regeneration relies more on institutional planning and symbolic reconstruction to coordinate economic development, urban governance and social order (He & Wu, 2009; Hsing, 2010). The combination of spatial adjustment, cultural revitalization and social inclusive measures has formed an urban transformation model under the leadership of the state and adapted to China's political and economic system.

One of the features of Tianjin urban regeneration is spatial optimization through policies and planning. The government has played a leading role in the transformation of the old city, land acquisition and infrastructure upgrading, promoting the improvement of the city's image, public facilities and residents' living environment. This process is not driven by private speculation, but its results are similar to the Western gentrification model, class differentiation and exclusion of indigenous communities. Large-scale flagship projects such as Binhai New Area and Italian Style City emphasize economic competitiveness and real estate value, ignoring social balance (Wu, 2015). Unlike the "rent gap theory", Tianjin's gentrification is largely driven by policies. Value addition is artificially realized through administrative planning rather than market cycles, ensuring capital accumulation and political consolidation (He, Wu, 2007).

The mechanism also uses the production of cultural symbols as a tool for spatial upgrading. In order to enhance global attractiveness and cultural reputation, government-led measures integrate cultural brands into urban renewal strategies. Urban space is redefined as a place of consumption, while retaining the elements of local heritage. While improving urban function and attracting investment, these projects also need to pay attention to the adaptation and social continuity of long-term residents.

At the social level, urban regeneration in Tianjin emphasizes diversity and inclusiveness. The core areas of the city attract business professionals and middle-class residents, but the government is trying to alleviate the impact of life from the transformation through the improvement of public services, housing security and community facilities. Residents' participation in planning and community activities can express opinions and needs in policy implementation and improve the human nature of urban governance (Wu & Zhang, 2020; Shin, 2016). The rapidly advancing project also emphasizes, in addition to efficiency and speed, protecting the rights and interests of residents and the continuity of the community, and minimizing the interference of relocation to life and social networks (Aalbers, 2016).

Another feature of the Tianjin model is the fast implementation speed. The cooperation between state institutions and large developers makes rapid progress from top to bottom possible, but the time left for social adaptation is very limited. Urban regeneration and the process of financialization are intertwined to transform real estate and urban brand building into tools for capital accumulation. As real estate is increasingly becoming an investment commodity rather than a housing necessity, housing inequality has increased (Aalbers, 2016). In the transformation area, commercial interests often occupy a dominant position, social welfare issues are ignored, and the channels for vulnerable groups to participate are also very limited.

Tianjin's urban regeneration presents a comprehensive development model led by the state, organically combining administrative planning, cultural construction and economic development. It has enhanced the international image and economic competitiveness of the city, and also provided opportunities to improve the living conditions of residents, optimize public space and protect cultural heritage. In the future urban renewal, continuous attention to public participation, social equity and cultural inheritance will help achieve a balance between economic development and social inclusion. Tianjin's urban regeneration reflects stronger humanistic care in the modernization process.

2.2.4 Community Resistance: Localized Contestation under Authoritarian Governance

In the process of urban regeneration in Tianjin, the participation of residents and community groups shows a diversified and adaptable form of social response. This response not only reflects residents' concern for the environmental, social and economic changes brought about by urban regeneration, but also shows their ability to protect their rights and interests in urban governance and community life. Compared with concentrated

demonstrations or large-scale mobilizations in London, New York and other cities, Tianjin residents' actions pay more attention to daily life practice and in-system consultation, while finding a balance between conforming to urban development and expressing their own needs (He & Wu, 2009). This form of participation reflects the resilience and creativity of the local society in the context of rapid urban regeneration, and also reflects the importance residents attach to community continuity and cultural identity.

Tianjin residents generally tend to express their opinions through low-intensity consultation channels, such as administrative complaints, official petitions and legal procedures. Although these channels may not completely change the final results of the urban regeneration plan, they help to improve relocation compensation, adjust residential arrangements, and encourage planners to consider the actual needs of the community in the implementation process (Shin, 2016; Hsin G, 2010). Residents use informal methods, such as sharing information and expanding social influence through local media, online community platforms or temporary alliances. These actions reflect the ability of residents to use pragmatic strategies to protect their rights and interests under a highly centralized urban governance framework (Wei & LeGates, 2013).

The emotional and cultural dimensions of community response cannot be ignored either. For many residents, relocation not only involves changes in living conditions, but also means that long-term accumulated social relationships and community networks are affected. In order to maintain community contacts, some residents spontaneously organize associations, online groups or neighborhood mutual aid networks to maintain social interaction and cultural identity. Some residents preserve and display the collective memory of the community through photography, video recording or oral history projects. These measures not only enhance the cohesion of the community, but also provide a humanistic perspective for urban regeneration, helping planners to understand community needs and cultural values more comprehensively (Sun & Chen, 2021).

Under the government-led urban regeneration framework, consultative participation has gradually become a part of institutionalized practice. The local government has set up a "condensation procedure" in the relocation and compensation arrangements, allowing residents to give feedback and adjust suggestions on specific programs. This mechanism reflects the interaction between administrative planning and residents' needs, and emphasizes taking into account efficiency and social care in the process of rapid urban regeneration (Zhang, 2010). Despite the asymmetry in the distribution of power, residents have created a viable path of influence in urban space through active participation,

consultation and initiative.

Tianjin's community response practice shows the dynamic balance between state-led urban regeneration and residents' independent action. Under the framework of institutionalized urban planning, residents should protect their own interests with flexible and pragmatic strategies, while promoting community continuity, cultural identity and social connection. Even micro-level participation can have a positive impact on the social dimension of urban regeneration and improve the applicability of public space and community well-being. The case of Tianjin shows that institutionalized urban regeneration can not only pay attention to urban image and economic development, but also integrate residents' participation, social care and cultural protection in policy design and implementation to achieve more inclusive and sustainable urban transformation.

Tianjin's community countermeasures show how grassroots forces interact with state-led urban regeneration and affect the social consequences of gentrification. Under centralized governance, micro-level resistance can also affect relocation practice, compensation and social cohesion, thus shaping the social appearance of the post-gentrification space.

Chapter 3 Comparative Analysis and Discussion

Urban regeneration and gentrification have become one of the key features of contemporary urban transformation, reflecting the increasingly close connection between local development strategies and global economic restructuring. These processes show similar dynamics in different cities, such as reinvestment in central areas, changes in land use and reshaping of urban identity, which are influenced by institutional, political and cultural background. Comparing Genoa with Tianjin helps to understand how two cities under different governance systems and socio-economic trajectories respond to the challenges of Urban regeneration and gentrification, social transformation and spatial restructuring. Based on the discussion in Chapters 1 and 2, this chapter adopts a comparative analysis perspective to discuss the performance of Urban regeneration and gentrification in different national and social contexts and the effects of these differences.

To understand cities through the relationship between cities, rather than hierarchy or geographical classification, such a perspective can identify the commonalities and differences of cities in terms of concepts, practice and the social consequences of renewal, while avoiding the one-way assumption of taking a single urban experience as a universal model. Each city reflects a specific political and economic structure, governance system and spatial production mode (Roy, 2011; Peck, 2015). As different participants in the process of urban reorganization, Genoa and Tianjin are both affected by globalization and institutional changes, but their response methods are reflected in their respective histories and social structures.

Genoa's Urban regeneration and gentrification stem from the background of the industrial recession, population loss and economic structural transformation in the late 20th century. One of the strategies is to revalue maritime heritage and urban cultural identity, and transform the original industrial areas and port areas into tourism, leisure and consumption spaces. This culture-oriented strategy has promoted economic recovery and brought problems such as spatial exclusion and changes in social structure. Evans (2015) and Scott (2019) pointed out that the culture-led regeneration of European cities often forms a kind of "symbolic revaluation". Urban space is redefined through "creativity" and "heritage", and the social composition also gradually changes.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Tianjin has undergone a rapid and state-led urban transformation, from the renewal along the Haihe River to the large-scale construction of the new coastal area. Wu (2018) and He & Lin (2017) pointed out that China's Urban regeneration and gentrification embody a kind of state entrepreneurialism local government

The local government plays the role of regulator and market subject at the same time. This model promotes the rapid implementation of the project, but also brings social and spatial restructuring, including the large-scale relocation of old residents, capital-oriented construction in new areas, and the production of urban space for the consumption of the middle class. Tianjin presents a top-down gentrification model promoted by the state, which is different from the market-driven regeneration in Europe, but it is logically comparable.

The comparison between Genoa and Tianjin not only discusses the development paths of different cities but also shows the respective institutional mechanisms behind them. The two cities take Urban regeneration as one of the means to cope with the structural economic transformation. Genoa is facing deindustrialization, and Tianjin is facing post-socialist transformation. Their institutional arrangements have produced a contrasting governance logic: the regeneration of Urban in Genoa depends on the consultation of all parties under the multi-level governance framework; Tianjin relies on a highly centralized coordination system with a high degree of integration of political power and economic resources. This difference shows how the governance system affects the inclusiveness of planning results, capital flows and urban development.

The analysis of this chapter is divided into three interrelated levels:

3.1 The main actors and governance processes of Urban regeneration, compare the interaction between local governments, private developers, planning agencies and community organizations in decision-making, and discuss how these relationships reflect different political power structures and forms of public participation.

3.2 Analyze the mechanism and types of gentrifications, and how cultural revaluation, market speculation and state intervention jointly shape the social spatial structure of cities.

3.3 Discuss the dynamics of community responses, analyze how residents cope with migration pressure and inequality in different political environments, and how to reshape citizenship and spatial justice in the process of fighting for urban rights.

Through the discussion of these three levels, the relationship between governance, economic strategy and social results is shown. In both cities, Urban regeneration has brought new development opportunities and replicated or aggravated inequality to varying degrees. The specific expressions of these dynamics are different, reflecting their respective institutional logic and public discourse: in Genoa, regeneration is related to European discussions on heritage, culture and participatory governance; in Tianjin, regeneration is rooted in national modernization, technological progress and developments. Comparative analysis helps to understand global policy concepts, such as how sustainable

growth or creative cities are reinterpreted and localized in different cities.

3.1 Key Actors and Regeneration Processes: Governance, Networks, and Institutional Dynamics

The urban regeneration of Genoa and Tianjin reflects two different but representative development results, showing how to shape the transformation of urban space in different political economies, institutional frameworks and historical trajectories. Both cities have undergone spatial restructuring to cope with the pressure of global and domestic modernization, competitiveness and urban image renewal. Urban regeneration in Genoa is carried out in a decentralized and consultative governance environment. Urban regeneration in Tianjin is characterized by a state-led top-down planning logic.

Fig.31 Genoa, Italy

Fig.32 Tianjin, China.

In Genoa, the emergence of urban regeneration is to cope with the decline of the port economy in the post-industrial era and the need for urban transformation to tourism, culture and service industries. Since the 1990s, under the leadership of the municipal authorities, local governments have played a catalytic role in launching a revival strategy with heritage protection and cultural value enhancement as the core. Institutions such as the Genoa City Laboratory and the Old Port Reconstruction Corporation have promoted cooperation between public institutions, architects and private investors. This model reflects a governance model often described as "networked" or "multi-scale", in which municipalities coordinate and cooperate with institutions at the regional and European levels to obtain funds and legitimacy (Healey, 2010; Moulaert et al., 2013).

In Tianjin, urban regeneration is influenced by the political landscape. As one of the four municipalities directly under the Central Government of China, Tianjin's urban regeneration is mainly led by state organs and state-owned enterprises. Its planning framework is rooted in the national development strategy, including the "Binhai New Area" plan to position Tianjin as the economic growth pole in the north (Wu, 2015). The decision-making process is highly concentrated, and the influence of local communities and non-state actors is limited. This model embodies "national entrepreneurship", that is, urban regeneration becomes a means of capital accumulation under the coordination of the state, integrating development goals with real estate expansion (Zhang Hezhao, 2018).

Although the urban regeneration process in Genoa depends on public-private cooperation and public participatory planning, it is also subject to fiscal constraints and decentralization. The city's dependence on EU funds has led to selective interventions, mainly concentrated in areas with symbolic significance and tourism value, further consolidating the culture-dominated urban regeneration model, emphasizing the importance of urban visibility and cultural heritage (Evans, 2015). This approach will benefit certain regions and groups while marginalizing others, especially the working-class communities relocated during the reconstruction project (Ponzini, 2011).

Tianjin's urban regeneration follows a directive-based institutional logic that prioritizes rapid transformation over public participation. The state's control over land allocation, finance and planning tools has enabled large-scale transformation to be completed in a short time. Urban villages, historic neighborhoods and old industrial areas are often replaced by high-rise residential or commercial development projects to ensure that urban regeneration is aligned with broader national priorities rather than meeting the needs of local communities.

Despite institutional differences, both cities show a rich network of actors who are active in both formal and informal fields. In Genoa, non-governmental organizations, local associations and residents' committees are occasionally involved in the consultation process, particularly in heritage-related projects. Their participation is often symbolic rather than decisive, because the strategic direction is still dominated by the political and economic elites. Also in Tianjin, although public participation mechanisms exist in the form of hearings or community committees, they have limited impact on actual decision-making. In these two cases, the asymmetry of power between state actors and citizens shows the common challenges facing the realization of inclusive urban regeneration.

Another dimension of comparison is the time and program rhythm of urban

regeneration. The reconstruction project in Genoa is gradually influenced by the gradual formation of consultation, funding cycle and consensus. This rhythm is conducive to adaptive management and absorbing community opinions, but there is also a risk of stagnation and uneven implementation. On the contrary, Tianjin's urban regeneration follows a goal-oriented acceleration model driven by five-year planning and performance indicators. This rapid demolition and reconstruction cycle often prioritizes short-term economic returns over long-term social sustainability (Shin, 2018).

The economic dimension of urban renewal shows the difference in the logic of resource mobilization. In Genoa, financial instruments rely on a hybrid financing model, combining municipal resources, EU structural funds and private investment. This way promotes innovation and exposes projects to the risk of fluctuations in the global tourism and real estate markets. In Tianjin, the financial system is centered on the state: land lease income and state-guaranteed loans are the main financing channels. This mechanism has promoted large-scale capital mobilization and also caused urban debt and social displacement (Wu & Zhang, 2020). Both cases show that urban regeneration is increasingly becoming an economic strategy, not just a spatial or social policy.

Governance culture will also affect the target discussion of urban regeneration. Genoa's discourse emphasizes heritage protection, cultural identity and European competitiveness, reflecting the transformation of many Mediterranean cities in the post-industrial era. Tianjin's discussion focuses on modernization, global integration and technological progress, which is consistent with China's broader development narrative. These differences in discourses show how urban regeneration operates as a material practice and symbolic project to build a new urban imagination. The role of community and daily space is still controversial. In Genoa, the urban regeneration program integrates with the existing urban texture, interacting between protection and commercialization. In Tianjin, government-led demolition and reconstruction have created a new urban landscape, but have also destroyed local social networks and identities. Both paths show the unevenness of social geographical distribution in the process of urban regeneration, and how decision-making at the institutional level can reshape people's life experience and spatial justice.

The cases of Genoa and Tianjin together show that the main participants of urban regeneration: the government, private capital, institutions and communities, operate under their respective governance and control systems. Genoa's decentralized model encourages consultation and innovation, and also faces some fragmentation and inequality. Tianjin's centralized model ensures efficiency and coordination, but often at the expense of

inclusiveness and cultural heritage. They reveal the different paths and dilemmas inherent in urban regeneration. Urban regeneration is not only a technical or construction project, but also a political and institutional process, in which all parties involved jointly determine the possibilities and limitations of urban transformation.

3.2 Pathways and Interactions of Gentrification: Residential, Commercial, and Cultural Transformations

Although there are differences in the urban regeneration strategies of Genoa and Tianjin, gentrification also shows different trajectories in terms of social space transformation, market dynamics and cultural revaluation. In the two places, gentrification is gradually carried out through the interaction of residence, commerce and cultural intervention. The process is not only related to the aforementioned urban regeneration characteristics, but also reflects how their respective social, economic and political logics shape urban space. Occupancy, commercialization and redistribution.

In Genoa, gentrification often manifests as the revaluation of culture and symbolism, which is connected with heritage-oriented regeneration projects. The construction of cultural institutions, museums and creative industries has attracted middle-income groups, artists and tourism-related enterprises to the neighborhoods that were originally dominated by the working class (Evans, 2015; Ponzini & Rossi, 2017). This influx of population and industry has led to residential replacement, changes in retail structures and rising real estate prices. Gentrification in Genoa is not a rapid reshaping of space, but a layered accumulation process: the improvement of cultural assets interacts with housing demand and commercial investment to form a feedback mechanism, cultural recognition attracts investment, and investment promotes further socio-economic changes.

Tianjin's gentrification is mainly promoted by the state and dominated by infrastructure, reflecting the top-down planning logic and development priorities of the city. Unlike Genoa, which leads the economic and spatial transformation with cultural symbolic revaluation, Tianjin's gentrification is more obviously guided by political goals under market-driven conditions. The new spatial form of the city is to attract high-income people and commercial activities (Wu, 2018; Lin & He, 2017). The synergy of national goals, real estate development and urban branding has promoted the rapid restructuring of social space, forming a gentrification area with high-rise residences, modern commercial centers and leisure facilities.

In the interaction between the three aspects of residence, commerce and culture, the

two cities show several similarities and differences. Housing upgrading and rising housing prices in Genoa will promote the commercial transformation of retail and service industries, and cultural revaluation justifies these changes. This kind of configuration usually meets the consumption and leisure needs of the middle class, and is often concentrated in areas with high cultural heritage density. The functional combination of Tianjin is similar to that of Genoa, but the implementation method depends on institutional coordination, not spontaneous market processes. Residential upgrading, commercial development and leisure facilities are often promoted synchronously, reshaping urban space under the framework of state-led modernization.

There is also a difference in the time rhythm of gentrification between the two places. Genoa presents a gradual and iterative gentrification: cultural activities, heritage projects and population changes have accumulated to form social spatial changes over the decades. The slow pace allows for a certain degree of consultation and adaptation, but it may also cause uneven spatial development, benefiting some regions while others continue to be marginalized. Tianjin's gentrification follows the accelerated project cycle, which usually matches the five-year plan and performance targets. Rapid renewal and population replacement have formed a clear spatial boundary between the new old city, which has exacerbated the social spatial differentiation.

Cultural and symbolic narratives also play a role in the gentrification process of the two cities. Cultural factors in Genoa have a regulating effect, affecting residential preferences and business investment, while strengthening urban identity. Festivals, museums and creative spaces create a vibrant urban atmosphere, attracting new residents and supporting small-scale entrepreneurial activities. In contrast, cultural elements in Tianjin are more used as tools for urban branding, such as imitating European architecture or themed blocks, which symbolize global connection and modernization. Both cities use culture to promote gentrification, but the spontaneity of culture is obviously different from the degree of community embedding.

Feedback loop between different types of gentrifications. In Genoa, residential upgrading promotes commercial development, and commercial transformation further strengthens cultural revaluation and spatial restructuring. In Tianjin, a similar cycle exists, but it is dominated by planning: infrastructure improvement and commercial development enhance the attractiveness of real estate, attract higher-income residents, and thus consolidate social and spatial changes. These examples show that gentrification is a relational process, and the interaction in the fields of residence, business and culture

together generates cumulative spatial and social effects.

Differences brought about by socio-economic migration. In Genoa, migration occurs slowly and unevenly, mainly affecting working-class residents and small businesses in areas with rich heritage resources. In Tianjin, the relocation is more synchronous and rapid, accompanied by the government's compensation and resettlement program, which is consistent with the national development goals. The mechanism is different, but both cities reflect how gentrification redistributes urban space, reshapes social networks, and generates new levels of residence, consumption and space use.

Although urban regeneration and gentrification are closely related, it is necessary to distinguish them in analysis. Urban regeneration involves policy planning, infrastructure construction and governance arrangements, while gentrification pays more attention to the social and spatial results of these interventions, especially how the wealthy and business behaviors transform the composition and identity of the community. Genoa and Tianjin can constitute a complementary case to some extent: the former shows the progressive gentrification of culture-mediated, and the latter shows the accelerated gentrification led by the state. The two together reveal that gentrification is not only a "sin-product" of urban regeneration, but also an independent process with its own logic, rhythm, and relational effects.

3.3 Community Resistance and Its Dynamics：Grassroots Responses and Social Negotiation

The community response of Genoa and Tianjin in the process of Urban regeneration and gentrification shows the social and spatial consequences of residents' negotiation, resistance, and reshaping urban transformation to a certain extent in a complex way. These reactions are not always uniform and visible; they often stem from the interaction between institutional frameworks, socio-economic pressures and cultural practices. Both cities face similar pressures of urban transformation, but the form, intensity and effectiveness of resistance are significantly different due to differences in politics, law and social environment, reflecting the relationship characteristics of urban competition (Leitner et al., 2018; Roy, 2016).

In Genoa, resistance is often institutionalized or semi-institutionalized, with the help of cultural heritage, participatory governance mechanisms and civil society networks. Local associations, community committees and non-governmental organizations often participate in advisory meetings, public forums and collaborative planning to advocate rights in spatial

development, heritage protection and housing access (Ponzini & Rossi, 2017; Evans, 2015). These actions are related to heritage-oriented renewal projects, reflecting the broader European context, where the idea of citizen participation and "urban rights" is recognized to a certain extent, both legally and culturally. Although these participations may not directly change policy outcomes, they help to shape the issues, narratives and symbolism of urban space, and sometimes even delay or readjust the development path.

The political and institutional environment in Tianjin makes the resistance more fragmented and limited. Residents affected by demolition or relocation (including residents from historical blocks or urban villages) can often only respond passively, such as petitions, mediation negotiations with local governments, or filing legal complaints when conditions permit (He & Lin, 2017; Wu, 2018). Public mobilization is fragmented and local, with limited access to decision-making platforms, which is consistent with broader civil society restrictions. However, some implicit resistances still appear, such as the community's efforts to protect cultural logos, the adjustment of the original informal economic activities in the new development area, and the alleviation of the impact of relocation through social networks. These micro-level strategies reflect a kind of "daily resistance" that unfolds within or around institutional constraints (Scott, 1985; Zhang & Wu, 2019).

The interaction between resistance and gentrification also reflects multi-scale characteristics. In Genoa, community-level initiatives are often related to municipal, regional and even EU-level policies and have a certain degree of influence. For example, public hearings, cultural festivals and heritage protection campaigns provide a platform for residents to express their spatial demands. In Tianjin, resistance mainly occurs at the local level and is regulated by national and municipal goals. For example, when the urban renewal zone is in line with the national modernization or urban brand strategy, the ability of residents to compete for space is more severely restricted. In a highly centralized governance system, communities can still affect daily life and social cohesion to a certain extent through informal housing adjustment and local initiatives.

The relationship between resistance and social spatial results. In Genoa, cultural value enhancement and gradual gentrification provide a space for residents to consult and strive, so that they can form uneven but identifiable channels of influence in housing, commercial space and public facilities. Although in the process of gradual substitution, residents can sometimes access compensation projects, alternative housing or participatory design processes. Tianjin shows the opposite trend: relocation is usually rapid, systematic, and closely related to state-led urban branding and infrastructure development. This rapid

promotion limits the traditional form of resistance. Residents adapt to environmental changes through informal networks, collective memory practice and cultural daily preservation, indirectly Affect the use and cognition of the new space.

The interaction between resistance and urban identity. In genoa, local actions often use historical memory and cultural heritage as tools to oppose renewal, emphasizing the continuity of community identity in the midst of physical changes. Cultural festivals, heritage protection projects and community-led artistic activities are both symbolic and practical, helping to maintain the identity of the city in the gentrification space. In Tianjin, the resident strategy places more emphasis on maintaining familiar social and business routines after relocation or infrastructure changes. For example, efforts to maintain the original informal market, localized social networks and community practice, the formal institutional impact of social capital in resistance is limited.

Time and processual aspects are also important aspects of resistance. Genoa's slow and consultative gentrification has enabled resistance to gradually form over many years, generating a feedback cycle, thus affecting policy and investment decision-making. The rapid renewal cycle in Tianjin has compressed the formation time of organized opposition, so that resistance is often short-lived and passive. This rhythm difference makes the speed of the update project affect the intensity of community consultation ability and social space competition.

The comparison of the two cities shows the relationship characteristics of urban resistance. There are differences in governance frameworks, institutional arrangements and market forces, but residents of both places are actively participating in the daily experience of shaping a gentlemanly space, whether through formal initiatives or informal practices. Resistance determines who can enter the updated region, how cultural and commercial functions are realized, and how social networks adapt to spatial reorganization. The interaction between power, the activeness of actors and the results of social space shows that gentrification is not purely top-down, but a process of continuous redefinition through the actions, adaptation and competition of local communities. Genoa and Tianjin provide complementary perspectives for understanding the dynamics of community resistance in the context of gentrification. Genoa presents a heritage-oriented and negotiable form of citizen influence, while Tianjin shows a bottom-up localization adaptation strategy under the centralized planning system. The two jointly reveal the multi-level, relational and situational characteristics of urban resistance, and the key role of dynamism in shaping the results of social space.

Conclusion

Urban regeneration has become one of the most contentious key dimensions in contemporary urban transformation. Taking Genoa and Tianjin as examples, this thesis explores how the global policy framework of urban regeneration has evolved in different political, cultural and economic contexts. Through dialogue between two cities with different structures, the comparative research method not only highlights the common characteristics contained in global urban regeneration but also reveals the locally specific developmental trajectories shaped by governance, institutional arrangements and historical legacies. This comparative framing clarifies that although urban regeneration is commonly presented as a strategy for economic recovery and spatial enhancement, its social consequences are uneven and raise issues of equity, identity and long-term sustainability.

There are differences in governance structure, development path and policy tools between Genoa and Tianjin, both cities use urban regeneration as one of the means to revitalize declining areas, influence urban space and consolidate their position in the increasingly competitive global urban landscape. The focus of this thesis is that the narrative of this "global repositioning" is largely a policy discourse, not a linear or inevitable transformation. The relationship between these global visions and local social change is intricate and constrained by local institutional practice. By distinguishing the established policy objectives and their actual effects, the comparative analysis illustrates that the urban regeneration framework has been interpreted, adjusted and questioned in a specific urban context.

Gentrification is not an unexpected by-product, but a common structural dynamic in the process of urban regeneration. In Genoa, gentrification presents a gradual market-driven form, driven by heritage-based revival, tourism and the redevelopment of historical space. Rising rents, business model changes and demographic changes show how spatial improvements can lead to the replacement or marginalization of long-term populations. Without large-scale demolition, the gradual changes in commercial composition, housing demand and cultural significance can also alter the population structure of the community over time, cultural dominance and market-driven forces can subtly and powerfully evolved the social space relationship. In Tianjin, gentrification is closely intertwined with state-led reconstruction. Large-scale demolitions and relocations have displaced entire neighborhoods, replacing the original workers' communities with commercial complexes and newly built middle-class residences. It involves not only the physical reconstruction of space, but also the reordering of class geography, because the relocation plan and

reconstruction measures jointly guide the migration of low-income people to the edge of the suburbs, while reconfiguring the central urban area into a space oriented towards middle-class consumption and commercial investment. Although the mechanisms are different, Genoa is culture-led and Tianjin is state-led, the results show significant similarities: vulnerable residents are facing relocation, the long-standing social network is destroyed, and the socio-cultural composition of the community has undergone major changes. Regarding gentrification as a part of urban regeneration, not an accidental phenomenon, helps to clarify its role in contemporary urban restructuring.

Cultural changes have further enriched this comparative perspective. In Genoa, the commercialization of the historic center has gradually changed the symbolic meaning of the local area, weakening the long-standing social diversity to a certain extent. In Tianjin, the rapid disappearance of industrial landscapes has led to the loss of material memories related to the identity of the working class. These different cultural trajectories offer important insights into how community identities are formed. Identity is a multi-level construction, which has both material foundations through architecture, public space and spatial practice, and symbolic meaning through heritage, modernity and life trajectory. The comparative research results demonstrate the diverse identities contained in urban space, and how urban regeneration unevenly transforms these identities, rather than assuming that there is a single "local identity." Distinguishing between the cultural narrative advocated by the policy and the personal experience of residents helps us to understand how urban regeneration interacts with the formation of local identity.

The governance framework plays a key role in shaping these results. Genoa's participatory planning environment provides an opportunity for dialogue among all parties, but the impact of conflicts of interest and market logic may limit the ability of citizens to participate in change. In Tianjin, centralized governance can achieve rapid and large-scale implementation, it also limits public debate and narrows the channels for residents to express their demands. These differences illustrate that the social consequences of urban regeneration cannot be interpreted solely from economic motivation or spatial changes, but also from the perspective of regulating the political structure and institutional mechanism of urban intervention. The thesis does not regard governance as a neutral procedural background, but discusses how governance influences the results of urban regeneration, deciding whose interests are prioritized, whose voices are marginalized, and how conflicts in urban development are mediated.

Against the backdrop of these two distinct governance systems, the local communities

in both cities have not remained passive. In Genoa, civic groups and community associations have taken active action to express concerns about the rising cost of living, the protection of cultural identity and access to affordable housing. In Tianjin, despite political restrictions on open mobilization, residents participate through petitions, online discussions and informal consultations to influence the conditions for relocation or protect the interests of the community. The comparative discussion of these two cases demonstrates that the participation and resistance of residents can shape, guide or mitigate the impact of urban regeneration to a certain extent. The analysis of the thesis does not explain that these practices can automatically offset the impact of gentrification, but their role depends on the structure of political opportunity, the ability of institutional response, and the forms of collective action that can be taken in their respective contexts. The response of the community, whether institutionalized or informal, is an important perspective to understand how residents respond, consult, and sometimes even resist the pressure of urban transformation. Resistance is not only passive, but also expresses the concept of the future of the city based on social unity, cultural continuity and spatial justice.

Overall, the comparative analysis reveals that urban regeneration is not a single or isolated intervention, but a complex process influenced by many factors such as global policy discourse, market dynamics, governance model and cultural transformation. While urban regeneration brings opportunities for economic revival and spatial improvement, there is also a risk of exclusion and social division. The comparative analysis underscores the importance of approaching urban regeneration through a reflexive and context-sensitive perspective, one that recognizes cities not merely as competitive nodes in global networks, but as lived spaces evolved by the rights, memories and aspirations of their residents. These findings do not point to fixed policy options, but rather put forward broader principles that may guide a more inclusive approach to urban regeneration. Integrating concerns for social equity at an early stage of planning, ensuring that affordable housing remains accessible, enabling meaningful forms of community participation, and adopting context-sensitive design strategies that recognize cultural heritage can together help balance economic objectives with social sustainability. While the specific policy instruments will vary across contexts, acknowledging these principles may support cities in navigating the tensions between redevelopment and social well-being for build a more sustainable and inclusive urban future.

List of figures

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