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# **DEMYSTIFYING SHENZHEN THE INFORMAL IN A PLANNED CITY**

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**Presented by  
JUAN DU**

**Master of Architecture, Princeton University**

**16 June 1975**

**Citizen of  
United States of America**

**Accepted on the Recommendation of  
Prof. Kees Christiaanse  
Prof. Hubert Klumpner**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Established in 1979 as an economic zone for modern China's first capitalistic experimentation, Shenzhen's success story has become a cliché of China's sudden rise—a rural fishing village transformed into an instant city of nearly 20 million residents in mere decades. However, the city's unprecedented rapid growth and development should not be solely attributed to China's past 40 years of centralized policies and planning.

The original 1982 Master Plan of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone anticipated a population of one million by the year 2000, an ambitious plan as the population then was merely 300,000. Yet by 2000, the actual population of Shenzhen stood at roughly 10 million due to the rush of rural migrant workers seeking employment in the city. With such discrepancies between the planned infrastructure and the actual load of the city, how did Shenzhen not only survive but also achieve such spectacular success? The present research hypothesizes that the informal urbanism of urban villages made up for the deficiencies of the formal planning by providing crucial economic, social, cultural, civic, as well as infrastructure for the overall city. This research investigates Shenzhen's unprecedented speed and scale of urban development through detailed retracing of the formation and transformations of the urban villages. The main research question is how the former agrarian villages evolved into the present day "urban villages" through the unique urban planning and developmental history of Shenzhen, and in turn, how the villages impacted the development of the city.

Findings of the thesis challenges the pervasive assumptions and myths of Shenzhen by providing an unorthodox perspective that reveals deep historical foundations and complex cultural evolutions, upon which the success of the contemporary city grew. The research frames its centuries of history through the myriad experiences of a diverse cast of characters whose roles are interwoven at various junctures over the course of Shenzhen's culturally rich, cosmopolitan, and enlightened past. Through the lives of commoners and leaders, who each contributed to shaping Shenzhen's evolution, the thesis firmly re-connects modern-day Shenzhen to its more history before the establishment of the Special Economic Zone, while piecing together the socio-economic and political contextual shifts that directed its growth.

The thesis offers a novel analysis in the evolution of Shenzhen and draws upon a range of political, social, economic, architectural, and planning perspectives to form a holistic and complex understanding of the growth and form of the city. Contrary to the notions of a generic and instant city, this research contends that it is the spatial, political, and cultural history—both modern and past— that defines, intensifies, and vitalizes Shenzhen and contributes to its remarkable speed of urbanization. Rather than a city without a past, Shenzhen stands with rich histories that are layered, nonlinear, and ever-present. The lessons of Shenzhen deliver an altered perspective on ways to foster cultural and economic vitalities for cities in China and around the world.

## Abstract en Français

Fondée en 1979, en tant que ZES (Zone Economique Spéciale) destinée à expérimenter pour la première fois le capitalisme en Chine moderne (post 1949), la réussite de Shenzhen est devenue le cliché du soudain développement chinois: un village de pêcheurs transformé en quelques décennies en une mégapole de près de 20 millions d'habitants. Toutefois, la croissance rapide, sans précédent, et le développement ne doivent pas être seulement être attribués aux politiques chinoises de planification centralisées de ces quarante dernières années.

Le plan directeur de la ZES de 1982 prévoyait à l'origine une population d'un million d'habitants en 2000. Il s'agissant d'un plan ambitieux car la population n'était alors que de 300 000 habitants. Pourtant en 2000, la population réelle de Shenzhen s'élevait déjà à environ 10 millions d'habitants en raison de l'afflux massif de travailleurs migrants ruraux à la recherche d'un emploi dans la ville. Avec de tels écarts entre la planification des infrastructures et la capacité d'accueil réelle de la ville, comment Shenzhen a-t-elle non seulement survécu, mais surtout réussi cette transformation spectaculaire? Notre recherche émet l'hypothèse que l'urbanisme informel des villages urbains a compensé les carences de la planification officielle, en fournissant des infrastructures économiques, sociales, culturelles et civiques vitales pour l'ensemble de la ville. Nous examinerons la vitesse et l'ampleur sans précédent de l'évolution urbaine de Shenzhen, en retraçant l'émergence et les transformations successives des villages urbains. Le sujet principal de notre recherche est de savoir comment, à travers les politiques de planification urbaine et développement de Shenzhen, ces anciens villages agricoles se sont transformés en ces villages urbanisés actuels et comment ont-ils eu un impact sur le développement de la ville.

Notre thèse remet en question les idées reçues sur les mythes de Shenzhen, en adoptant une perspective hétérodoxe. Elle met en lumière des fondations historiques profondes et des évolutions culturelles complexes, sur lesquels repose le succès de la ville contemporaine. Notre recherche retrace l'histoire millénaire de la ville à travers les expériences d'acteurs divers dont les rôles sont entrecroisés à divers tournants de l'histoire riche, ouverte et cosmopolite de la ville. À travers les portraits de vie de femmes et d'hommes du peuple et de dirigeants ayant contribué à l'évolution de Shenzhen, notre recherche vise à reconnecter la ville moderne aux racines historiques qui précèdent la création de la Zone économique spéciale, tout en reconstituant les changements de contexte socio-économiques et politiques qui ont dirigé sa croissance.

Notre thèse propose une analyse novatrice de l'évolution de Shenzhen, en s'appuyant sur l'analyse des dimensions politiques, sociales, économiques, architecturales et planificatrices de la ville pour construire une compréhension holistique et complexe de sa fondation et de sa croissance. Contrairement aux notions de ville générique et de ville instantanée, nous soutenons que c'est l'histoire, moderne et antérieure, spatiale, politique et culturelle, qui définit, intensifie et dynamise Shenzhen, et qui contribue à cette remarquable vitesse d'urbanisation. Plutôt qu'une ville sans passé, Shenzhen se démarque par de nombreuses strates historiques, non-linéaires et toujours ancrées dans le présent. Les enseignements que nous apportent Shenzhen permettent ainsi une perspective renouvelée des facteurs contribuant à la vitalité culturelle et économique des villes en Chine et dans le monde.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Prologue

“Shenzhen and Dubai may have outstripped Paris and New York as civic models. But can an instant city ever feel like the real thing? Built at phenomenal speeds, these generic or instant cities, as they have been called, have no recognizable center, no single identity. It is sometimes hard to think of them as cities at all...”

Nicolai Ouroussoff, “The New, New City,” *New York Times Magazine* (June 8, 2008)

“Beyond its head start, and role-model status as an SEZ, Shenzhen has grown out of its instant-city stage to become a huge industrial city confronting new challenges that threaten its continued prosperity. In a sense, Shenzhen has become too successful too quickly.”

Xiangming Chen and Tomas de’Medici, “The ‘Instant City’ Coming of Age: Production of Spaces in China’s Shenzhen Special Economic Zone,” *Urban Geography* 31, no. 8 (2009)

“Since Deng launched his economic reforms in 1979, Shenzhen has changed from a tiny county of 30,000 people across the border from Hong Kong to a metropolis of 10m with one of the highest per-capita incomes in China.”

Demetri Sevastopulo, Delta Blues, *Financial Times* (January 24, 2014)

“The story of Shenzhen’s transformation from a fishing village of 30,000 people across the border from Hong Kong into a ‘special economic zone’ and capitalist guinea pig in 1980 into a booming city of 18 million with the fourth-largest GDP in China is well known.”

Clifford Coonan, “Hong Kong Border Crossing a Growth Gateway,” *Irish Times* (August 5, 2014)

“The magical transformation of the city from a fishing hub to an electronics manufacturing kingdom isn’t lost on the country’s inhabitants. In 2010, the 30th anniversary of the sweeping economic reforms, then Chinese president Hu Jintao called the city a ‘miracle.’”

Will Yakowicz, “5 Things to Know About Doing Business in Shenzhen,” *Inc.* (February 24, 2015)

“The city, which was only a coastal fishing village when the country started reopening to the world in the late 1970s, leapfrogged ahead of China’s other metropolises on the path of capitalism thanks to its status as a special economic zone, separated from the rest of the country by an internal border.”

Neil Gough, “A Stain on China’s Success Story,” *International New York Times* (December 24, 2015)

“Shenzhen was hailed as a miracle by Chinese President Hu Jintao in 2010 as China marked 30 years of reforms in the city that provided the blueprint for the country’s economic rebirth.”

“Shenzhen’s World-Beating Stock Rally Mirrors City’s Rapid Rise from Fishing Village,” *Wall Street Journal* (March 18, 2015)

“Three decades ago, Shenzhen was a fishing village called Baoan County. It was renamed Shenzhen in 1979, when it was turned into a special economic zone and therefore does not have many historical attractions.”

Mike Ssegawa, “Shenzhen: Silicon Valley of China,” *The East African* (June 4, 2016)

“In the space of four decades, Shenzhen has transformed itself from a fishing village into a manufacturing center and now a tech hub - attracting top firms and young talent in sectors including technology, advertising and design.”

Neil Fullick, “Here’s What People Fear in China’s ‘Silicon Valley,’” *Huffington Post* (June 13, 2016)

## The Myth of Shenzhen

Established in 1979 as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), Shenzhen grew from a “small fishing village” into a sprawling metropolis in mere decades, a modern day miracle of an Instant City. Narratives of Shenzhen’s history emphasize its meteoric growth, unprecedented in human history: from a rural community with a small indigenous population, Shenzhen became a megacity of over 10 million people by the mid-2000s. Fast forward another 10 years, and the city’s population today has reached 20 million. The magnitude of Shenzhen’s population growth is made all the more impressive by its speed of economic development. From 1980 to 2000, Shenzhen’s GDP increased from 0.15 billion to over 200 billion yuan, averaging a more than 40% increase per year. By 2017, Shenzhen’s GDP had grown another tenfold to 2.2 trillion yuan (US \$338 billion), finally surpassing Asia’s leading financial capital cities of Hong Kong and Singapore. Shenzhen’s success has earned it both admiring and disparaging labels, from “Miracle City” and “Model City” to “Instant City” and “Generic City.” Shenzhen’s achievements are often attributed to the power of the centralized state and its modern planning, while the city’s reputed lack of history or local characteristics is optimistically theorized as a secret to success, enabling possibilities and the pursuit of the new without an obligation to consider the past. In comparison, Chicago—the “Miracle City” of the nineteenth century—grew from a small rural community to a population of one million by 1890, five decades after its founding in 1833. The city’s population continued to grow, but peaked at 3.6 million after 100 years. Chicago hosted the World’s Fair in 1933, to celebrate the city’s planning and architecture with the “Century of Progress Exposition.” This rate of growth seems painfully slow when compared to that of Shenzhen, which reached a population several times larger than Chicago’s in a fraction of the time.



**Figure 1** Overview of Shenzhen’s Central Urban Districts

The Shenzhen Special Economic Zone was one of the first initiatives orchestrated as part of China's "Reform and Opening Up" policy under Deng Xiaoping, paramount leader of the People's Republic of China (PRC) from 1978 to 1989. To transform China's stagnant economy, which had been closed off to the world for decades, reform-minded leaders sought to learn from neighboring free market countries and regions that had achieved economic successes. Deng endorsed the creation of three Special Economic Zones (SEZ) in 1980 as a cautious experiment with market reforms. Shenzhen was the first, followed by Zhuhai and Shantou. The locations of the SEZs were carefully chosen for their geographic proximity to neighbors with "foreign" market economies that could also be persuaded to become trade partners. The Shenzhen SEZ was adjacent to Hong Kong, while the Zhuhai SEZ was close to Macau, and the Shantou SEZ was near Taiwan. Close to "corrupt" foreign elements, the SEZ was separated from the rest of China by secondary military-patrolled borders. Until 2006, passports and visas were necessary to enter the SEZ district of Shenzhen from anywhere in China. The SEZs were instrumental in shaping the central government's reform policies, which would eventually spread across the nation. Encouraging everything from land reforms to experimentation with foreign trade entities, these SEZ test cases eventually directed China's drastic transformations during the past four decades. The reforms initiated in the SEZs catapulted China's reemergence onto the world stage.

Shenzhen, in particular, became a powerful tool in the effort to convince skeptics within Deng's government that market reforms could generate wealth quickly and, therefore, constituted the only way to alleviate China's widespread poverty. From the 1980s onwards, during Shenzhen's initial years of industrialization as well as its later phase of commercialization, the city's apparent economic success made headlines throughout China. By the year 2000, over eight million migrant workers, both educated and unskilled, had flocked to Shenzhen from all over the country. Ambitious professionals and illiterate laborers alike saw Shenzhen as a land of opportunity. Sensational stories of "mountains of gold" shocked the Chinese populace, impoverished by lack of resources and controlled by austere regulations within a rigid socioeconomic structure.

Academic and journalistic accounts alike tell a remarkably generic story about the reasons for Shenzhen's success, attributing its unprecedented growth and development to the Chinese central government's economic policies and plans across the last 40 years. They tell an equally similar, and very much related, story about what Shenzhen was like before the initiation of reform in 1979: a tiny and insignificant fishing village, from which an instant city arose almost overnight. The city's seemingly sudden emergence in the global economy is so compelling that nearly all local, national, and international reporting on Shenzhen regurgitates variations on this success story. This story has appeared in the *Shenzhen Daily*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and the *World Bank Annual Report*. Depending on one's perspective, the story of Shenzhen's founding is either a sacred narrative of economic turnaround or a cliché of rags to riches—either way, it is a story in which an instant city rose from near nothingness.

This thesis argues Shenzhen's growth and development after 1979 should not be attributed solely to the national government's economic policies and top-down centralized planning. In Shenzhen, local negotiations and practices were just as important as—if not more than—national policies and

central planning. Likewise, the local geography, history, and culture of the Shenzhen region was just as essential to its evolution as the larger national history for which it became a focal point. The urban form and organization of contemporary Shenzhen is rooted in centuries of complex cultural evolutions from earlier settlements—both rural and urban—as well as in events unanticipated at the national level when the ambitious urban experiment to reform Shenzhen, and China more broadly, was initiated in 1979. The Shenzhen SEZ was not just an experiment, but a critical experiment, meaning one that reflected critically on the problems with China’s state of affairs at the time of its initiation. The experiment was controversial, unpopular, and filled with insecurity and uncertainty. The political pathway for China’s “reform and opening up” was far from straightforward or unanimous, and the reforms themselves were not initiated or implemented in a strictly top-down process.

Today, however, the founding myth of Shenzhen is more influential than ever. Outside China, the Shenzhen myth is at times dreaded because it attributes China’s stunning economic growth to the actions of a powerful and authoritarian state. Within China, the Shenzhen myth is celebrated as a moral message, one that explains and legitimizes the origin of China’s reform policies which are generally heralded for lifting millions out of poverty. For most of those living in Shenzhen, the myth is sacred, an optimistic mantra that validates their decisions to migrate there, regardless of whether they have made it or are struggling. Whether viewed as a cliché or cherished as an origin story, the Shenzhen myth embodies China’s global rise at the turn of the twenty-first century. The myth has become more powerful than any facts about the city.

### **Globalization of the SEZ Model**

Most agree that Shenzhen was an experiment to establish a model. Shenzhen is often referenced in China—and across the world—as a replicable model of city planning and economic development. Implementations of policies derived from the city in the rest of the country have forcefully shaped China as we know it today. After the first batch of SEZs in 1980, China went on to open up 14 coastal cities in 1984, followed by the southern island Hainan Province in 1988. Shenzhen’s ‘exceptionalism’ treatment was rapidly institutionalized into national strategies promoting expedited urban development, with central and provincial governments encouraging the establishment of zones by decentralizing authority to lower administrations at township and county levels.

The Chinese SEZ has also attracted much global attention. While both developed and developing countries around the world have experimented with various forms of zones since the 1960s, most of these—with a few exceptions—have not yielded exemplary results. Shenzhen’s success has therefore made the SEZ one of China’s most visible foreign policy drivers and sought-after “exports,” especially in other developing countries. From India to Africa and Latin America, developing countries are looking to China, and specifically to Shenzhen, for ways to achieve rapid economic success while maintaining government control. 30 years ago, China experienced similar challenges to those many developing countries are currently experiencing: lack of infrastructure, outdated modes of industrial production, large surplus rural labor, stagnant local economy, and shortage of investment funding. The idea that

Shenzhen became an “overnight” metropolis, shooting to success from its humble origins as a “small remote fishing village,” is incredibly compelling. The “rags-to-riches” story is irresistibly appealing to governments in China and around the world, especially in developing countries.

Encouraged by the radical applications of zones in Shenzhen and other areas of China, zonal strategies have become popular worldwide. Shenzhen is cited in new town planning documents of developed countries, referenced in World Bank reports for developing economies, and courted by various government bodies across the world. China has also promoted the SEZ model globally, most visibly with substantial investments in “economic cooperation zones” in developing regions.<sup>1</sup> In 2006, there were 3,500 special zones of various types in 130 countries, approximately 44 times the number in 1975.<sup>2</sup> China’s neighboring countries are establishing jointly operated special zones, expecting to learn from the success of Shenzhen. North Korea is establishing an area at Rason City with flexible policies to build a modern port to develop international logistics, trade, tourism, and high-end manufacturing. The North Korean government hopes it will become the country’s Shenzhen.<sup>3</sup> Myanmar passed a new special economic zone law, and its port city of Tavoy in the south is looking towards the Shenzhen model. Even in Latin America, a “new” model of city building, the *Charter City* plan in Honduras, is openly citing Shenzhen as its inspiration. In addition to SEZs “inspired” by the Chinese experience, “Chinese Special Economic Zones” have emerged in “host” countries. Following China’s 2001 internationalization policy of “Going Out,” the 2006 Eleventh Five-Year Plan outlined implementation plans for 19 Chinese SEZs in other developing countries, with the long-term goal of reaching 50 in total.<sup>4</sup> In Africa, six zones have developed with Chinese government-backed enterprises: one zone each in Zambia, Egypt, Mauritius, Ethiopia, and two in Nigeria.<sup>5</sup>

Yet while the skyline of Shenzhen could perhaps be repeated elsewhere, the actual operation of Shenzhen is less easily replicated. Indeed, while Shenzhen inspired the creation of additional economic zones in China and around the world, no other SEZ has ever been able to match its unprecedented economic success. And while it may be too soon to evaluate the economic effectiveness and social impact of the newest international zones, it is worrisome that the Shenzhen SEZ model is regarded as a prototype ready for rapid application when its contours are not yet fully understood. The idea that Shenzhen is a replicable model reinforces the assumption that cities can be politically planned and socially engineered from scratch. In fact, national policies based on misconceptions about Shenzhen’s developmental history could have devastating consequences in other countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Claude Baissac, “Brief History of Sezs and Overview of Policy Debates,” in *Special Economic Zones in Africa: Comparing Performance and Learning from Global Experience*, ed. Thomas Farole (Washington DC: World Bank, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Michael Engman, Osamu Onoder, and Enrico Pinali, “Export Processing Zones: Past and Future Development,” in *OECD Trade Policy Working Paper* (2007).

Jean-Pierre Singa Boyenge, “ILO Database on Export Processing Zones, Revised,” ed. International Labour Organization (Geneva: ILO, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> X. Zhou, “North Korea Investment Zone Promoted to Chinese as Next Shenzhen,” *Bloomberg*, 13 September 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Dannenberg, Yejo Kim, and Daniel Schiller, “Chinese Special Economic Zones in Africa: A New Species of Globalization?,” *African East-Asian Affairs- the China Monitor*, no. 2 (2013).

Ruben Gonzalez-Vicente, “The Internationalization of the Chinese State,” *Political Geography* 30 (2011).

<sup>5</sup> Deborah Brautigam and Xiaoyang Tang, “African Shenzhen: China’s Special Economic Zones in Africa,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 49, no. 1 (2011).

## Four Misconceptions

This thesis presents Shenzhen's urbanization and development process as highly specific and extremely complex in terms of its social, cultural, political, geographical, and historical context. Even those responsible for the policy, planning, design, construction, and management of the city may be hard-pressed to state the exact reasons for Shenzhen's exceptional success. The thesis does not pretend to provide a conclusive explanation for Shenzhen's success, but rather aim to provide a critical reflection on a range of assumptions and misconceptions that have shaped narratives of this success. Given Shenzhen's prominence as a global model for economic reform, these misconceptions are due to be revisited and revised. There are four common categories of misconceptions about this remarkable city: misconceptions surrounding the city's *purpose*, the stretch of *time* relevant to its development, the *place* from which it grew, and the *people* who are part of its story.

### 1. Misconception of Purpose: "SEZ"

The most commonly held view of China's Special Economic Zone (SEZ) policy is that the central government, under Deng Xiaoping's visionary leadership, created it with the goal of turning the country into a globally wealthy and powerful state. This misconception has been perpetrated both in China and abroad. "Special Economic Zones" have become synonymous with China's successful centralized economic policies, a perception further promoted by global institutions. According to a publication by the World Bank, "The story of China's economic growth is inextricably linked to the use of 'special economic zones' (SEZs). The transformation of Shenzhen, a small fishing village in the 1970s, into today's city of almost 9 million is an illustration of the effectiveness of the SEZ model in the Chinese context."<sup>6</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, those critical of China's recent economic drive also, at times, aggrandize the purpose and impact of the SEZ policy. A scholarly paper entitled "The 'Instant City' Coming of Age" offers a typical example of such criticism: "Socioeconomically, while adventurous individual pioneers searching for private fortune or religious freedom built the boomtowns of the old American West, Shenzhen became an instant city as a result of it having been designated as a SEZ—thus its growth was propelled by a purposeful push from a powerful state."<sup>7</sup> However, the goal of China's reforms under Deng was far more modest: it was not to be rich and powerful, but to no longer be poor. The dire need to lift its people from poverty motivated the country to change. Emerging from the shadows of the Great Famine (1959–1961) and the subsequent decade of Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), China suffered deep and widespread poverty. The SEZ policy originated as a tentative attempt to experiment with possible ways to alleviate poverty and improve quality of life. While this distinction may seem subtle, the more modest goal of poverty alleviation increased urgency for China's leaders and gave more agency to its citizens. In turn, the motivations of local governments and individuals played an influential—and as yet, largely unheralded—role in the development of the Shenzhen SEZ. The physical reality of the Shenzhen SEZ was

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Farole, "Special Economic Zones in Africa - Comparing Performance and Learning from Global Experience," Washington, DC: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, The World Bank, xiii.

<sup>7</sup> Xiangming Chen and Tomas de'Medici, "The 'Instant City' Coming of Age: Production of Spaces in China's Shenzhen Special Economic Zone," *Urban Geography*, 31, no. 8 (2010): 1141–1147.



shaped by the purposes of many, not one—from Deng Xiaoping to the tens of millions of migrants who arrived in Shenzhen with little or no resources and began their lives anew.



**Figure 2** Shenzhen's iconic Deng Xiaoping Billboard in 1992, 1994, and 2004. The iterations contained three constant representative elements of Shenzhen: Deng's portrait, His dictums on Reforms, and the modern city image of the evolving skyline.

## 2. Misconception of Time: “1979”

The year 1979 is well established and celebrated as the year in which the City of Shenzhen was founded. Most government documents, scholarly texts, and news articles begin the story of Shenzhen with that particularly important year. Yet it is a misconception to perceive 1979 as the origin point for this story. This popular fallacy conceals the fact that the region’s history prior to 1979 significantly impacted the development of modern-day Shenzhen, and obscures the influence of prior historical events on the city today. Shenzhen is not a place without history, as is commonly reported. Rather, Shenzhen has inherited important social networks and industrial traditions from thousands of years of immigration and emigration, political administration, agriculture and aquaculture production, transnational maritime

trade, and changing social and political norms, as well as from centuries of reforms in education, culture, trade, and industry. While this thesis is not a comprehensive history of the city, it does aim to give a necessary historical perspective to Shenzhen's contemporary urbanization. To that end, this thesis goes as far back as 100 BC to uncover the forgotten regional history of this strategic location on China's southern coast. Much of Shenzhen's current spatial organization, social practices, and cultural characteristics can be traced back to its history—both ancient and modern—before 1979. For instance, Chiwan Harbor—located in present-day Nantou Peninsula, Shenzhen's Nanshan District—has a recorded history that dates back to the Tang Dynasty (618–907). Chiwan was one of the most important ports in southern China during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, and the gateway between China and other historic civilizations bound by the South China Sea and beyond. Having been abandoned for a century, Chiwan Harbor was revived with the establishment of the Shekou Industrial Zone and contributed to the rapid development of Shenzhen. To the north of Chiwan Harbor was the Nantou Ancient City: originally an administrative base and military camp during the Tang Dynasty, it grew into the commercial and political capital for a large territory spanning present-day Shenzhen, Hong Kong, Dongguan, Huizhou, Zhuhai, and Macau. Historically, Nantou oversaw an array of political, commercial, and agrarian activities that had a direct impact on the geographical and ecological history of the region; the intricate relationship between Shenzhen and Hong Kong also originates from this shared past. Likewise, the “Town and Village Enterprises” (TVE), which defined the rural organizational structure of the region for decades prior to 1979, would become some of the most dynamic industrial engines of Shenzhen's economy during the first decade after 1979. The patterns of earlier pre-1979 settlements and industries greatly influenced Shenzhen's later urban form, social organization, and economic production. By contextualizing the past 40 years with over a past centuries of largely forgotten regional history, this thesis shows how this history shaped social, economic, and spatial aspects of Shenzhen's urbanization after 1979.





**Figure 3** Qing Dynasty depiction of Xin'an County (present-day Shenzhen and Hong Kong), ca. 1685. Walled fort on the left indicate location of the Nantou Ancient City, regional capital ca. 331-1953.

### 3. Misconception of People: “30,000”

There are conflicting reports regarding exactly how many people live in Shenzhen. In 2014, the UK-based *Financial Times* reported 10 million: “Since Deng launched his economic reforms in 1979, Shenzhen has changed from a tiny county of 30,000 people across the border from Hong Kong to a metropolis of 10m with one of the highest per-capita incomes in China.”<sup>8</sup> The same year, the *Irish Times* nearly doubled the figure: “The story of Shenzhen's transformation from a fishing village of 30,000 people across the border from Hong Kong into a ‘special economic zone’ and capitalist guinea pig in 1980 into a booming city of 18 million with the fourth-largest GDP in China is well known.”<sup>9</sup> While conflicting population statistics for Chinese cities are prevalent, more problematic here is the erroneous consistency with respect to Shenzhen’s reported population. Most media publications and some scholarly papers list “30,000” as the original population prior to Shenzhen’s urbanization. However, the actual population inhabiting the 2,020 square kilometers designated as the City of Shenzhen was more than 300,000 in the years 1979 and 1980.<sup>10</sup> The conflicting figures may have arisen owing to different notions of what

<sup>8</sup> Demetri Sevastopulo, “Delta blues,” *Financial Times*, January 23, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Clifford Coonan, “Hong Kong border crossing a growth gateway,” *Irish Times*, August 5, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Shenzhen Statistics Bureau and NBS Survey Office in Shenzhen, eds., *Shenzhen Tongji Nianjian* (Shenzhen Statistical Yearbook) (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2000). The official figure for the population of Shenzhen in 1979 was 314,100.

geographically constituted Shenzhen or what it stood for: the city was spliced into two territories in 1980, Shenzhen Special Economic Zone in the south and Shenzhen Bao'an County in the north. There were fewer people inside the SEZ, which was a much smaller territory of 327.5 square kilometers, one sixth that of Bao'an County. However, according to official population statistics published by the Shenzhen government, the population even within the Shenzhen SEZ was close to 100,000.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the "30,000" figure referred to only those living in Shenzhen Zhen, or the Old Shenzhen Market Town, an area of three square kilometers within the SEZ. There were 23,000 people living in this area north of the Hong Kong border; the market town has been an active regional commercial center for centuries.<sup>12</sup> Aside from the matter of statistical inaccuracy, the idea that Shenzhen's pre-1979 population was not material to its urbanization is another misconception. In reality, many overlooked—and in some cases, intentionally omitted—communities and individuals contributed to its remarkable development. Certain groups of people are entirely unacknowledged in standard accounts of Shenzhen's population explosion. These include the 20,000 Infrastructure Corps soldiers who arrived in Shenzhen during its first two years (1979–80) and built many of its towers, roads, and dams, as well as the many inhabitants of "urban villages," former agrarian villages incorporated into the city. Indeed, much of Shenzhen's rapid urbanization and economic growth can be directly attributed to the original villagers who built homes to house the massive influx of migrants. The human dimensions of the city's construction, including the incredible stories of local and regional communities who shaped and were shaped by the Shenzhen SEZ, have yet to be fully narrated.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. The official figure for the population of Shenzhen SEZ in 1980 was 94,100.

<sup>12</sup> *Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Zongti Guihualun Pingji (Commentary of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Overall Planning Theory)*, (Shenzhen: Haitian Publishing House, 1987).



**Figure 4** The often mixed "Three Shenzhen's": Shenzhen Old Market Town, (pre-1980 pop. 23,000); Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, (pre-1980 pop. 100,000); Shenzhen City, inclusive of the SEZ (pre-1980 pop. 300,000).

#### 4. Misconception of Place: "Fishing Village"

Of all the misconceptions propagated by the Shenzhen Myth, perhaps the most visual is the "fishing village into metropolis" narrative. The story of a modern, advanced, urban civilization with no memory of its past except a rural seaside hamlet is a powerful modern-day fairy tale. Despite historical records to the contrary, even the Municipal Shenzhen Tourism Board used it as an official tagline for Shenzhen on their website: "Thirty Years Ago, A Peripheral Small Fishing Village." The latest global image of Shenzhen as "China's 'Silicon Valley'" mythicizes the village-to-future-city narrative even further: "In the space of four decades, Shenzhen has transformed itself from a fishing village into a manufacturing center and now a tech hub—attracting top firms and young talent in sectors including technology,



advertising and design.”<sup>13</sup> Yet Shenzhen’s pre-1979 history included agricultural fields and coastal aquaculture, urban centers and rural settlements, The assumption that the urbanization of Shenzhen is the story of a “fishing village” erased and replaced by a city that is “a manufacturing center, and now a tech hub,” suggests that the “modern metropolis” could be anywhere. The sentiment implies that the *placeness* of Shenzhen had little bearing on its development, that the city easily could have been built elsewhere. This thesis argues, however, that Shenzhen is a unique place with a variety of specific features that contributed to its growth—including a pre-existing terrain of farming fields and aquaculture along the coast, a history of significant urban and rural settlements, and numerous unrecognized communities, among them hundreds of thousands of indigenous villagers.



**Figure 5** Historic Water Well Still in Use Today, in Baishizhou Village, Shenzhen

The general notion of urbanization is a process of obsolescence of the rural. Narratives of Shenzhen generally assume that the urban has entirely replaced the rural: the village is no longer, having been erased through the urbanization of rural agriculture, rural land, rural *hukou*, and rural people. However, the physical, social, cultural, and economic characteristics of Shenzhen are not best defined by the obsolescence of villages, but by the empowerment of the rural. Shenzhen's urbanization was tremendously influenced by the transformation and persistence of centuries-old agrarian villages into the current “urban villages” (*chengzhongcun*) spread across the SEZ, including the Baishizhou Village where

<sup>13</sup> Neil Fullick, “Here’s What People Fear in China’s ‘Silicon Valley,’” *Huffington Post*, June 13, 2016.

my own search for the hidden realities of Shenzhen began. But the exceptional physical presence of urban villages in Shenzhen is not a matter of its having more former agrarian villages or indigenous villagers than other Chinese cities. One of the most unique characteristics of Shenzhen's urban village phenomenon is the relatively large sociopolitical influence of the village collectives. The former agrarian community of Huanggang Village, for instance, used community organization, political engagement, economic development, and policy loopholes to participate in the city-making process and leverage its "rural-ness" to the benefit of the villagers. There are currently approximately 350,000 "peasant house" buildings in the urban villages of Shenzhen.<sup>14</sup> Together, these buildings supply half the city's residential floor area, estimated at 120 million square meters.<sup>15</sup> In some cases, these villages are seen as rent-collecting "parasites" of the city. However, collectively the urban villages of Shenzhen have provided affordable housing in a city that does not have effective social or public housing programs. As elsewhere in China, the few social housing options have strict requirements and the majority of China's migrant working class is not eligible. Shenzhen's apparent lack of control over the construction and development of the urban villages is not a failure; rather, it is a testimony to the city's strength. The "Villages in the City" component of the event sparked great professional, academic, and public interest, and has become a recurring topic in each ensuing biannual event. Since 2005, the urban villages have been gradually transformed from a taboo subject to an important topic for architects, artists, planners, and policy makers in the city and beyond.<sup>16</sup> In addition, increasing attention to urban villages in research and publications about Shenzhen has also disrupted the stereotypical image of the city.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Qingzhi Dong & Qiuyue Liang, "Shenzhen Chengzhongcun Nongminfang Huo Zijianfang Chao 35 Wan Dong, Zhan Zhufang Zongliang 49% (There Are over 350,000 Peasant Houses and Self-Built Houses in Urban Villages of Shenzhen, Accounting for 49% of the Total Housing in the City)," *National Business Daily*, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Yaping Wang, Yanglin Wang, and Jiansheng Wu, "Urbanization and Informal Development in China: Urban Villages in Shenzhen," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 33, no. 4 (2009).

Shenjing He et al., "Social Groups and Housing Differentiation in China's Urban Villages: An Institutional Interpretation," *Housing Studies* 25, no. 5 (2010).

Pu Hao et al., "What Drives the Spatial Development of Urban Villages in China?" *Urban Studies* 50, no. 16 (2013).

Dror Kochan, "Placing the Urban Village: A Spatial Perspective on the Development Process of Urban Villages in Contemporary China," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39, no. 5 (2015).

Peilin Li, *Cunluo de Zhongjie: Yangchengcun de Gushu (The End of Village: Story of Yangcheng Village)* (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2004).

Yuyun Lan, *Dushili de Cunzhuang: Yi Ge "Xin Cunshe Gongtongti" de Shidi Yanjiu (Village in the City: A Field Study of a "New Village Community")* (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> Mary Ann O'Donnell, *Learning from Shenzhen: China's Post-Mao Experiment from Special Zone to Model City*, ed. Mary Ann O'Donnell, Winnie Won Yin Wong, and Jonathan Bach (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

Winnie Wong, *Van Gogh on Demand: China and the Readymade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

Linda Vlassenrood and International New Town Institute, eds., *Shenzhen: From Factory of the World to World City* (Rotterdam: Nai010, 2016).

Shen Liu, *Shuishuo Shenzhen Shi Xiaoyucun (Who Says Shenzhen Is a Small Fishing Village?)* (Shenzhen: Shenzhen baoye jituan chubanshe 2011).

Yongtao Li, *Dadao 30: Shennan Dadao Shang De Guojia Jiyi (30 Years of the Boulevard: National Memories on Shennan Boulevard)*, vol. 1 (Shenzhen: Shenzhen Press Group Publishing House, 2010).

Yongtao Li, *Dadao 30: Shennan Dadao Shang De Guojia Jiyi (30 Years of the Boulevard: National Memories on Shennan Boulevard)*, vol. 2 (Shenzhen: Shenzhen Press Group Publishing House, 2010).

Zhaoxu Nan, *Shenzhen Jiyi 1949-2009 (Memory of Shenzhen 1949-2009)* (Shenzhen: Shenzhen Press Group Publishing House, 2009).

## Organization of Thesis

In addition to this introduction and thesis' conclusion chapters, the thesis is organized into three parts.

Part I presents the design and methods of the thesis first through literature review of interrelated topics of Shenzhen, Urban Villages, and Urban Informality in the Chinese context. The thesis' research methodology is further outlined with specific research objectives, questions, tasks, and methods. The significance and longer term impact of the research are also presented.

Part II presents the thesis research through a critical re-examination of the historical and spatial formation and development of Shenzhen's establishment and urban planning (Ch. 3) and urban growth through developments of the urban villages (Ch. 4). These chapters aim to provide a reconsideration to the standard narrative of Shenzhen's formal planning and informal development.

Part III presents the thesis' three main in-depth case studies through a synthesis process of creating an ethnographic presentation of each urban village neighborhood. Each case study centers around the stories of different protagonists—all real people—involved in the development of each urban village, and also to the overall city.

The narrative structure of each case study chapters aims to provide multiple perspectives and individual experiences, generating humanist and material understandings of China's most heterogeneous city. In addition to the individuals whose perspectives inform each chapter, artifacts—some intangible cultural productions, others constructed physical forms—also help to reveal the hidden realities of Shenzhen.



# **PART I RESEARCH FRAMEWORK: REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY**

## **2. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK**

## Literature Review

### Shenzhen

Shenzhen was the first SEZ initiated by China and, evidenced by economic indicators, is the most successful and iconic example of new modernity in Asia. Terms like “Shenzhen Speed”<sup>18</sup> and “Shenzhen Miracle”<sup>19</sup> have been repeatedly used as metaphor to describe the almost mythic exceptional urbanization. Shenzhen’s apparent quick success drew great attentions to the urban model of SEZ within China and abroad. From typical economic indicators and popular visual representations, Shenzhen seems to be a city with generic urban qualities that astonishingly leapfrogged from the “land of fish and rice” into its glittering present form all within two decades. Shenzhen’s success is commonly celebrated as the government’s triumph and modern master planning’s success in the establishment of the SEZ. The commonly accepted notions of Shenzhen's national and global identity certainly reaffirm it as an ultimate representation of an instant city grew overnight from nothing.<sup>20</sup> In Rem Koolhaas’ *Great Leap Forward*,<sup>21</sup> probably one of the most-read book on the Pearl River Delta in the past decade by architectural students, Mihai Craciun (2001) theorizes that Shenzhen as a zone is “conceptually blank” and “open to ideological manipulation.”<sup>22</sup> The book's assessment of Shenzhen and other emerging Asian cities as generic, chaotic, and restless urban form which enables, even resembles, the complicated network of global economy is accepted by scholars and casual observers alike. However, the unique urban history and present realities of Shenzhen challenge the assumption that the zone “purges historical contents from territories” and “places them with the dynamics of global economy”.<sup>23</sup>

Shenzhen was not the first city to be established as a zone. Freeports, such as Lubeck and Hamburg first emerged in Europe since the fifteenth century. Later on, colonial ports, such as Gibraltar (eighteenth century), Singapore and Hong Kong (nineteenth century) thrived as entrepot. Early modern zones could be traced back to Export Processing Zones such as Mexicali and Tijuana in the twentieth century.<sup>24</sup> In Asia, according to Ong (2006), Kaoshiung, Taiwan, was the first Export-Processing Zone (EPZ) in the region in 1960s.<sup>25</sup> By the promotion of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the World Bank, EPZ proliferated throughout developing regions such as Asia, Latin America, Middle East and Africa.

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<sup>18</sup> Mihai Craciun. “Shenzhen Speed.” *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 17, no. 4 (2000): 18-19.

<sup>19</sup> Kaiming Liu. “‘The Shenzhen Miracle’: The Relationship Between the Migrant Labor Force and Shenzhen's Economic Development.” *Chinese Economy*, 40, no. 3, May-June 2007.

T. Farole & G. Akinci (Eds.). *Special Economic Zones: Progress, Emerging Challenges, and Future Directions*. World Bank 01 August 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Shenzhen Urban Planning and Land Administration Bureau (SUPLAB). *Search for a Balance in the Dynamic Change—The Evolving History of Shenzhen's Planning* (China: Shenzhen Municipality, 1999).

Chuihua Judy Chung, Inaba Jeffrey, Rem Koolhaas & Sze Tsung Leong (Eds.), *Great Leap Forward* (Köln: Taschen GmbH, 2001). Michael J. Bruton, Sheila G. Bruton and Li Yu. “Shenzhen: Coping with uncertainties in planning.” *Habitat International* 29 (2005): 227– 243.

<sup>21</sup> Chuihua Judy Chung, Inaba Jeffrey, Rem Koolhaas & Sze Tsung Leong (Eds.), *Great Leap Forward* (Köln: Taschen GmbH, 2001).

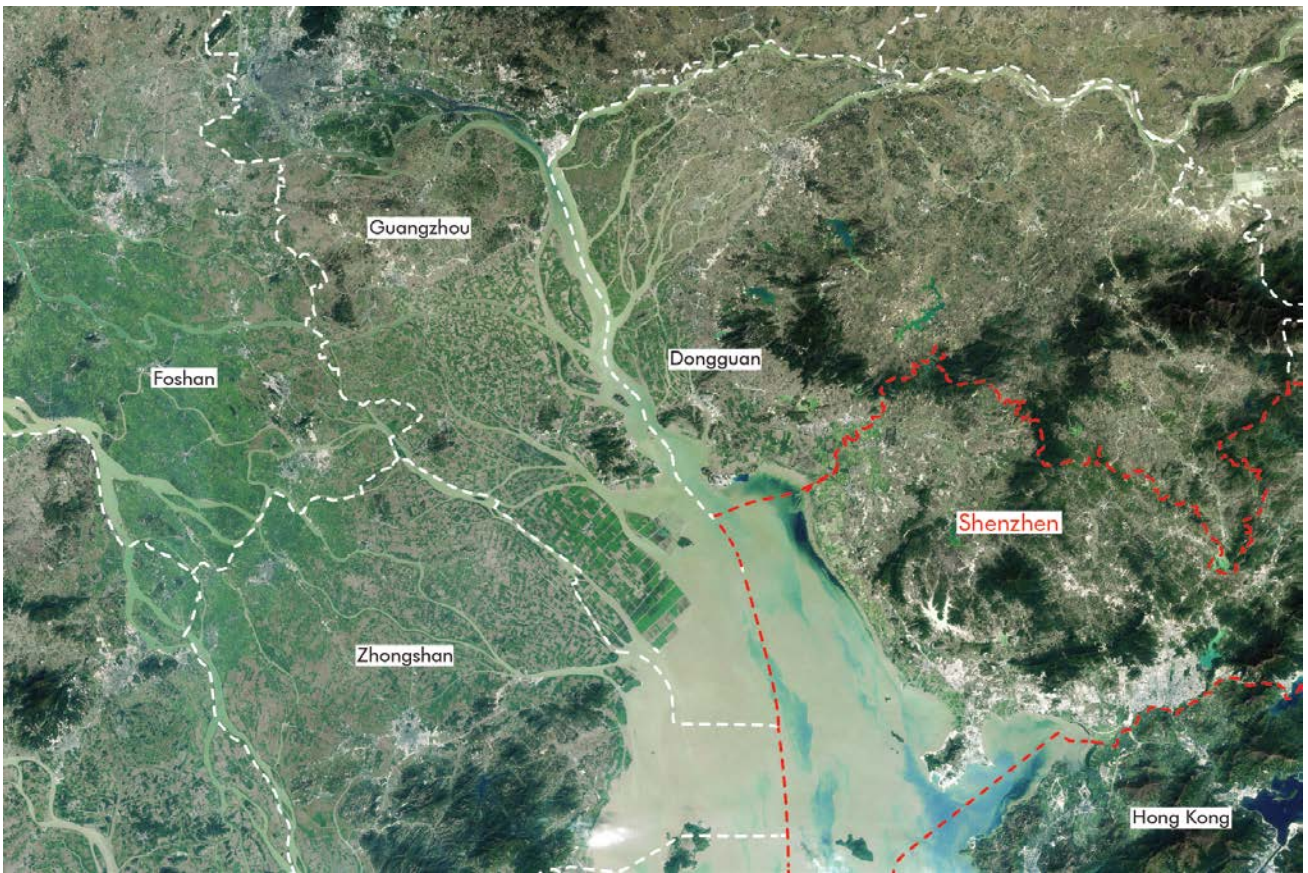
<sup>22</sup> Mihai Craciun. “Ideology.” In Chuihua Judy Chung, Inaba Jeffrey, Rem Koolhaas & Sze Tsung Leong (Eds.), *Great Leap Forward/Havard Design School Project on the City* (Köln: Taschen GmbH, 2001), pp. 44-155.

<sup>23</sup> Carolyn Cartier. “Transnational Urbanism in the Reform-era Chinese City: Landscapes from Shenzhen.” *Urban Studies* 39, no. 9 (2001): 1513-32.

<sup>24</sup> Keller Easterling. “Zone.” In Ilka & Andreas Ruby (Eds.), *Urban Transformation* (Berlin: Ruby Press, 2008), pp.30-45.

<sup>25</sup> Aihwa Ong. “Mutations in Citizenship”, *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 2-3 (2006): 499-531.





Pearl River Delta 1988



Pearl River Delta 2004

Figure 6 Urbanization and Ecological Transformations of the Pearl River Delta from 1988 to 2004



Seeking ways to improve China's stagnating economy in the 1980's, the Chinese government led by then Premier Deng Xiao-Ping initiated a bold experiment of creating Special Economic Zones (SEZ) in Southern China's Guangdong Province. Shenzhen was the first to be initiated in 1979, along with Zhuhai and Shantou, during the first planned phase of zone development from 1979 to 1984. Sitting at the mouth of the Pearl River Delta Estuary, the chosen location was a 2,000-square-kilometer portion of Bao'an County, a mostly agricultural region bordering the British-ruled Hong Kong. The Shenzhen Special Economic Zone designated three districts – Luohu, Futian and Nanshan – divided from the rest of Bao'an County by an interior secondary border – the Er Xian Guan. Bao'an County was later incorporated in the special economic zone as Bao'an and Longgang districts to form the Shenzhen Municipality. The secondary border was set up with checkpoints, which allowed only the people with special residence permits or international passports to travel into the SEZ. The division was both physical and ideological to protect, or rather isolate, the zone from the rest of the nation, keeping Neidi intact from what was then deemed as an extremely risky experimentation of "capitalism with socialist character." This zone of exception was a buffer between China and Hong Kong with its wider global influences.

As a testing zone for contemporary China's first capitalistic experiment, Shenzhen was commonly represented in literature as a modern planning miracle, the fabled sleepy village transformed into a metropolis of nearly 20 million in merely 30 years.<sup>26</sup> Since the city's establishment as a SEZ in 1979, Shenzhen sustained a high average annual GDP growth of 25%. Perhaps more than any other city, Shenzhen has come to represent China's rapid modernization and urbanization since the country's economic reforms in the 80s.<sup>27</sup> Shenzhen's early rapid urban planning processes can be regarded as an experimentation of a national movement of planning reformation since the late 1970s.<sup>28</sup> Ng & Tang (2004) examined the role of planning in the development of Shenzhen by cross checking discrepancies between the rhetoric with socio-economic realities, although the informal development of the urban villages is not referenced.<sup>29</sup> The continual and rapid urban expansion of the city had raised concerns in recent planning literatures for its environmental and socio-economic sustainability.<sup>30</sup> In general, it is uncommon for literature on Shenzhen's formal developmental history such as planning policies, comprehensive masterplans, and economic developments to mention the existence of the urban

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<sup>26</sup> Rem Koolhaas, Stefano Boeri, Sanford Kwinter, Nadia Tazi, Hans Ulrich Obrist. *Harvard Project on the City & Arc en rève centre d'architecture* (2000). *Mutations: Rem Koolhaas, Harvard Project on the City, Stefano Boeri, Multiplicity, Sanford Kwinter, Nadia Tazi, Hans Ulrich Obrist.* Barcelona: ACTAR.

Mihai Craciun. "Ideology." In Chuihua Judy Chung, Inaba Jeffrey, Rem Koolhaas & Sze Tsung Leong (Eds.), *Great Leap Forward/Harvard Design School Project on the City* (Köln: Taschen GmbH, 2001), pp. 44-155.

Kaiming Liu. "The Shenzhen Miracle: The Relationship Between the Migrant Labor Force and Shenzhen's Economic Development." *Chinese Economy*, 40, no. 3, May-June 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Carolyn Cartier. "Transnational Urbanism in the Reform-era Chinese City: Landscapes from Shenzhen." *Urban Studies* 39, no. 9 (2001): 1513-32.

<sup>28</sup> Anthony Gar-on Yeh and Fulong Wu. "The transformation of the urban planning system in China from a centrally-planned to transitional economy." *Progress in Planning*, 51, no. 3 (1998): 167-252.

<sup>29</sup> Mee Kam Ng & Wing-Shing Tang. "The Role of Planning in the Development of Shenzhen, China: Rhetoric and Realities." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 45, no. 3 (2004): 190-211.

<sup>30</sup> Jianfa Shen. "Urban Growth and Sustainable Development in Shenzhen City 1980-2006." *The Open Environmental Journal*, 2 (2008): 71-79.

Jing Qian, Yunfei Peng, Cheng Luo, Chao Wu and Qingyun Du. "Urban Land Expansion and Sustainable Land Use Policy in Shenzhen: A Case Study of China's Rapid Urbanization." *Sustainability* (Switzerland) 8, no. 1 (2016): 1-16.

villages. However, nearly half of 14 million residents of Shenzhen live in the illegally built rental housing within urban villages located throughout the city.<sup>31</sup>

## Urban Villages

The unique economic restructuring process of Shenzhen has encouraged researchers to examine on the urban regeneration process within the SEZ and hints at some innovative ideas and approaches on alternative ways of urban planning and development.<sup>32</sup> Ng (2003) calls for innovative development control mechanisms that could balance public and private interests in the face of rapid urban redevelopment concurrent to the economic restructuring of the city.<sup>33</sup> Bruton, Bruton and Yu (2005) urge for a planning process based on lessons learned from Shenzhen that could cope with developmental uncertainties.<sup>34</sup>

Formal policies governing China's rural to urban transformations of the SEZ, spatially and institutionally, produced the urban villages. Compressed due to a much higher population and spatial density, these tightly packed working migrant enclaves exhibit radically different social and formal characteristics than the city-proper.<sup>35</sup> While many are deprived of basic civic infrastructure, the urban villages are full of colorful street life, small-scaled public spaces, and eventful pedestrian activities – a vibrant urbanity that is rarely found outside of these enclaves in Shenzhen.<sup>36</sup> There are 79 urban villages located within the SEZ alone (except Yantian district).<sup>37</sup> Because the SEZ did not evolve around existing urban centers,<sup>38</sup> the city development was planned around the pre-existing villages, in which the spacing is related to the carrying capacity of the pre-industrialized farmland.<sup>39</sup> Smart & Lin (2007) argued that the unique physical presence of the urban villages in the region was contributed by the pre-existing social structures in the locality.<sup>40</sup> These enclaves operate in the grey zones of existing judicial frameworks and are representative of a unique type of urban informality in Chinese cities.

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<sup>31</sup> Pu Hao, Pieter Hooimeijer, Richard Sliuzas, and Stan Geertman. "What Drives the Spatial Development of Urban Villages in China?". *Urban Studies* 50, no. 16 (2013): 3394-411. (the recent number is around 20 million)

<sup>32</sup> Shenjing He. "Consuming urban living in 'villages in the city': Studentification in Guangzhou, China", *Urban Studies* 52, no. 15 (2015): 2849-2873.

James Wang & Jiang Xu. "An unplanned commercial district in a fast-growing city: A case study of Shenzhen, China." *Journal of Retail and Consumer Services* 9, (2002): 317-326.

<sup>33</sup> Mee Kam Ng. "City profile - Shenzhen." *Cities*, 20, no. 6 (2003): 429-441.

<sup>34</sup> Michael J. Bruton, Sheila G. Bruton and Li Yu. "Shenzhen: Coping with uncertainties in planning." *Habitat International* 29 (2005): 227-243.

<sup>35</sup> Juan Du. "Min Gong: City Builders," *Domus*, 873 (2004): 58-69.

Juan Du. "The hands that built the city". In Lot Felizco and Madeleine Marie Slavick (Eds.) *China Voices* (Hong Kong: Oxfam, 2010), pp.74-79.

Shenjing He. "Evolving enclave urbanism in China and its socio-spatial implications, the case of Guangzhou", *Social and Cultural Geography* 14, no. 3 (2013): 243-275.

<sup>36</sup> Juan Du. "Don't Underestimate the Rice Fields". In Ilka and Andreas Ruby (Eds.) *Urban Transformation* (Berlin: Ruby Press, 2008), pp.218-225.

Mary Ann O'Donnell. "Vexed Foundations: An Ethnographic Interpretation of the Shenzhen Built Environment". Paper presented at *Vexed Urbanism: A Symposium on Design and the Social*, The New School, New York, February 15, 2008.

<sup>37</sup> Pu Hao. "Informal Development, Migrant Housing and Urban Villages." In *Spatial Evolution of Urban Villages in Shenzhen*. PhD Thesis, Utrecht University, pp. 11-29 (original data obtained from: *Annual report of redevelopment of urban villages in Shenzhen*, 2005).

<sup>38</sup> John Zacharias and Yuanzhou Tang. Restructuring and repositioning Shenzhen, China's new mega city, *Progress in Planning* 73, no. 4 (2010): 209-249.

<sup>39</sup> David Grahame Shane. "Notes on Villages as a Global Condition", *Designing the Rural, a Global Countryside in Flux*. Joshua Bolchover, John Lin & Christiane Lange (Eds.), *Architectural Design* 86, no. 4 (2016): 48-57.

<sup>40</sup> Alan Smart & George Chu Sheng Lin. "Local Capitalisms, Local Citizenship and Translocality: Rescaling from Below in the Pearl River Delta Region, China." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 31, no.2 (2007): 280-302.

There is an extraordinary number of urban villages that exists in contemporary Chinese cities. According to various research groups, there are approximately 500 in Beijing,<sup>41</sup> 200 in Guangzhou<sup>42</sup> and 318 in Shenzhen.<sup>43</sup> What distinguishes Shenzhen's condition amongst other major Chinese cities is that the city has the highest proportion of population living in its urban villages.<sup>44</sup> It is estimated that the 318 urban villages in Shenzhen house half of the 14 million residents who reside in the city.<sup>45</sup> The living conditions within the urban villages are frequently regarded as inferior to other areas in Shenzhen. It was reported that in 2003, around 70% of crimes and 90% of unauthorized building works in Shenzhen were found in urban villages.<sup>46</sup> The inferior imagery of urban villages related to issues such as crime rates and hygiene were largely popularized by public media and the government, and the city of Shenzhen has officially adopted an agenda for all urban villages should disappear through the process of demolition and redevelopment.<sup>47</sup>

In recent years, a number of researchers have begun to dispute general literature's description of the urban villages as instances of problems associated with unplanned development. Wang et al. (2009) emphasized urban villages' important role of providing affordable housing for the migrant workers during the urbanization process of Shenzhen and urged to reconsider the current governmental policies of redevelopment.<sup>48</sup> Zacharias and Tang (2010) offer a projection that the urban villages could potentially invent new spaces with distant characters, pedestrianized and sustainable environs for the cityscape of Shenzhen.<sup>49</sup> Wu et al. (2012) addressed the current lack of nuance and details in the study of informal housing, which had led to problems of overgeneralized statements and unproductive debates.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Robert Mangurian and Mary-Ann Ray. "Rural urbanism: thriving under the radar—Beijing's villages in the city," in: Gretchen Wilkins (Ed.) *Distributed Urbanism: Cities after Google Earth* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 21–41.

<sup>42</sup> Li Tian. "The Chengzhongcun Land Market in China: Boon or Bane? – A Perspective on Property Rights." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32, no. 2 (2008): 282-304.

<sup>43</sup> John Zacharias and Yuanzhou Tang. Restructuring and repositioning Shenzhen, China's new mega city, *Progress in Planning* 73, no. 4 (2010): 209–249.

<sup>44</sup> X. Tong. "The possibility of self-administration: Reflection on Shenzhen's floating population." *Chinese Social Sciences Today* 32 (2009) (In Chinese).

<sup>45</sup> John Zacharias and Yuanzhou Tang. "Restructuring and repositioning Shenzhen, China's new mega city." *Progress in Planning* 73, no. 4 (2010): 209–249.

Pu Hao, Pieter Hooimeijer, Richard Sliuzas, and Stan Geertman. "What Drives the Spatial Development of Urban Villages in China?" *Urban Studies* 50, no. 16 (2013): 3394-411. (the recent number is around 20 million)

<sup>46</sup> Li Tian. "The Chengzhongcun Land Market in China: Boon or Bane? – A Perspective on Property Rights." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32, no. 2 (2008): 282-304.

<sup>47</sup> Shenzhen Urban Planning Bureau (SUPB). "Shenzhen Shi Chengzhongcun (Jiucun) Gaizhao Zongti Guihua Gangyao (2005–2010) [Master Plan of Urban Village Redevelopment 2005–2010]," Shenzhen Urban Planning Bureau Document (2005).

<sup>48</sup> Yaping Wang, Yanglin Wang & Jiansheng Wu. "Urbanization and Informal Development in China: Urban Villages in Shenzhen." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33, no. 4 (2009): 957-973.

<sup>49</sup> John Zacharias & Yuanzhou Tang. "Restructuring and repositioning Shenzhen, China's new mega city", *Progress in Planning*, 73, no. 4 (2010): 209–249.

<sup>50</sup> Fulong Wu, Fangzhu Zhang & Chris Webster. "Informality and the Development and Demolition of Urban Villages in the Chinese Peri-urban Area", *Urban Studies*, 50, no. 10 (2013): 1919-34.

## Urban Informality in China

The concept of informality is commonly used, while highly contested,<sup>51</sup> in studies on low-income settlements in developing urban centers around the world, such as such as Caracas,<sup>52</sup> Rio de Janeiro,<sup>53</sup> Nairobi,<sup>54</sup> and Mumbai.<sup>55</sup> China's urban villages are regarded as informal because the legality of the majority of their building activities is not recognized by state institutions. Similar to informal settlements around the world, urban villages satisfy the basic needs, such as shelter and community networks, of the impoverished in lieu of the incapacity of state laws and institutions<sup>56</sup> and are based on socially shared rules, which are created, communicated. Smart & Zerilli (2014) addressed the impact of "extralegal" actions of power holders on urban government in the region of the Pearl River Delta.<sup>57</sup> These enclaves operate in the grey zones of existing judicial frameworks and are representative of a unique type of urban informality in Chinese cities. Urban villages are characterized by a heterogeneous mix of population and land uses that operate outside of judicial regulations, while land usage rights usually belong exclusively to the village shareholding collectives.<sup>58</sup> The role of urban villages in providing crucial economic, social, cultural, and civic infrastructure for the city is generally not recognized by the formal planning sectors.

However, distinctions of the formal and informal are not sufficient in examining the China's urban villages due to their intertwined relationships with the formal land administration and planning sectors. Sorkin (2013) finds that a clear distinction between formal and informal is impossible.<sup>59</sup> Smith (2014) deemed the pervasive framework of top-down and bottom-up in understanding urban villages as limiting.<sup>60</sup> Wu & Webster (2013) addressed the current lack of nuance and details in the study of urban village developments, which had led to problems of overgeneralized statements and unproductive debates.<sup>61</sup> Chung (2010) and Bach (2010) have briefly addressed the co-evolution of the villages and the city in Shenzhen.<sup>62</sup> To further the discussion, the research will expand on the theoretical framework

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<sup>51</sup> Neil Gilbert. *Transformation of the Welfare State: The Silent Surrender of Public Responsibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>52</sup> Alfredo Brillembourg, Kristin Feireiss and Hubert Klumpner (eds.). *Informal city: Caracas case* (Kulturstiftung des Bundes/Caracas Urban Think Tank/Prestel, 2005).

<sup>53</sup> Greg O'Hare & Michael Barke. "The favelas of Rio de Janeiro: A temporal and spatial analysis", *GeoJournal*, 56, no. 3 (2002): 225-240.

<sup>54</sup> Marie Huchzermeyer. "Tenement City: The Emergence of Multi-storey District Through Large-scale Private Landlordism in Nairobi", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 31, no. 4 (2007): 714-732.

<sup>55</sup> Jan Nijman. "A Study of Space in Mumbai's Slums", *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie*, 101, no. 1 (2010): 4-17.

<sup>56</sup> Hernando De Soto. *The Other Path: The Invisible Revolution in the Third World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989).

David E. Dowall & P. Alan Treffeisen. "Spatial transformation in cities of the developing world: Multinucleation and land-capital substitution in Bogotá, Colombia", *Regional Science and Urban Economics*, 21, no. 2 (1991): 201-224.

Wubalem Fekade. "Deficits of formal urban land management and informal responses under rapid urban growth, an international perspective." *Habitat International* 24, no. 2 (2000): 127-150.

<sup>57</sup> Alan Smart & Filippo Zerilli. "Extralegality", In Donald M. Nonini (Ed.) *A Companion to Urban Anthropology* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2014), pp.222-238.

<sup>58</sup> Shenjing He, Yuting Liu, Fulong Wu & Chris Webster. "Social groups and housing differentiation in China's urban villages: An institutional interpretation." *Housing Studies* 25, no. 5 (2010): 671 - 691.

Li Tian. "The Chengzhongcun Land Market in China: Boon or Bane? - A Perspective on Property Rights." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32, no. 2 (2008): 282-304.

<sup>59</sup> Michael Sorkin. "Informal Formality." Paper presented at the *4th International Holcim Forum for Sustainable Construction*, Mumbai, April 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Nick R. Smith. "Beyond top-down/bottom-up: Village transformation on China's urban edge." *Cities*, 41 (2014): 209-220.

<sup>61</sup> Fulong Wu, Fangzhu Zhang & Chris Webster. "Informality and the Development and Demolition of Urban Villages in the Chinese Peri-urban Area", *Urban Studies*, 50, no. 10 (2013): 1919-34.

<sup>62</sup> Him Chung. "Building an Image of Villages-in-the-City: A Clarification of China's District Urban Spaces", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 34, no. 2 (2010), 421-437.



of informality in dissecting the development process in urban villages and formally planned urban fabric by retracing the constant interactions between the formal and informal, and proposes a theoretical framework of “planned informality”. The research brings together Shenzhen’s planning discourse with the body of research on urban village and urban informality in China. In addition, this research aims to enrich the global discussions on urban informality in developing economies by presenting the unique ways in which informality and formal planning could have unexpected productive relationship.

The role of informal neighbourhoods such as the urban villages in providing crucial economic, social, cultural, and civic infrastructure for the city<sup>63</sup> was not recognized by the formal planning sectors. The city of Shenzhen has adopted an aggressive agenda for urban villages to disappear through the process of demolition and redevelopment since 2005.<sup>64</sup> The massive redevelopment movement of urban villages in Shenzhen continues in the following decade. Hao et al. (2011) argued that the demolition-redevelopment approach was devastating to the livelihood of migrants and the city, and suggested possibilities to explore alternative responses.<sup>65</sup> Lai et al. (2017) analyzed and promoted a village-led redevelopment approach in Shenzhen within a formal institutional framework.<sup>66</sup> Kochan (2015) provided with a spatial perspective in understanding urban villages as places, argued for their legitimacy to stay during the current city-wide urban regeneration movement.<sup>67</sup> In 2016, a consultative document was released for a potential shift of redevelopment principles in Shenzhen- the document proposed to prioritize comprehensive upgrade for villages in the inner districts; on the other hand, encourage demolition and redevelopment in villages in the outer districts.<sup>68</sup>

## Knowledge Gap

**Related to Scope:** Existing literature situates the issues of development of Shenzhen either within the realm of formal planning<sup>69</sup> or portrays urban village developments as passive products of policies.<sup>70</sup> While there are a few recent articles that explores the inter-relationship of the formal and informal,<sup>71</sup> the observations were sectional and lacked a longitudinal understanding of the continual interactions

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Jonathan Bach. “‘They Come in Peasants and Leave Citizens’: Urban Villages and the Making of Shenzhen, China.” *Cultural Anthropology* 25, no. 3 (2010): 421-458.

<sup>63</sup> Yani Lai, Yi Peng, Bin Li and Yanliu Lin. “Industrial land development in urban villages in China: A property rights perspective”, *Habitat International*, 41 (2014): 185-194.

<sup>64</sup> Shenzhen Urban Planning Bureau (SUPB). “*Shenzhen Shi Chenghongcun (Jiucun) Gaizhao Zongti Guihua Gangyao (2005–2010) [Master Plan of Urban Village Redevelopment 2005–2010]*,” Shenzhen Urban Planning Bureau Document (2005).

Him Chung. “The Planning of ‘Village-in-the-City’ in Shenzhen, China: A State-led Approach”, *International Planning Studies*, 14, no. 3 (2009): 253-273.

<sup>65</sup> Pu Hao, Richard Sliuzas, Stan Geertman. “The development and redevelopment of urban villages in Shenzhen”, *Habitat International*, 35, no. 2 (2011): 214-224.

<sup>66</sup> Yani Lai, Edwin Hon Wan Chan and Lennon Choy. “Village-led land development under state-led institutional arrangements in urbanizing China: The case of Shenzhen”, *Urban Studies*, 54, no. 7 (2017): 1736-1759.

<sup>67</sup> Dror Kochan. “Placing the urban village: A spatial perspective on the development process of urban villages in contemporary China.” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 39, no. 5 (2015): 927-947.

<sup>68</sup> Shenzhen Urban Planning Bureau (SUPB). *Shenzhen Shi Chengshi Gengxin Shisanwu Guihua Wenben Tuji (Zhengqiu Gongzhong Yijian Gao) [Shenzhen Urban Renewal Plan for the 13th 5-year Plan (Public Consultation Draft)]*. Shenzhen, 2016.

<sup>69</sup> Such as Mee Kam Ng & Wing-Shing Tang. “The Role of Planning in the Development of Shenzhen, China: Rhetoric and Realities”, *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 45, No. 3 (2004): 190-211.

<sup>70</sup> Such as Yumei Liu. You Nichengshihua de Chengzhongcun Gaizao Yinfa de Sikao (Reflections on the transformation of urban villages against urbanization), *Northern Economy*, 12 (2014): 52-53.

<sup>71</sup> Such as Yanliu Lin, Pu Hao and Stan Geertman. “A conceptual framework on modes of governance for the regeneration of Chinese ‘villages in the city’”. *Urban Studies*, 52, no. 10 (2015): 1774-1790.

between the two through the developmental history of Shenzhen. This research, on the other hand, will focus on the parallel interactions and impacts between the formal planning/policies and informal urban village developments spanning from pre-SEZ history to present times.

Shenzhen's urban planning, industrialization, and developmental experimentations were extensively published in literature in the 90's but have not been given much attention during the past decade. However, while there has been an increasing volume of research that touches upon the subject of Shenzhen's urban villages during this time, there has yet to be any research that studies the inter-relationships between the urban villages and formal planning mechanisms. The research would be the first to bring together Shenzhen's planning discourse and the urban villages research. Compared to other existing research and publications on the urban villages, this research will be unprecedented in its expanded time scope by extending well past the establishment of the SEZ in 1979.

**Related to Methodology:** Previous researches on urban villages typically relied on social science research methods such as questionnaire surveys<sup>72</sup> and interviews.<sup>73</sup> This research supplements these research tasks with spatial research methods such as cartographic analysis and detailed architectural survey to enrich the discussion of the development of the city and urban villages with geographic and spatial information. The research aims to examine the research subject through multiple scales ranging from regional territorial transformations to specific building construction, in addition to the use of mixed methods such as qualitative, quantitative, and spatial analysis, the eventual output will attempt present a fresh view and interpretation not only on the urban villages but the history of Shenzhen in general.

## Research Methodology

### Research Objectives

The current research proposal is based on these previous research experiences, with an intention to generate a more rigorous set of research data and more well-rounded synthesis of academic knowledge on the spatial, institutional, and socio-economic transformations of the urban villages and the overall city of Shenzhen. The research framework and tasks in the following sections are intended to create a more inclusive chronicle of the formal and informal processes that created the "Shenzhen Miracle". The underlying innovation and challenge of the proposed research is the interdisciplinary nature of the research and the associated methods.

The research objectives are:

1. Produce an unorthodox chronicle of the traditional villages as the historical foundations upon which the contemporary city grew, and in doing so enrich the literature of Shenzhen's initial urbanization in the 1980's beyond economic zone planning and the

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<sup>72</sup> Such as Li Tao, Francis K. W. Wong & Eddie C. M. Hui. "Residential satisfaction of migrant workers in China: A case study of Shenzhen", *Habitat International*, 42 (2014): 193-202.

<sup>73</sup> Such as Yaping Wang, Yanglin Wang & Jiansheng Wu. "Housing Migrant Workers in Rapidly Urbanizing Regions: A Study of the Chinese Model in Shenzhen". *Housing Studies*, 25, no. 1 (2010): 83-100.

assumptions of an “instant city” (Challenge the existing mis-perceptions of Shenzhen’s history and rapid urbanization).

2. a) Document the parallel spatial and institutional transformations of the urban villages within the context of Shenzhen’s overall urban planning and growth at the city scale. b) Document the parallel spatial and socio-economic transformations of individual representative ‘Villages in the City’ within the context of formal urban blocks at the neighborhood scale. c) Document the parallel spatial and socio-economic transformations of the self-built village building typologies within the context of the urban transformations of Shenzhen.
3. Construct a detailed examination of the urban village’s formations and transformations not only before and immediately after the establishment of Shenzhen in 1979, but present the city’s present state as a continuum of evolution from its pre-1979 history as agrarian villages. Identify ways in which the Urban Village, collectively and individually, contributed to the overall development of Shenzhen over the city’s different developmental phases.
4. Analyse the interdependent and intricate relationships between top-down formal planning and policies with the informal responses and contributions of the urban villages, and position Shenzhen’s formal-informal processes within a larger historical, theoretical, and implementation framework of urban informality, planning, and development.

## **Research Questions**

The research framework and questions aim to reveal the portrayals of Shenzhen through academic and general literature as a tabula rasa condition where the prior history of the land is either erased or irrelevant to its urbanization process. This presents a critique of this generalization of the city and set up a counter argument that contrary to the notions of an ahistorical instant city, the city’s economic growth and urban expansion cannot be explained only through an accounting of its formal planning and governmental policies from the 1979 establishment of the SEZ. It is the spatial, political, and cultural history– both modern and past– that defines, intensifies, and vitalises the Shenzhen and contributes to its remarkable speed of urbanization. Rather than a city without the past, Shenzhen’s histories are layered, nonlinear, and ever-present. The main research questions are:

1. How has Shenzhen been defined and why is the city consistently referred to by popular and academic literature as tabula rasa with no relevant pre-1979 economic zone history? What are the spatial and formal evidence of urban villages as the historical foundations that have impacted Shenzhen’s post-1979 urbanization?
2. What were the spatial distributions and socio-economic conditions of the pre-industrial settlements (villages as well as their agricultural and aqua-cultural fields) prior to the establishment of the SEZ? Did these pre-existing conditions impact the earliest stages of the rural villages-to-urban village transformations and the SEZ’s initial masterplans?

3. How did the urban villages collectively interact with and contribute to the overall growth of Shenzhen over the city's different developmental phases? How did formal and informal developments of the urban villages inside Shenzhen's key central locations evolve along with the formally planned urban centers? How did the urban villages and the urban centers impact each other?
4. What can be learned from the formal-informal interactions during Shenzhen's past four decades' urbanization to create/develop an inclusive and sustainable city in rapidly developing regions?

### Scope

Informality does not consist exclusively of activities of the poor- it is an organizing logic emerging from contingent social-economic situations. Urban informality could not be understood in isolation. According to Wirth (1938), "as long as we identify urbanism with the physical entity of the city, viewing it merely as rigidly delimited in space, and proceed as if urban attributes abruptly ceased to be manifested beyond an arbitrary boundary line, we are not likely to arrive at any adequate conception of urbanism as a mode of life."

This research aims to narrate the detailed and smaller scaled processes of urban transformation through tracing how the urban villages and their surroundings were transformed by contrasting socio-political systems into its present state. The research is not motivated by accounting of a comprehensive history of Shenzhen, it aims to present an alternative view of how the city developed through interactions of formal and informal processes through episodic examinations and shed new understandings on some foundational aspects of Shenzhen. Through historical and formal analysis of each case-study urban village, the research contributes to existing literature on urban informality through the study of space and community in addition to considerations of labour and economy.

Similar research methods include Jonathan Bach's multidisciplinary approach in examining urban villages in Shenzhen and Ray and Mangurian's multimedia documentation of Caochangdi- an urban village in Beijing. Bach (2010) examined urban villages in Shenzhen comprehensively through subjects on economics, culture and semiotics.<sup>74</sup> Bach (2011) also studied the villages through the lenses of popular narratives, filmmaking and architectural innovations.<sup>75</sup> Mangurian and Ray (2009) supplemented textural records of field studies with color photographs, conversation transcripts and other graphics that provide information which cannot otherwise be effectively communicated, such as human interactions, spatial characters and urban ecologies.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Jonathan Bach. "They Come in Peasants and Leave Citizens': Urban Villages and the Making of Shenzhen, China", *Cultural Anthropology* 25, no. 3 (2010): 421-458.

<sup>75</sup> Jonathan Bach. "Shenzhen: City of Suspended Possibility", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35, no. 2 (2011): 414-420.

<sup>76</sup> Robert Mangurian and Mary-Ann Ray. "Caochangdi Beijing inside out: Farmers, floaters, taxi drivers, artists, and the international art mob challenge and remake the city." *Hong Kong: Timezone* 8 (2009).

## Tasks and Methods

In order to analyse Shenzhen's dynamic processes of development from pre-industrialization to industrialization and urbanization, multiple research methods are involved to document the city's history, economy, geography, planning, policy, and architecture. The analysis of spatial change will be based on comparative analysis of pre- 1979 archival survey maps and contemporary computer graphic databases including Geographic Information Systems. Certain tasks in this research utilizes architectural representation techniques to conduct qualitative analysis of the development of villages in parallel to their urban context. Spatial survey will be conducted through the collection of physical and environmental data on-site, analysis of sources such as historic maps, photos, village self-published newsletters, personal observations during fieldworks and interviews with villagers and residents. Similar multimedia spatial research methods include Mangurian and Ray (2009)'s visual records of field studies in Caochangdi in Beijing;<sup>77</sup> Angelil & Hehl (2011)'s axonometric drawings, photo collages and prototypical studies on the physical qualities of informal settlements in Brazil;<sup>78</sup> and Al (2014)'s aerial photographs, architecture sections and maps that illustrate the qualities of social life in urban villages.<sup>79</sup>

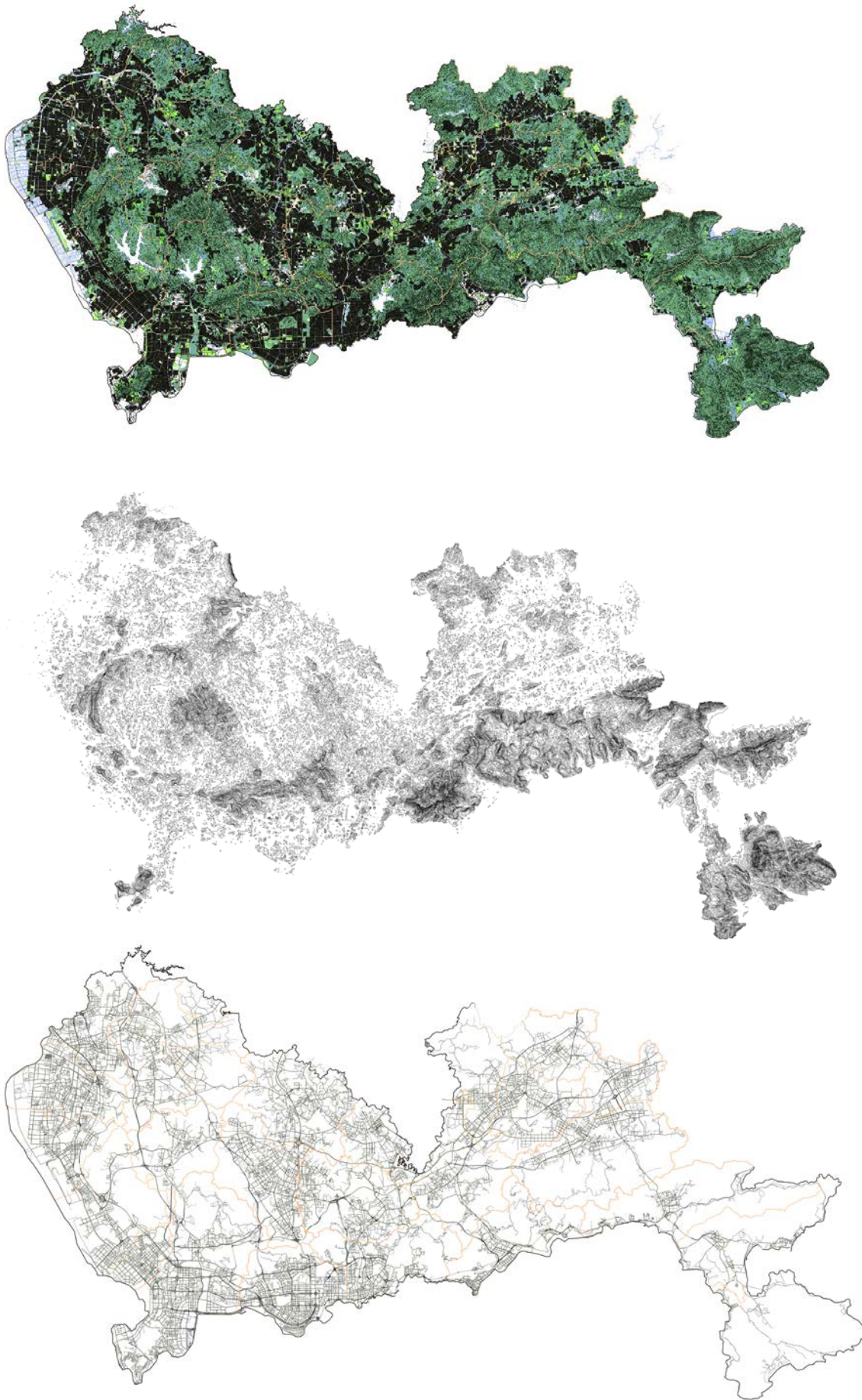
There are three main parallel scales of research tasks. First is to examine the unique conditions of Shenzhen's urban formation and why they form the basic—but erroneous—preconceptions of the city through reviews of governmental policy publications, other scholarly text, and popular representations in the local and international media. Secondly the research traces the developmental history of the urban villages in time periods of drastic socio-economic and political change: Pre-1949, agrarian villages prior to the establishment of the People's Republic of China; 1949-1979, the villages under socialist planned economy; 1979-2009 establishment of the Special Economic Zone and Shenzhen's subsequent urbanization. Lastly is to situate each of the case-study urban villages transformations within its larger urban context in order to examine both the interplay of the informal and formal processes of the city. This parallel analysis is designed based on the principle that while informality exists within a framework of formal policies and planning, informal processes in-turn impact and often directs the formal development of the city. For each of the three scales of investigation, the development and production of visualization such as mapping and diagrams is central to the methodology of the research.

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<sup>77</sup> Robert Mangurian and Mary-Ann Ray. "Caochangdi Beijing inside out: Farmers, floaters, taxi drivers, artists, and the international art mob challenge and remake the city." *Hong Kong: Timezone 8* (2009).

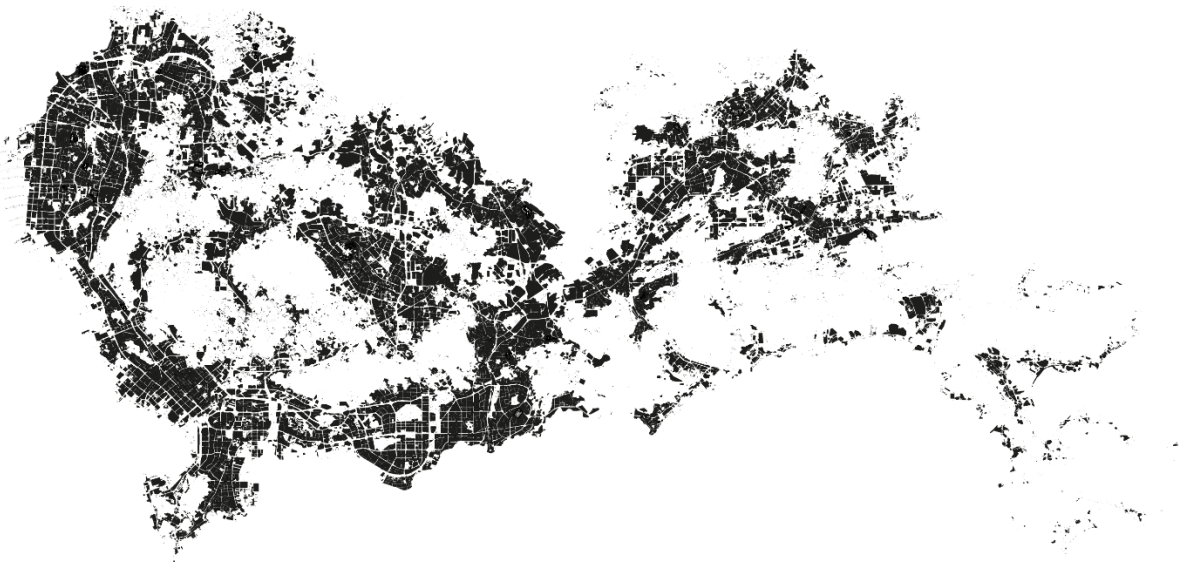
<sup>78</sup> Marc M. Angelil, Georgios Alexandrou & Rainer Hehl (Eds.). *Building Brazil! The Proactive Urban Renewal of Informal Settlements* (Berlin: Ruby Press, 2011).

<sup>79</sup> Stefan Al. *Villages in the City: A Guide to South China's Informal Settlements* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014).



**Figure 7** Shenzhen GIS Mapping: Overall (above), Terrain (middle), Roads (below)





**Figure 8** Shenzhen GIS Mapping: Building Footprint-based Urbanization Density

Preliminary spatial analysis yielded a group of urban villages that has the potential to be representative case study sites. Three have been selected for further detailed studies to both demonstrate the common physical traits and operational logic of these urban enclaves, but more importantly to excavate the important differences and variations amongst them. The urban villages that are selected as the main subject for the research meet specific parameters such as: Unique and pivotal historic role and origin; Located in strategic areas of the well-developed central districts; currently under urban redevelopment plans and debates; and distinct economic and political positions as well as varying social and cultural structures. This is important to construct a detailed account of the diversity and complexity of the urban village, revealing their differences, rather than commonly referred as a generic monolithic entity. This would be both for first hand survey to establish visual data base, and the creation of original drawings to reveal and analyze the information. The visual analysis will also attempt to create a forensic visual narrative of the physical evolution of villages based on non-visual written records and oral history. This is necessary as the early stages of Shenzhen's urbanization were not well photographed or mapped. And published pre-1979 photos and images of villages and Shenzhen in general are extremely rare.

Preliminary literature review revealed gaps of knowledge in the literature which focused primarily from 1979 the (establishment of the Shenzhen Special Economic zone) onwards. Yet the spatial, social, and economic organizations of the urban village were heavily influenced by the pre-1979, and in some case the pre-1949 history of the villages and the entire territory. The current research would allow for more time consuming and culturally sensitive research tasks such as the collection and analysis of rare and alternative historical records, such as each village's self-chronicles, news archives on pre-1979 Shenzhen on newspapers from other cities such as Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Beijing. Oral histories and in-depth interviews with village elders and early governmental workers as well as planning and design professionals will be used to further supplement knowledge gaps in published literature.

The main challenge of the research in relation to material acquisition and data source is the scarcity of publications in English or in Chinese of specific village histories, either before 1979 or even in most cases after 1979. The retracing is through intense collection and analysis of diverse sources such as historic maps, photos, village self-published newsletters and interviews with village elders published in local newspapers. Authentication will be sought through corroboration with other contemporary sources, such as published governmental surveys and new primary sources through specific interviews.

### **Case-Study Selection and Analysis**

1. Explored based on the 327.5 square kilometers of the initial Special Economic Zone (SEZ) as the Study Area, which till this day, demarcates the central 3 urban districts of Shenzhen: Luohu, Futian and Nanshan.
2. Explored based on three 1-square kilometer Study Areas with in the central locations of each of the three main central districts of Luohu, Futian and Nanshan. Each of the 1-Km<sup>2</sup> study area contains one urban village and adjacent formally developed urban fabric.
  - Caiwuwei: Clan Village in the Financial District (Luohu District)
  - Huanggang: Corporate Village in the CBD (Futian District)
  - Baishizhou: “Slum” Village in the High-Tech Town (Nanshan District)

The unique spatial pattern of the former villages meant that Shenzhen’s most affordable housing was evenly distributed throughout its most urbanized centers. The spatial arrangement had enabled the majority of working population to live close to their places of work. The current trend of urban villages redevelopment has many implications for the future development of Shenzhen. As in its past forty years, the present reality and future possibilities of these former village sites continue to transform the urban landscape and economic vitality of Shenzhen. Each of the in-depth case study demonstrated three key aspects of Shenzhen’s development and addresses specific questions that related to the main research questions.

**Caiwuwei Village and Shenzhen’s Economic Zone Development:** (a) What economic experimentations have been implemented to set up Shenzhen as a Special Economic Zone and established the city as a model of zone development? (b) How did the traditional villages evolve through the superimposition of a planned economic zone into the current urban villages, and did they in turn contribute to the speed and scope of Shenzhen’s economic development?

**Huanggang Village and Shenzhen’s Political Governance and Planning:** (a) What distinctive political strategies and governance structure shaped Shenzhen’s urban planning and development? (b) How have the villages evolved to interact with Shenzhen’s political mechanisms and its urban planning and development?

**Baishizhou Village and Shenzhen’s Population Explosion:** (a) What are the unique causes and consequences to Shenzhen’s explosive population growth? (b) How have the villages evolved in response to and participated in the rapid increase of rural to urban migration?



## Geographic transformation of SZSEZ and locations of case studies

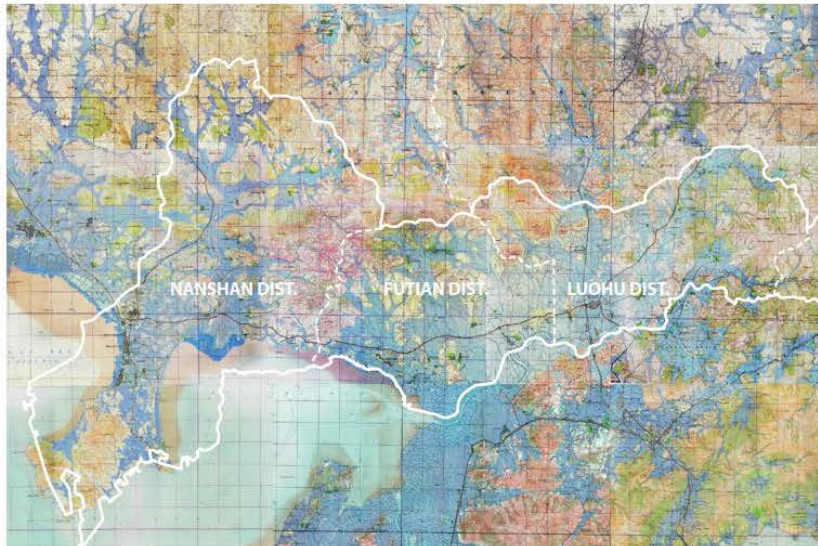


Diagram based on 1949 Survey Map showing village settlements, roads, agricultural land and terrain (Base map by UK War Office)

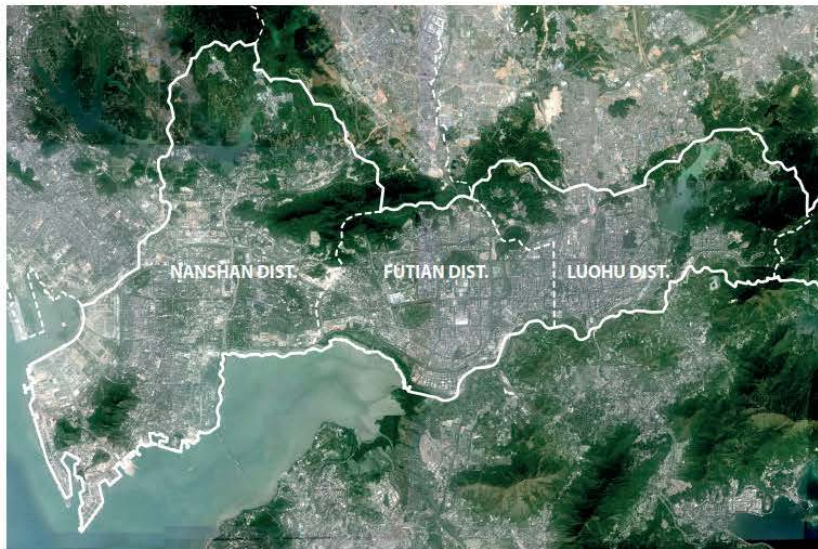
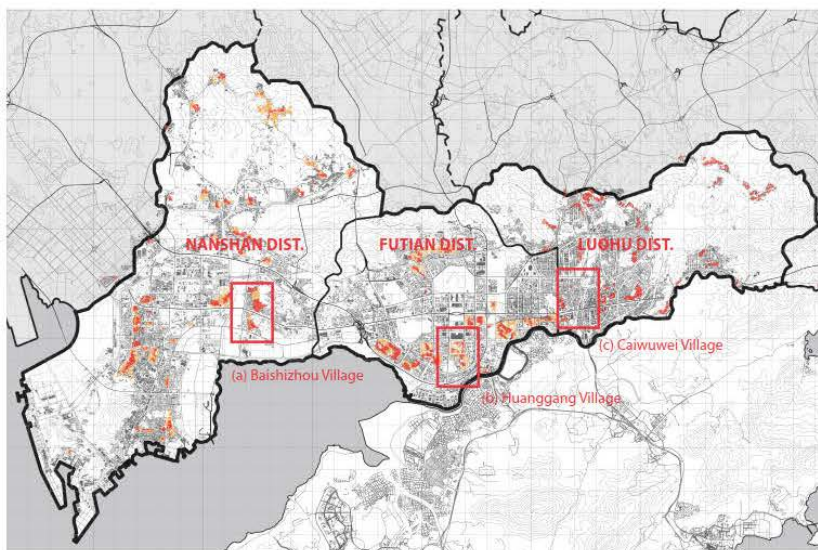


Diagram based on 2016 Satellite Image (Base map from Google Maps)



(1) Locations of ViCs distributed in current urbanized centre of Shenzhen

(2) Locations of case studies: (a) Baishizhou Village in Nanshan District; (b) Huanggang Village in Futian District; (c) Caiwuwei Village in Luohu District

**Figure 9** Case Study Locations and Historic, Satellite and Mapping Comparisons of the Three Central Districts of Shenzhen

**Case Studies' Narrative Synthesis:** The story of Shenzhen is not the story of a single purpose, but a story of many purposes. Not the story of a single history and a single place, but a collection of varied local histories and local geographies. Not the story of one person or even of one “people,” but a story of countless individuals. It is, in other words, a story of pluralities. This thesis has chosen to represent each study through tracing the interactions between personal narratives, spatial transformations, and the larger sociopolitical development of Shenzhen (and China) at large. Each individual included has contributed to the city’s urbanization and economic growth, while each one’s story reflects the overlooked processes and hidden costs of Shenzhen’s urbanization. The words and sentiments of most of these individuals are based either on participant observations and interviews that I have conducted over the years, or on published texts and public records.

## Materials and Data

**A. Detailed Survey Maps of the Bao-an County** (administrative name of the land that later became Shenzhen): The time period immediate prior to the formation of SEZ in 1979 is marked by a struggling new PRC nation. There are no survey maps by the Chinese government available for this period. Preliminary research and mapping has been conducted based on relatively low-resolution survey maps done by the War Offices of the United States.

*New data available:* Since January 2016, the National Library of Australia (NLA) has launched an online catalogue for its map collections. Among the 40,000 maps and 180,000 catalogue records, there are around 200 historical maps from 1866-1974 that cover the areas of Bao-an County, administrative name of the rural land that later became Shenzhen. Most of these geographic maps were produced by the Geographic Section, War Office of the Great Britain at the scales of 1:20,000; 1:25,000; 1:50,000 and 1:100,000. The Braga Collection in NLA holds an 1866 map of Xin’an County; and the map collection also holds cartographic maps in the region produced in 1928, 1957 and 1974. These maps contain cartographic information such as contours, land forms, vegetation cover, and locations of built-up areas, orchards and farms and are world polyconic projection. These newly accessible maps can be used in geographic and spatial analysis on the region preceding the establishment of the SEZ in 1979.

**B. Governmental Masterplans and Documents:** The Municipal Planning and Land Bureau maintain an archive of planning policy documents and master plans. Survey and Planning documents of specific villages are currently more difficult to obtain after the merging of the “Old Village Renovation Branch” with the “Old District Urban Renewal Branch”.

*New data available:* The Shenzhen branch of China Academy of Urban Planning and Design (CAUPD-SZ), responsible for the drafting of the spatial masterplans of Shenzhen since early 1980s, recently compiled internal record of their works for the past 30 years. These records contain anecdotal comments and histories that link the formal masterplanning of Shenzhen to the unpredictable growth of the city, as well as references to the urban village. In addition, due to Shenzhen’s recent recognition of

previously unaccounted for “floating population” and a more open attitude towards the urban village, more accurate census data has become available.

**C. Field Survey:** Detailed spatial survey will be conducted on site in the selected villages. Typologies of buildings and open spaces will be identified. Quantitative spatial and environmental data will be recorded in detailed drawings and digital models. Qualitative spatial information will be recorded by photos, videos, and digital simulations.

**D. Current Geographic Information:** Systematic GIS data of the entire urban regions in China is difficult to obtain due to tight regulatory control of the release of information. However through past professional and governmental collaborations, access to basic updated information such as built up areas, building foot prints and road networks of the selected study area has been established. This information will be mapped to compare to the historic geographical data, and form the foundations for more detailed visualization demonstrating the evolution of the specific urban villages.

**E. Village Records:** Type, quantity, and quality of archival records vary greatly from village to village. Contact with specific village organizations and communities has been established and a collection of different forms of material has been acquired. Formats range from photographs, ancestry records, and village newsletters.

**F. Interviews and Oral History:** In-depth interviews are targeted towards 2 main groups: Indigenous Villagers and Planners/Architects. When possible, goal is to interview members of the core decision-making teams of their respective Urban Village Collectives. Interviewed planners, architects, and planning officials will be focused on a few individuals who have participated in Shenzhen’s planning since the early 1980s. Knowledge gained from these interviews will be further correlated to the more available ethnographic information found in existing scholarly literature. Interviews with land-owners and tenants of the urban villages will also be interviewed.

## **Significance and Impacts**

### **Significance**

Shenzhen’s urban planning, industrialization, and developmental experimentations were extensively published in literature in the 90’s but have not been given much attention during the past decade. However, while there has been an increasing volume of research that touches upon the subject of Shenzhen’s Villages in the City during this time, there has yet to be any research that studies the inter-relationships between the urban villages and formal planning mechanisms. The proposed research project would be the first to bring together Shenzhen’s planning discourse and the urban villages research. Compared to other existing research and publications on the urban villages, this research will

be unprecedented in its expanded time scope by extending well past the establishment of the SEZ in 1979 and the establishment of the PRC in 1949 to bring out the deeper history of the region.

This research will expand on the theoretical framework of Urban Informality as rational and credible urban processes<sup>80</sup> by presenting Shenzhen's urban villages' incremental self-upgrades as responses and adjustments to the city's overall urbanization process. Some emerging researches situated their studies on the importance of the urban villages within the framework of the informal.<sup>81</sup> However, they often accept a conceptual and operational divide of the formal and informal and equate them to planned and unplanned. This is not sufficient in examining the case of Shenzhen's urban village redevelopment where the two are intertwined in spatial, cultural, and institutional relationships. This research aims to demonstrate that throughout decades of Shenzhen's urban villages' incremental upgrades, spontaneous developments and extralegal constructions were both the result of, and influencers for, formal planning and governmental policies. This research conceptualizes the urban villages as a form of "planned informality," which not only gives credit to the individual village/villagers' contribution to city's urban development, but also recognizes Shenzhen's governmental planning agencies' ability to create and adjust planning policies that recognize the need to adjust according to unexpected growth circumstances. The latest Shenzhen urban village redevelopment planning adheres to this conceptualization.

Shenzhen's municipal government has embarked on an aggressive campaign to demolish and redevelop the urban villages during the past decade. The urban planning, urban design, and redevelopment policies thus far has not incorporated the past history, cultural significance, social implications and economic operations of the urban village and associated contribution of the city's informal urbanism. This research aims to provide architects, planners, and policy makers with a different perspective to understanding the evolution of Shenzhen and how the roles of the urban village cannot simply be erased or replaced by standardized urban development models. As Shenzhen is a model of rapid urbanization for many developing cities and countries, a reconsideration of the developmental history and strategy of Shenzhen could contribute to the urban policy, planning, and design in other cities globally.

### **Long Term Impacts**

The phenomenon of Shenzhen's Urban Village holds important lessons to be learned, in regards to both the inadequacies of formal urban planning, and the potentials of self-organization and informal development. Dispelling the perception of a 'necessary evil', Shenzhen could serve as a persuasive

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<sup>80</sup> Nezar AlSayyad. "Urban Informality as a 'New' Way of Life", In Ananya Roy & Nezar AlSayyad (Eds.) *Urban informality: Transnational perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2004), pp. 7-30.

Ananya Roy. "Urban Informality- Toward an Epistemology of Planning", *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 71, no. 2 (2005): 147-158.

<sup>81</sup> Fulong Wu, Fangzhu Zhang & Chris Webster. "Informality and the Development and Demolition of Urban Villages in the Chinese Peri-urban Area", *Urban Studies*, 50, no. 10 (2013): 1919-34.

example of informal urbanization as assets to the planned city. As the trend of informal urbanism and mass migration is increasing drastically around the world, Shenzhen's urban village phenomenon is relatively unique and has potential to influence the understanding of slum presence and their values globally. The project aims to contribute at the empirical and theoretical levels of the research and literature on Shenzhen and the role of urban informality through the in-depth examination of the urban village's impact on Shenzhen's past and current urbanization.

China's neighbouring countries are setting up jointly operated special zones, expecting to replicate the success of Shenzhen. North Korea is setting up an area at Rason City with flexible policies to build a modern port to develop international logistics, trade, tourism, and high-end manufacturing. The North Korean authority believes it will become the country's Shenzhen. Burma passed legislation for a new special economic zone law and is looking towards the Shenzhen model. Even in Latin America, a "new" model of city building, the Charter City plan in Honduras is openly citing Shenzhen as its source of inspiration. Erroneous generalizations of Shenzhen as an instant city that had no prior history and culture pave the way for assumptions of the power of state control and master planning.

Not recognizing the unique hybrid urbanization process of Shenzhen's formation externally, lead to blind misleading copies of the economic zone as the device for city creation, and internally, lead to the normalization of planning decision that lead the city towards a future that is not sustainably based on its unique developmental history, rather a generic future based on false pretence of a generic past. This research aims to reveal a more bottom-up understanding of urban growth as a dynamic process, not only in contemporary times, but also to call for a rethinking of the histories of industrialization and urbanization in the classic models of early industrial cities such as Manchester and Chicago.

## **PART II CRITICAL REINTERPRETATION: FORMAL AND INFORMAL**

### 3. SHENZHEN PLANNING: TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP

#### Overview

Since the 1949 establishment of the People's Republic of China, the nation's economic growth had been centered on industrialization with highly restricted urbanization. The opening and reform policies of the 1980s and 1990s marked a pivotal shift away from the previously entrenched socialist governance of China's cities. These reform policies promoted the spread of marketization throughout the country, but cities were especially poised to become China's new engines of economic growth. The effects of the robust zonal policy developed during these years can still be seen today: nearly every major city in China has become identified with some type of "economic zone." The widespread dissemination of reform policies, first established in Shenzhen and later in all other major Chinese cities, drastically changed the structural relationship between China's central government and local municipalities. The accompanying decentralization of economic decision-making also changed the political and social landscape of China. Shenzhen's remarkable physical transformation and its image of modern urbanity set an example for all Chinese cities.

However, contrary to popular narratives of Shenzhen's top-down establishment and instant success, the reality of the city's evolution is far more complex. Shenzhen's early developmental history was fraught with political oppositions, policy uncertainties, economic setbacks, and vicious cultural criticism. Its development did not follow the central planning process directed by Beijing; rather, in a struggle to thrive, the city inadvertently challenged top-down policies and drastically altered centralized planning. Much of the city's subsequent unexpected exponential growth was enabled through local initiatives, bottom-up ingenuities and unanticipated, or informal, urban processes.

Shenzhen's magnetic pull was so phenomenal that it far exceeded all population growth expectations in the decades after its establishment. The city's initial purposes were outlined in the March 1979 "Reply of the State Council on Establishing Shenzhen and Zhuhai Municipality in Guangdong Province," which specified an urban population of 100,000 as a short term target, and a projected population of 200,000 to 300,000 by the year 2000.<sup>82</sup> However, the establishment of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in August 1980 prompted publication of the "Shenzhen City Urban Construction Comprehensive Planning," the city's first official planning document, which revised the projected population by the year 2000 upwards to 500,000.<sup>83</sup> The 1982 and 1986 Shenzhen Comprehensive Plans revised these figures once again, increasing the projected population to 800,000 and 1.1 million respectively. Despite these successive adjustments, the actual rate of growth far outpaced the projected increases. By the year 2000, Shenzhen's population had already topped 6

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<sup>82</sup> Zhonggong Huizhou Shiwei Dangshi Yanjiushi Ketizu (China's Central Party Huizhou Municipal Committee Party History Research Office Topical Section), "Shenzhen Tequ Jianli Guochengzhong Huiyang Diqu de Lishi Zuoyong (The History Impact of Huiyang Region during the Setting Up Process of SZSEZ)," *Shenzhen Shizhi Bangongshi (Shenzhen Historic Record Office)*, December 7, 2015.

<sup>83</sup> Wang Wei, *Shenzhen Chengshi Guihua Fazhan Jiqi Fanxing de Lishi Yanjiu (A Historical Study on Development and Paradigm of Shenzhen City Planning)*. Wuhan University of Technology. Master Thesis, April 2005.



million, or six times more than the most ambitious planned figures.<sup>84</sup> The discrepancy between projected and actual numbers also meant that the planned provisions for urban infrastructure, including housing, transportation, and social services, were far below customary standards for the amount of people. One could argue that the real mystery is how Shenzhen managed not only to avoid downfall but to continue growing into a metropolis of presently 20 million residents.

Shenzhen was initially planned as an industrial zone of manufacture and production. However, the role that the city plays evolves contingently to challenges or national orders of the time. The socialist ideology at the time regarded the city as an ideal agglomeration for industrial production linked with the state planned economies. At the initial stage of development in Shenzhen, the central and local government adopted a soviet-style central planning system, where urban planning was subservient to economic planning. Planning was a device used to overcome the negative attributes of a capitalist city such as unequal division of labor and social segregation.

As the central and local governments had no prior experience or the expertise in how to build an SEZ, the initial master plan was one of cautious speculation.<sup>85</sup> The city's first, 1980 Draft Master Layout Plan of Shenzhen's Urban Development drafted by the Guangzhou Planning Institute, sketched the development of an "industry-led modernized SEZ of 49 km<sup>2</sup> and the target population of a half million by 1990. However, the modest plan was rejected by the central government that demanded the plan of a larger industrial city and ordered the formulation of an economic plan that corresponded with the national Sixth Five Year Plan. The subsequent 1982 Shenzhen Socio-economic Outline Development Plan and the master layout plan envisioned an industrial city with multiple functions in commercial, agricultural, residential and tourist activities. The planned population was expanded to 0.8 million and the covered territory to 98 km<sup>2</sup>, dividing the eastern, central, and western districts into 18 functional zones. This planning resulted in an essentially linear city stretching along the border between Shenzhen and Hong Kong. A single coastal transportation spine Shennan Boulevard connected the three major industrial clusters then – Shatoujiao, Luohu-Shangbu, and Shekou-Nantou. Much of the SEZ's early development happened within these industrial zones, without attention paid to the overall formal and operational relationship between them. The state allocated large investment to initiate the construction of factories and transportation system in these industrial zones, aiming to attract foreign investment, but the major sources of early investment were domestic loans or funds raised locally from other provinces due to the lack of infrastructure to power industrial development at the time.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Shenzhen Planning Bureau, "Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Shehui Jingji Fazhan Guihua Dagang (Shenzhen SEZ Socioeconomic Development Outline Plan)" (1982); Shenzhen Planning Bureau & China Academy of Urban Planning and Design, "Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Zhongti Guihua (Shenzhen SEZ Master Plan 1986-2000)" (1986); Shenzhen Statistics Bureau and NBS Survey Office in Shenzhen, eds., *Shenzhen Tongji Nianjian (Shenzhen Statistical Yearbook)* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2015).

<sup>85</sup> Michael J. Bruton, Sheila G. Bruton and Li Yu. "Shenzhen: Coping with uncertainties in planning." *Habitat International* 29 (2005): 227– 243.

<sup>86</sup> Mee Kam Ng & Wing-Shing Tang. "The Role of Planning in the Development of Shenzhen, China: Rhetoric and Realities." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 45, no. 3 (2004): 190-211.





**Figure 10** Maps of Shenzhen's early rural-urban administrative changes: 1978 Rural Bao'an County; 1979 Establishment of Shenzhen City and cancelation of rural Bao'an; 1980 Division of Shenzhen into the SEZ and the reinstated rural Bao'an County.

## Shenzhen SEZ: A Bottom Up Initiative

By the end of the 1970's, China's central government actively sought out potential market opportunities internationally. Often overlooked, are the efforts to establish Special Economic Zones in Guangdong as a bottom-up endeavors by local government officials in the region.

The announcement of China's reforms and opening up to the outside world was greeted with particular enthusiasm in Guangdong, a region that had already spawned international networks through personal relationships and informal connections with overseas Chinese diaspora.<sup>87</sup> Wu Nansheng, Secretary of the Guangdong Communist Party Committee and a native of the province, was especially motivated.<sup>8889</sup> Spurred on by widespread poverty in Shantou, his hometown and a former bustling international seaport city, but also knowing the potential advantages of its extensive ties to the outside world, Wu proposed to transform Shantou into an "export processing zone" by attracting investment from members of the city's overseas Chinese diaspora. Wu maintains that this idea did not come from any one individual, but rather was a collective effort generated through discussions with Shantou emigrants who were, by then, wealthy, patriotic businessmen living in Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.<sup>90</sup> They pointed out to Wu that the key to economic take-off in Singapore and Hong Kong had been their advantages as free ports and processing zones.

By March 1979, Wu Nansheng's idea had received enthusiastic support from Xi Zhongxun, father of China's current General Secretary Xi Jinping, then the Chief Secretary of the CCP in Guangdong Province.<sup>91</sup> While Xi Zhongxun had only been stationed by the central government in Guangdong for two years, he recognized that the greatest obstacle faced by the provincial leaders was the lack of laborers and farmers due to the emptying of villages and cities. The proposal had the potential to stem the exodus of residents as well as improve regional economy and security. Xi Zhongxun additionally recommended expanding Wu's Shantou "Export Processing Zone" proposal to cover the entire Guangdong Province. Following internal discussions, the Guangdong provincial leaders decided to first limit the zone to specific locations in Guangdong. In April 1979, Xi Zhongxun presented the Guangdong Proposal to Beijing's central government, proposing to establish Export Processing Zones in Shantou, Zhuhai, and Shenzhen. During his Beijing visit, Xi Zhongxun also requested greater autonomy for the provincial government in order to experiment with policies to attract foreign investment and increase export trade. This was a bold and potentially politically reckless request, especially coming from Guangdong. For decades, and even centuries, China's southernmost province was criticized in Beijing for exercising "localism," and therefore closely scrutinized by the central government for any acts of

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<sup>87</sup> Father of Xi Jinping, China's current President. For the details of Xi Zhongxun's biography, see: Xi zhongxun chuan bianweihui (Editorial Board of the Biography of Xi Zhongxun), *Xi Zhongxun Chuan (Biography of Xi Zhongxun)* (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe 1996).

<sup>88</sup> Xiao and Yang.

<sup>89</sup> More on his specific role in Shenzhen later. Later in 1980, as Shenzhen's Party Secretary, Wu was instrumental in the startup phase of the planning and financing of Shenzhen's infrastructure.

<sup>90</sup> Hong Chen, *Shenzhen Zhongda Juece He Shijian Minjian Guancha (Civil Observations on the Major Decision-Makings and Events in Shenzhen)* (Wuhan: Zhangjiang wenyi chubanshe, 2006), pp. 9–23.

<sup>91</sup> Di Lu, "Guangdong Jingji Tequ De Tuohuangzhe - Wu Nansheng (the Pioneer of Sezs in Guangdong - Wu Nansheng)," no. 1 (2001).

disobedience. Xi Zhongxun's lobbying on behalf of Guangdong's local provincial governance was met with the usual suspicion, as well as unexpected support, in Beijing.

To understand the reasons behind the central government's willingness to consider Guangdong's request for such exceptional treatment, it is necessary to further contextualize the events leading up to the December 1978 Third Plenary Session of the 11<sup>th</sup> Committee. Over the course of 1978, Premier Hua Guofeng endorsed a group of top government officials to make a series of foreign study trips. The communist leaders traveled to countries in Asia and the West that were more developed and encompassed diverse political systems. It was the first time that many of these leaders realized how backward the Chinese economy and industrial production were, following decades of wars and internal strife. One particularly important tour took place in May 1978, when a high-level delegation led by Vice-Premier Gu Mu visited the West European countries of France, Belgium, Denmark, Switzerland, and West Germany. In addition to reports of advanced developments in trade, commerce, and technology, Gu Mu brought back the message that foreign countries, even capitalist ones, were willing to invest and aid in the modernization of China's industrial production.<sup>92</sup> Gu Mu's report had a major impact on government discussions the following year, particularly regarding the possibility of reforming China's economic system.<sup>93</sup> However, there were many obstacles to this major change in direction: lack of foreign currency, an outdated industrial base, and limited technical capacity, to mention a few. The central government looked to the countries bordering China for possible guidance. In 1978, in an unprecedented move, Beijing sent a diplomatic delegation to Hong Kong to meet with the British colonial governor Murray MacLehose on the subject of potential economic collaboration.<sup>94</sup> The meeting was productive and, on returning to Beijing, the delegation drafted the "Economic Survey Report of Hong Kong and Macau," which assessed the viability of building production bases for export-oriented activities in rural Bao'an County. However, the only industries under consideration were agricultural production and tourism, and export activities mainly referred to trade with neighboring Hong Kong.

By March 1979, the State Council had approved plans to designate the 2020 square kilometers comprising rural Bao'an County as the City of Shenzhen, named after the old border market town. The total population in this territory at the time was 358,000, mostly spread throughout 2000 agrarian villages. More concentrated populations could be found in commercial centers such as Shenzhen Old Town, which had a population of 30,000. Both the central government's decision to establish the city of Shenzhen, and the parallel proposal at the provincial level to establish Shenzhen as a Special Economic Zone were driven by one common purpose: to stop the mass illegal border crossings known as the Great Escape to Hong Kong. The initial plan for Shenzhen City was modest in scale, comprised of new urban development's totaling 10.65 square kilometers and spread among three areas of Bao'an that already existed as regional commercial and industrial centers—namely Shenzhen Old Town, Shekou Industrial Zone, and the Shatoujiao commercial area.

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<sup>92</sup> Fangqing Cheng, "Zhongguo Huiji Gaige Chuangxin De Shiyanchang -Shenzhen Tequ 30 Nian Huiji Gaige Chuangxin De Changshi (the Experimental Field of China's Accounting Reform)," (China Financial Publishing House, 2011); *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Ezra F. Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2011), pp. 220, 224.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 219–220.

The short-term target was to attract a new population of 100,000 to Shenzhen SEZ, with an expected increase in population to 200,000 or 300,000 by the year 2000. The central government's first objective for the SEZ was to generate revenue by expanding the region's light industrial-agricultural production, and the second was to attract visitors from nearby Hong Kong and Macau for scenic tourism. While the second goal may seem contrary to today's commonly perceived image of Shenzhen as a former factory town, the territory's lush mountains and pristine water bodies have been historically renowned for centuries. During this initial phase of centralized planning, with the exception of agricultural production, all industries were required to remain under the operation of state-owned enterprises.

The proposal that Xi Zhongxun presented to the Beijing authorities in April 1979, to set up "export processing zones" in Guangdong, pushed the boundaries of acceptability much further, inviting direct foreign investment and the development of private enterprises. As mentioned earlier, the proposal received a mixed response: it was criticized by many in the central government, and even the term "Export Processing Zones" sparked objections from a number of Beijing's top CCP members. The term was deemed unacceptable because it is the same terminology used in Taiwan at the time. The alternative expressions "Free Trade Zone" or "Trade and Export Zone" were regarded as too blatantly capitalistic. Although Deng Xiaoping was not present at most of the formal meetings to discuss the Guangdong proposal, he made his support known and, via Vice-Premier Gu Mu, offered to solve this dilemma by suggesting adoption of the term "Special Zone."<sup>95</sup> It had a strong patriotic tone, as it was utilized to designate enclave districts for special administrative and military purposes during China's anti-Japanese war era (1931-1945). In addition, Deng emphasized that while the central Beijing government could not provide substantial funding, it would support Guangdong by granting its local government more autonomy and jurisdiction through the waiving of certain national policies.

After months of deliberation, the Guangdong proposal eventually garnered sufficient support. However, critics of the initiative maintained that it ran counter to communist doctrines, and these voices remained a strong presence in the central government. On July 19, 1979, the Central Committee Document No. 50 was officially issued, granting Guangdong and Fujian provinces "Special Policy, Flexible Measures" to explore setting up "Special Zones" in the cities of Shenzhen and Zhuhai. If successful, these would be followed by zones in Shantou and Xiamen. Vice-Premier Gu Mu was charged with leading coordination efforts between the central government and the local provinces. Wu Nansheng, the local initiator from Shantou, was appointed Director of the newly formed Guangdong Province Special Zone Office, with the role of leading the planning efforts for all three Special Zones and the drafting of a "Special Zone Ordinance." In December 1979, Wu Nansheng presented a written report to the State Council, proposing to reduce the ongoing illegal border crossings by boosting the local economy through agricultural production, tourism, and construction of an Export Processing Zone in the Fujian Commune using foreign investment.<sup>96</sup> Wu's report was entitled "A Few Problems Regarding the Establishment of

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<sup>95</sup> Mu Gu, *Gumu Huiyilu (Memoirs of Gumu)* (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2009).

<sup>96</sup> Nansheng Wu, "Guanyu Guangdong Jianli Jingji Tequ Jige Wenti De Huibao Tigang (Report Summary of Several Problems Regarding the Establishment of Special Economic Zones in Guangdong)" (1979).

Guangdong's Special Economic Zone." It was the first official appearance of the term "Special Economic Zone" in governmental documents.<sup>97</sup>

### **The First Masterplan of Shenzhen**

Following his appointment as Shenzhen's first mayor and Secretary of the Shenzhen CPC in June 1980, Wu Nansheng directed the drafting of the first "Shenzhen Urban Construction Comprehensive Master Plan." It was produced by the Guangzhou Planning Institute (planning agencies were yet to be established in Shenzhen) with support from expert advisors from all over China. The plan described its intended outcome as "an industry-led modernized Special Economic Zone with industrial and agricultural production, and to be constructed as a new type of border city."<sup>98</sup> The SEZ was designed to accommodate a service population of 300,000, with a projected total population of 600,000 across the 2,000 square kilometers of territory formerly known as Bao'an County; the county was abolished in August 1980, and the territory designated as Shenzhen City. The plan demarcated, for the first time, the Special Economic Zone as an area of 327.5 square kilometers within that territory. The SEZ was situated on the border of Hong Kong, with the Luohu area (named after the border-crossing) marked as its center. On August 26, 1980, China's Fifth Standing Committee of the National People's Congress approved the "Guangdong Province Special Economic Zone Ordinance" for the cities of Shenzhen, Zhuhai, and Shantou. The "Shenzhen Special Economic Zone" was officially a reality.

The making of Shenzhen transformed the territory of Bao'an County at a rate unexperienced in human history. First, the territory was split. The former Bao'an County and its residents were separated into two areas: inside the SEZ, and outside the SEZ. The differences were not so acute, until the subsequent 1982 Land Nationalization policy that categorized China's land as either urban land owned by the state government, or rural land remaining under the ownership of rural collectives. In the case of Shenzhen, SEZ land continued to be designated as urban and owned by the government, while land outside the SEZ reverted back to its pre-1980 status as rural. For administrative purposes, the abolished Bao'an County was reinstated in 1982. This time it included only the land outside of the SEZ (i.e. rural land), separated from urban land by a boundary that later became known as the "Er-Xian-Guan," or Second Line Border (to distinguish it from the Hong Kong-Shenzhen national border). For centuries, the name Bao'an had referred to the entire territory of what later became today's Shenzhen City. From 1982 onwards, the name referred only to the rural areas of Shenzhen outside of the Special Economic Zone.

The 1982 Shenzhen SEZ Master Plan formed a central part of the overall "1982 Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Social and Economic Development Planning" strategy, and depicted the SEZ area sandwiched between the southern border of Hong Kong and the northern border of Bao'an County. These influential planning efforts in Shenzhen were led by Liang Xiang, the city's second mayor, who held his office from 1981 to 1985. Liang, a native of Guangdong and seasoned CCP leader, was first

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> "Shenzhen Shi Chengshi Jianshe Zongti Guihua (Shenzhen City Urban Construction Overall Plan)," ed. Shenzhen Urban Planning Bureau (SUPB) (Shenzhen 1980).  
Huida Gu, ed. *Shenzhen Chengshi Guihua De Huigu Yu Zhanwang (Review and Prospect of Urban Planning in Shenzhen)*, Collection of Essays by the Urban Planning and Design Institute of Shenzhen (Shenzhen: Urban Planning and Design Institute of Shenzhen, 1998).

appointed by the Guangdong government to Shenzhen's top post of CCP Secretary in March 1981. Under his leadership, the vision for Shenzhen's development was greatly expanded from an industry-oriented processing zone towards a more holistic and fully functioning city. By July 1981, the central government endorsed Liang Xiang's initiatives and announced that Shenzhen would be an "Industry-oriented, and concurrently commercial, agricultural, residential, tourist and other multi-functioning comprehensive special economic zone."

With the subsequent establishment of the Shenzhen Municipal Planning Department and Economic Planning Commission, the Shenzhen government produced the "1982 Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Social and Economic Development Plan." Formulation of the new plans occupied the rest of the year: local government officials conducted drafting meetings with national experts in April, consultations with Hong Kong economists and planners in September, and finally submitted a finished plan to the Guangzhou government by December 1982.<sup>99</sup> It is customary for China's city master plans (which outline the general land-use pattern) to be approved by provincial governments; however, due to its unique status, the SEZ's Master Plan required additional approval by the State Council in Beijing.<sup>100</sup>

The 1982 Shenzhen planning document was more comprehensive in scope than the initial 1980 version. It not only outlined locations for industrial activities, but also designated areas for commercial, residential, civic and educational functions. In addition, it detailed a more ambitious population projection for Shenzhen: 250,000 by 1985; 400,000 by 1990; and 800,000 by the year 2000. However, the centerpiece of the planning document was the elegantly hand-drawn and brightly colored Master Plan map.

The 1982 Master Plan map of the SEZ—the city's imagined future city center—lays out orange-colored "Residential Zones," brown "Industrial-Logistic Zones," and green "Tourism Zones," distributed across a yellow background described as "Farming and Forest Land." The red grid denotes a road transportation network stretching from the Nantou Peninsula in the west, via the Luohu border area in the center, to the more isolated areas around Shatoujiao in the eastern areas. The urban form of Shenzhen's city center eventually developed along the west-east spine of the main Shennan Boulevard, which connected the various zones. In the decades that followed, this master plan was credited with the innovation of the so-called "Clustered Linear Planning Principle" (*dai zhuang zu tuan*), and commended by industry and academia. Indeed, the SEZ's eventual spatial urban development appeared to closely conform to the original spatial planning.<sup>101</sup> However, analysis of the 1982 Master Plan has often neglected the relationship of urban development to the natural geography and built settlements that existed pre-1979. This oversight inflates the impact of the Master Plan while overlooking the geographic and environmental sensitivity of the early planners that contributed to this effort.

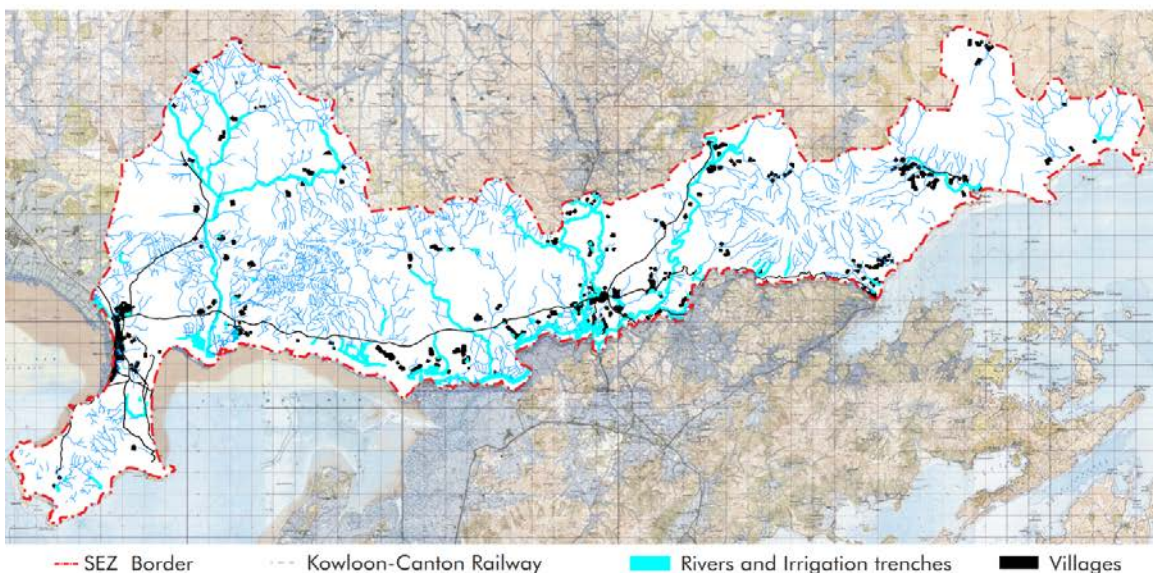
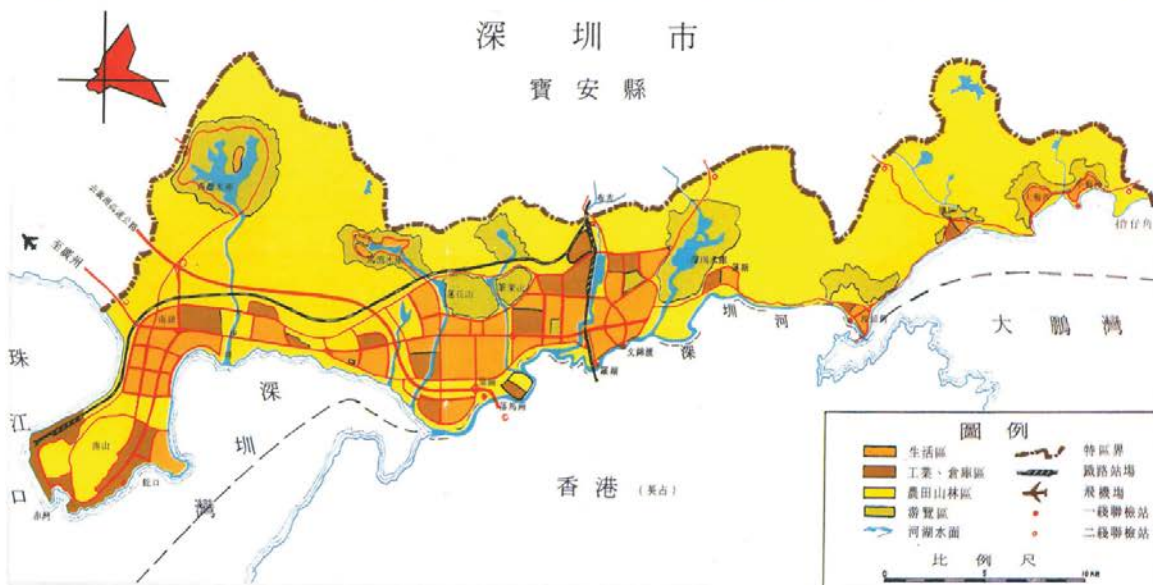
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<sup>99</sup> Archives Bureau of Shenzhen Municipality, "1982 Chronicle".

<sup>100</sup> Anthony Gar-on Yeh, "Physical Planning," in Kwan Yiu Wong & David K. Y. Chu (eds.) *Modernization in China - the Case of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp.108–130.

<sup>101</sup> John Zacharias and Yuanzhou Tang, "Restructuring and Repositioning Shenzhen, China's New Mega City," *Progress in Planning* 73, (2010).





**Figure 11** Topographic Map of Bao'an (Shenzhen) ca. 1950s (upper). The First Shenzhen SEZ Master Plan of 1982 (middle). Map of pre-existing villages, waterways, and roads redrawn from the 1950s survey map (lower). Comparisons of the maps indicate the influence of pre-existing man-made and natural geographies on the 1982 Plan, contrary to the misconception that modern Shenzhen was based on an idealized city planning based on a "blank slate". Locations of the planned new industrial zones avoided areas that contained villages, and the elegantly planned six north-south waterways and tourism zones followed the pre-existing north-south rivers.

## Shenzhen Geography: Non-Tabula Rasa

Comparing the 1982 Master Plan with a 1960s map of the same region reveals that, while indigenous villages settlements were not noted on the Master Plan, they all neatly fall within the orange-shaded Residential Zones. Likewise, all the “Industrial-Logistic Zones” were adjacent to but outside the Residential Zones, thus avoiding overlap with all the villages. While the distribution of these industrial zones may seem scattered, there was an underlying logic: when the new city government negotiated to purchase land from the local village collectives, financial constraints necessitated that it only expropriate the farming fields surrounding the original village settlements, leaving the villagers with land for self-built housing and self-industrialization. This explains how former farming fields, i.e. the land most easily expropriated, became the first Industrial-Logistic Zones. Thus, much of the spatial arrangement on the new Master Plan map could be said to have been born of necessity rather than designed as an ideal urban form. In other words, the locations of the most important industrial and residential clusters within the new city of Shenzhen were dictated by the patterns of original village settlements and farming fields. The orange Residential Zones (rather than the planned brown Industrial-Logistic Zones) would eventually develop into the most densely built-up urban districts of Shenzhen. Embedded in present-day Shenzhen’s modern urban pattern lies the hidden original distribution of villages and the lands between them, with the distance from each village center to the periphery of the surrounding farming fields (which were mostly accessible within a day’s walk). The spatial development of Shenzhen, the city that would become one of the world’s densest urban centers, was unintentionally determined by centuries-old agrarian spatial patterns.

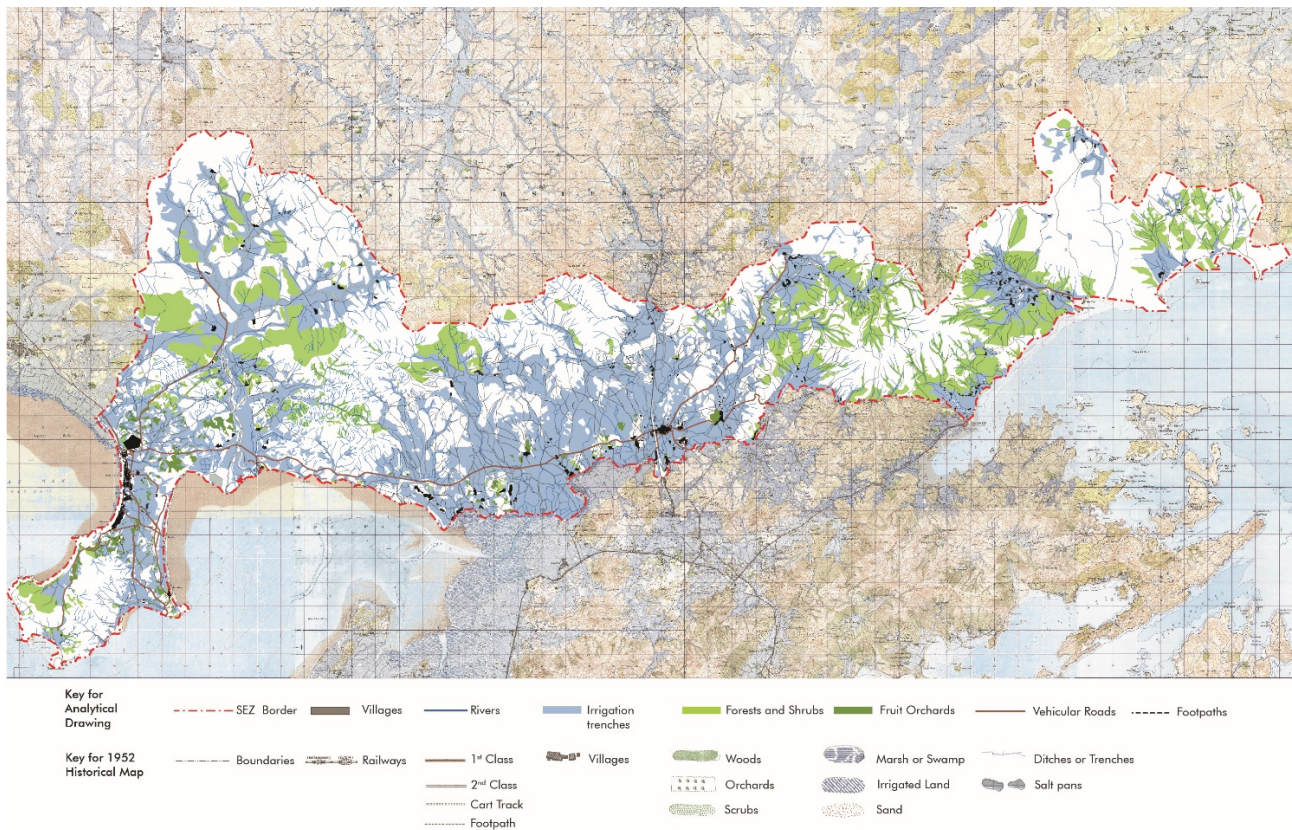
Even the city’s most important transportation artery, Shennan Boulevard, closely follows a pre-existing country road that was built at the turn of the twentieth century. The original narrow earthen road was formally named Country Road 107, as a part of an old national road system. However, locally it was informally called by its historic name Bao-Shen Road, as it connected the Bao’an Fort in Nantou Old City to the west with Shenzhen Old Market Town to the east, its route linking up various large coastal villages.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, the 1982 Master Plan depicts several large-scale urban landscape features incorporating the natural and manmade waterways of the region prior to 1979. Abundant with rivers, canals, and marshes, the local geography was dominated by waterways, which provided irrigation for the rice fields and ponds for fisheries. The 1982 Master Plan includes six waterways that originate from a natural reservoir or water dam, which is enclosed by a Tourism Zone to the north of the Industrial-Residential Zones; these waterways flow southwards, discharging into either Shenzhen Bay or the Shenzhen River. The incorporation of existing waterways, farming fields, villages, and transportation networks reflected the early planners’ knowledge of and sensitivity to the pre-existing natural and manmade geography. The influential Shenzhen origin myth, with its emphasis on the miraculous new city, downplays the impact of the original physical geography and distribution of settlements, as well as

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<sup>102</sup> Weixiang Huang and Songlin Ma, eds., *Baoan Xianzhi (Baoan Annals)* (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1997).



environmental considerations by early planners. These elements are continuously overlooked in later accounts of the city's planning history.



**Figure 12** Detailed composite map of pre-existing man-made and natural geographies redrawn from 1950s survey map of the present-day Shenzhen. As indicated by map, the territory was once fully occupied with agricultural and aquacultural productions. These pre-urban spatial, social, cultural, and economic geographies played significant roles in Shenzhen's post-1979 urbanization and development.

In March and April 1984, a series of meetings were held in Beijing to advance further reform policies. By May 4, the central government formally declared 14 coastal cities, including Shanghai and Guangzhou, as the next sites of economic reforms. In May 1984, the “doors” of Dalian, Qinhuangdao, Tianjin, Yantai, Qingdao, Lianyungang, Nantong, Shanghai, Ningbo, Wenzhou, Fuzhou, Guangzhou, Zhanjiang, and Beihai were opened to foreign investment and trading. At the National Day parade on October 1, 1984 in front of Tiananmen Square, broadcast on national TV all over China, there was a float in the form of Shekou’s Ming Hua cruise liner emblazoned with the famous slogan in large bold text: “Time is Money; Efficiency is Life.” Formerly used as evidence to denounce Shekou and Yuan Geng for capitalism, the slogan was now celebrated at national level. The State Council released the “Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Economic Reform” document in the same month, signaling to the nation the central government’s intention to continue the reform and opening-up of China.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>103</sup> The CPC Central Committee, “Guanyu Jingji Tizhi Gaige De Jueding (the Central Committee of Cpc's Decision on Economic System Reform),” ed. the CPC Central Committee (Beijing: the CPC Central Committee, 1984).

Buoyed by the endorsement of Deng Xiaoping's 1984 visit, Shenzhen embarked on an ambitious new round of planning. Under the direction of the Mayor's office and the Municipal Planning Department, the Shenzhen Branch of the Chinese Academy of Urban Planning and Design (CAUPD SZ) began work on Shenzhen's Second Master Plan in late 1984. The first step in this new draft involved a detailed survey of the state of urban construction at the time. The 1984 SEZ Survey Map, produced by the CAUPD SZ, revealed that urban development was mainly concentrated in the Luohu District, just north of the Hong Kong border crossing. This was by far the most densely urbanized area of the SEZ, comprised largely of high rises, and the main focus of Deng Xiaoping's 1984 visit. Prior to 1985, the Shenzhen SEZ had yet to attract substantial foreign investment and enterprises. The development of the rest of the SEZ—which stretched east and west of the Luohu District city center—was largely left to various individual enterprises, unrestrained by the land use designations of the city master plan. It should be noted that, with the exception of the two large industrial zones of Shangbu and Shekou, the pre-existing villages formed some of the most dynamic centers for small-scale industrial activities.

New enthusiasm for Shenzhen's future drove city leaders and planners to develop more concrete plans for the entire SEZ beyond the Luohu District, and the 1984 Master Plan increased the focus area for urban build-up land to 123 square kilometers—25% bigger than that of the original 1982 Shenzhen SEZ Master Plan. Given that Luohu District was almost all occupied by new constructions, and in order to facilitate Shenzhen's westward expansion, local leaders decided to move the civic and commercial core of the city from Luohu westwards to Futian District. Drafts of the "Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Masterplan 1986–2000" were completed and released by the Municipal Planning Department and CAUPD SZ in 1985. Formal axial planning organized the center of this new Futian District, which would later become the new location of Shenzhen City Hall.

A comparison of the 1982 and 1985 Master Plans clearly shows the city's intention to remold itself from a loose collection of industrial clusters into a comprehensive city. In addition to industrial zones, the second Master Plan specified land uses for commercial, political, educational, and leisure activities, while residential areas were further refined and all connected with an extensive greenbelt-lined road network. The aspiration for a landscaped city reflected the intention to build Shenzhen into a comprehensive city—beyond an industrial production and export zone. It also reflected the influence of Singapore during the early decades of the SEZ.<sup>104</sup> Singapore's manicured green parkways, epitomizing a modern, clean, garden city, shaped the vision of Shenzhen's city leaders, especially Mayor Liang Xiang. Liang's forward-looking vision also included a rapid roadway network that established Shenzhen's future as a car-dependent city, the merits of which might be disputed today. His more admirable measures, however, included setting aside a large land plot for a new Shenzhen University and allocating 50 million RMB, almost half the city's total annual revenue, for its construction and faculty recruitment.<sup>105</sup> This effort designated the education of people as the city's most important investment. Indeed, while it would have been difficult to predict this outcome at the time, many of the future graduates of Shenzhen

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<sup>104</sup> Kees Christiaanse. "Green Urbanism: Models of a Dense and Green Urban Context." In *Dense + Green: Innovative Building Types for Sustainable Urban Architecture* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2015).

<sup>105</sup> Shenzhen Daily and Shenzhen Municipal Archive, "Shenzhen Gaige Kaifang Ziliao (Information on the Reform and Opening up Policies of Shenzhen)".

University would go on to play significant roles in the technological and economic advancement of the city. Some graduates of the university would generate stunning global impacts, including Tencent's founder Ma Huateng, the most profitable social media organization in the world. Other major civic infrastructure projects incorporated into the new Master Plan included: the future Shenzhen Airport, to be located in the former Shajing communes, an area just outside the SEZ; the Guangzhou-Shenzhen Highway; and two additional east-west transportation arteries inside the SEZ, as well as expansion of the previously planned Shen-Nan (Shennan) Boulevard.

The second Shenzhen SEZ Master Plan was refined by the Shenzhen Urban Planning Committee throughout the year, and published in August 1986 as the "Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Master Plan (1986–1990)" to coincide with the release of "Shenzhen's Seventh Five-Year Plan (1986–1990)."<sup>106</sup> According to the published planning document, the Shenzhen SEZ would "be built into a predominantly industrial, export-oriented, multi-functional industrially well-structured, technically advanced, comprehensive economic zone with a high degree of civilization."<sup>107</sup> While the six north-south river-reservoir tourism nature reserves of the 1982 SEZ Master Plan are no longer clearly evident, the 1985 SEZ Master Plan still incorporated the existing natural geography—hills, rivers, forests, and even large lychee orchards—into the urban landscape. The 1985 Master Plan allocated 22 public parks and 10 tourism areas, all connected by the 140 kilometers of parkways lined with greenery.<sup>108</sup> While not clearly evident from the Master Plan drawing and often overlooked in later descriptions of early planning efforts, many of the designated green areas, public parks, and urban water features were derived from former agrarian fruit orchards, fishing ponds, and river system flood plains. While the Master Plans clearly demonstrate the city's progression from 1982 to 1985, less obvious—and often overlooked—is the significant impact of the pre-existing natural and manmade geography on the spatial layout of the new 1985 Master Plan.

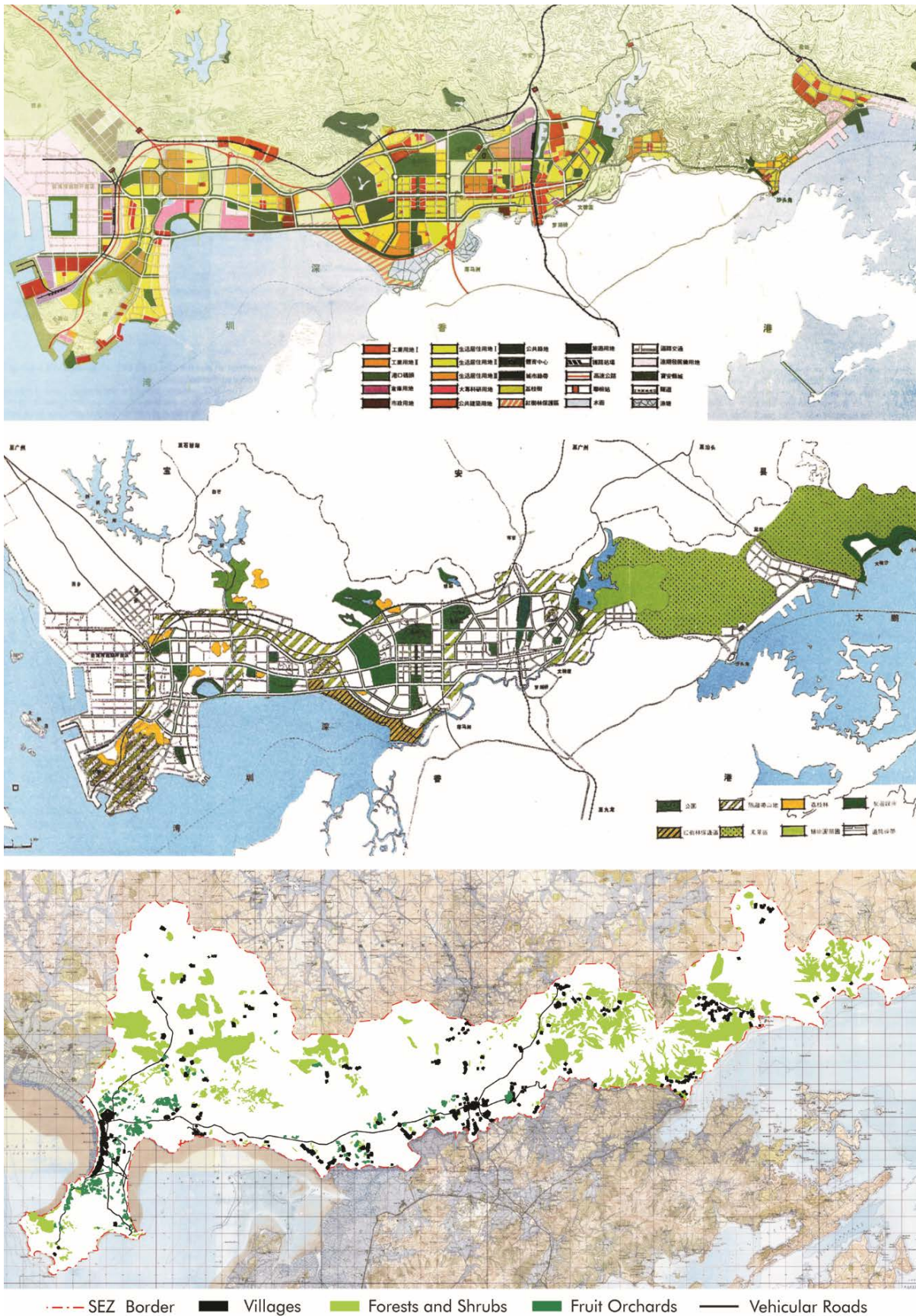
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<sup>106</sup> Shenzhen Development Planning Bureau, *Shiji De Kuayue: Shenzhen Shi Lici Wunian Guihua Huibian (Crossing the Century: A Collection of Five-Year Plans of the Shenzhen)* (Shenzhen: Haitian Chubanshe, 2002).

<sup>107</sup> Chuanfang Li (ed.), *Shenzhen Zhengshi Guihua (Shenzhen Urban Planning and Design)* (Shenzhen: Haitian Chubanshe, 1990), p. 15.

<sup>108</sup> Huang, et al. (2012). The Plan-led Urban Form. 48th ISOCARP Congress 2012.





**Figure 13** 1986 Shenzhen SEZ Master Plan (upper). 1986 SEZ Urban Greenery Master Plan (middle). Map of Villages, Roads, Orchards, and Woodlands redrawn from 1950s survey map (below). Comparisons of the Maps indicate influence of the pre-existing geographies on Shenzhen's second round of planning. However, the six north-south urban waterways of the 1982 Master Plan were changed to "Isolation Zones" in the 1986 Plan.

Shenzhen's pre-existing geography is not the only critical factor that has been underemphasized in the narrative of Shenzhen's formal planning. Another factor was the explosion of unplanned population growth and the lack of housing provisions for this influx of new residents. The population target for the 1982 Shenzhen SEZ Master Plan was set according to "Shenzhen's Sixth Five Year Plan." This document anticipated a future population of one million by the year 2000. However, by 1985, Shenzhen's population had already reached 880,000; nearly 400,000 of those individuals were unregistered "temporary" residents. While Shenzhen's government officials and planners were aware that they had vastly underestimated the population increase, they were also aware that the central government in Beijing was critical of such uncontrolled growth, especially that attributed to the "temporary" population without urban *hukou* or even registration papers. This explains why the new 1986–1990 Master Plan was obliged to follow the new Seventh Five-Year Plan, and therefore set the new target for the registered population as 800,000, and for the temporary population as 300,000, by the year 2000.<sup>109</sup> While this Master Plan acknowledged the existence of the temporary population for the first time, it could not blatantly reveal that this segment already made up nearly 50% of Shenzhen's population.

### **The Great Migration South**

One of the biggest initial draw of migrants to Shenzhen was the city's radical break from national policy of resident registration, *hukou*. The *hukou* system was set up in 1958, when the National People's Congress passed its "Regulations on Household Registration in the People's Republic of China," and still exists today (albeit in a more relaxed form). Every Chinese citizen is assigned a *hukou* tied to the lowest-level administrative unit—city, township, village, etc. Depending on its administrative location, a person's *hukou* is further classified as an "agricultural" (rural) or "non-agricultural" (urban) *hukou*. In principle, the *hukou* cannot be transferred from one location to another, and especially not from rural villages to urban centers. This system effectively controlled the internal movements of China's vast population and facilitated the country's planned economy, which rationalized and governed state spending on programs such as education, healthcare, housing, and employment. Migration between cities was even forbidden unless authorized by the government. Through its geographic regulations, this institutionally divisive system unintentionally segregated China's population into two broad socioeconomic classes, with rural *hukou* holders benefitting from considerably fewer opportunities for upward economic or social mobility.

Those born to parents of rural *hukou* inherited this "second-class citizen" status, which restricted how and where they lived, worked, married, and were buried. Access to agricultural land was possible via the village collective, but the Communist state welfare benefits were not available. Prolonged presence in any city was illegal, and one risked being stopped by the police demanding to see identification papers. Until the early 2000s, those caught without the proper *hukou* were fined and sent to detention centers. A woman who was held in a migrant detention center in Beijing described her experience in 1995 as "hell on earth, much worse than normal prisons. . . . Considering all living conditions, including

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<sup>109</sup> Li, p. 15.

food, I say that is not a place for a human being.”<sup>110</sup> If individuals were unable to provide papers within one month of their detention, they would be deported back to their place of *hukou* registration. Massive “clean-up campaigns” to round up millions of rural migrants for repatriation were carried out in most major Chinese cities, as recently as the 2000s.

Although the central government tightly controlled quotas for legalized migration through temporary residency registration, Shenzhen’s flourishing industries attracted a massive influx of people from all over China seeking work opportunities without formal registration. Since these enterprises and factories completely relied on rural workers as a source of cheap labor, both employees and employers took the risks of engaging in informal, and at times unlawful, practices. In order to grow, Shenzhen opened its doors to millions of rural migrants seeking opportunities that would have been impossible elsewhere in China. In addition, the Shenzhen government made considerable efforts to recruit skilled and educated personnel. Individual enterprises even awarded a head-hunting bonus to employees as a recruiting incentive.

In 1984, Shenzhen’s municipal government began issuing “Temporary Residence Certificates.” This made Shenzhen the first city in China to formally recognize the existence of a “floating population” and, most importantly, to offer legal status to the so-called migrant workers, officially authorizing them to live and work in the city. Over the next decade, this practice was replicated by other city governments in Guangdong province and other urban centers in China. Shenzhen later initiated additional *hukou* reforms to support certain groups of new arrivals by shortening their waiting period for the Shenzhen’s urban *hukou*. These reforms included the Blue Chop program, designed to attract well-educated workers, and a point-based system that incorporated additional factors such as home purchases. The successful implementation of these “special” measures encouraged their adoption by other Chinese cities, and eventually inspired ongoing nationwide *hukou* reforms.<sup>111</sup>

Whether out of necessity or collective spirit, time and again Shenzhen paved the way for the rest of the country in changing existing policies and formulating new protocols for working migrants. Shenzhen’s successive *hukou* reforms, and more importantly, its open and welcoming approach to newcomers, helped to make its urban culture unique in comparison to other cities in China. While Shenzhen has often been described as a pilot site for China’s economic reforms, the city’s role in ushering drastic changes to societal norms and expectations is just as often overlooked. In a country where one’s social network and cultural identifier were largely based on place of origin, a conversation between two people meeting for the first time often started with “*ni shi na li ren*,” which means not just “where are you from?” but, more literally, “you are a person of what place?” In Shenzhen, the same obligatory question would still be asked, but the verbal exchange would usually include some words of comfort to the new comer: “*lai le jiu shi Shenzhen ren*,” translated as “now that you’re here, you are person of Shenzhen.” The phrase became the city’s unofficial motto, a civic sentiment of citizenship upon arrival.

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<sup>110</sup> Human Rights in China (HRIC), “Not Welcome at the Party: Behind the “Clean-up” of China’s Cities - a Report on Administrative Detention under “Custody and Repatriation,” (New York, NY: Human Rights in China, 1999).

<sup>111</sup> Jason Young, *China’s Hukou System: Markets, Migrants and Institutional Change* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).



The average age of the Shenzhen SEZ population in the 1990s was under 25. Shenzhen's population was growing at a rate of half a million every two years. Migrant workers were attracted to the city not only by its more relaxed attitude towards illegal residency, but also by certain freedoms in the workplace. Elsewhere at that time, China's planned economy offered workers life-long employment in state-owned enterprises commonly called "*Danwei*," or the work unit. During the decades of national planned economy prior to the 1980s reform era, state-owned work units were the default form of social organization in Chinese cities. Much more than a job, the work units also provided housing and other social services to every employee. Colloquially referred to as the "Iron Rice Bowl," jobs within the centrally planned economy ensured lifelong social welfare as part of work unit employment. In addition to salary, the work unit provided housing, medical care, child care, and retirement benefits, covering the entire lifespan of each worker. Upon death, an employee's children would even step into the employment post of the deceased parent. And it did not end there. The work unit was not only the regulator of one's employment, but also the general locus of one's social life. Moving house, attending school, getting married, having children . . . any such development in daily life required permission from one's work unit. Switching jobs was rare and signified a major change in life. By breaking away from the work unit system, Shenzhen was able to invent new types of labor contracts that placed responsibilities on both employers and employees. This system, issuing contracts for both short- and long-term employment, was later adopted throughout the country.<sup>112</sup>

Shenzhen successfully marketed these changes to attract not only rural migrant workers, but also educated and skilled talents from other more developed Chinese cities. During the first decade of the SEZ's existence, educated employees were often reluctant to leave their stable and reputable jobs elsewhere. However, as news of Shenzhen's progress spread, the city swiftly gained a reputation as a place of personal freedom and free-wheeling opportunities, encouraging entrepreneurial and ambitious young graduates from China's top universities to descend on the city. Many new arrivals were highly educated, attracted to the city's government agency and elite corporate sectors; most, however, came from rural regions throughout China to seek work in production factories. This characteristic mix continues to the present day, with Shenzhen holding the country's record both for the lowest education level among its migrant workers and also for the highest number of doctoral degree holders.

The stated statistics of the 1986 Master Plan revealed the city's intention to double the registered urban *hukou* population, but curb and reduce the temporary population. However, the reality of Shenzhen's eventual development indicates that increases in the non-registered population consistently outpaced the growth of the registered population, and from 1989 onwards unregistered and "temporary" residents accounted for the majority of Shenzhen's total population.<sup>113</sup> By the end of 1987, Shenzhen's export industry performance had exceeded the stringent criteria set by its economic critics in the central government. By March 1988, many of the SEZ-initiated reform policies were launched in other selected cities. In contrast with the cautious expansion of the previous two years, the new policies

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<sup>112</sup> Jianfei Li, "Shehui Biange Zhongde Zhongguo Laodong Hetong Lifa (Chinese Labor Contract Legislation During Societal Reform)," *Jurist* 2009, no. 6 (2009).

<sup>113</sup> Shenzhen Statistics Bureau and NBS Survey Office in Shenzhen, eds., *Shenzhen Tongji Nianjian (Shenzhen Statistical Yearbook)* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2016).

were implemented in 293 locations, encompassing a total land area of 426,000 square kilometers and comprising a total of 200 million people—nearly 20% of China’s vast population.<sup>114</sup> As Shenzhen’s rapid urbanization continued, the 1986 Shenzhen SEZ Master Plan was modified in December 1988 and released in 1989. The modified Master Plan increased land allotted for urban construction from 123 to 150 square kilometers. Acknowledging the rapid growth of the city’s temporary population, the 1989 Master Plan projected a total population of 1.5 million by the year 2000, increasing the projected temporary unregistered population to 700,000 (up from 300,000 in the 1986 Master Plan). The “Shenzhen City Urban Development Strategy” was also published in 1989, and described Shenzhen’s future as an “International City.” It presented the city as “relatively mature in foreign trade, finance and hi-technology; integrates techniques of commerce and industry; outward-looking and multi-functional; well supported by infrastructure; with export-oriented agriculture industry; as well as environmentally attractive.”<sup>115</sup> The 1989 strategy document also specified the need to extend planning and development beyond the Second Line Border to the “entire territory” of Shenzhen. Nonetheless, population growth in Shenzhen would continue to vastly outstrip even these more ambitious local plans.

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Yongqiang Zhang, "Chengshi Kongjian Fazhan Zizuzhi Yanjiu (Research on Self-Organization of Urban Space Development: A Case Study of Shenzhen)" (Southeast University, 2003), p. 98.

Informal: VIC Transformations & Developments

Bilateral Impacts and Interactions

Formal: Governmental Master Plans



**Pre-1979**  
**Agrarian Villages**  
 Prior to the establishment of the SEZ in 1979, there were around 90,000 population in the area. (Wang, 2004)



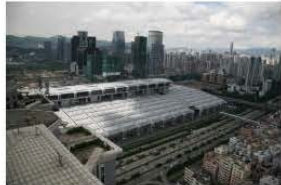
**Early 1980s**  
**Informal Industrialization**  
 Benefited from Open Door policies and connections with overseas Chinese, villages began to participate in Sanlaiyibu industries.



**Late 1980s**  
**Informal Housing**  
 With the influx of migrant workers and insufficient provision of low cost housing, villagers began to construct residential units for rent.



**1990s**  
**Informal Commerce**  
 Village collectives developed large scale projects with economic activities such as commerce and entertainment in addition to mass housing.



**2000s**  
**Resistance to Redevelopment**  
 Scarcity of land had created great demand for redevelopment in villages. Resistance took place in forms of prolonged negotiation and nail houses.



**2010s**  
**Partnership in Renewal**  
 Institutionalization in the villages increased the bargaining powers of villagers. Recent renewal projects in villages tended to be co-developments between villagers, the government and outside investors.

Spatial distributions of villages and farms impacted the initial layout of the SEZ in the first master plan of the city.

1982 Policy: 《Temporary Guidelines on the Use of Lands by Villagers in SZSEZ》

Economic success of Sanlaiyibu in villages encouraged trades and commerce development in new industrial zones.

1986 Policy: 《Bulletin on Strengthening Planning Works in Villages in SZSEZ》

Low-cost housing provided by villagers accommodated the majority of floating population in Shenzhen.

1992 Policy: 《Temporary Guidelines on the Urbanization of Villages in SZSEZ》

The high level of urbanization spatially and economically within the villages encouraged administrative urbanization of all lands in the city.

2005 Policy: 《Master Plan of Urban Village Redevelopment in Shenzhen 2005-2010》

Complexities in village redevelopments in the SEZ accelerated the rate of urbanization in the outer districts of Shenzhen.

2012 Policy: 《Urban Renewal Implementation Method Detailed Guidelines for the City of Shenzhen》

The importance of the existence of ViCs within the SEZ was formally recognized by the planning sectors, strategic upgrade was preferred to complete redevelopment.



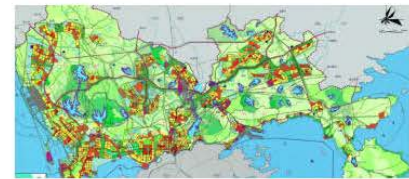
**1982**  
**Shenzhen SEZ Master Plan**  
 Projected population: 800,000 (2000)  
 Projected urban areas: 98km<sup>2</sup> (2000)



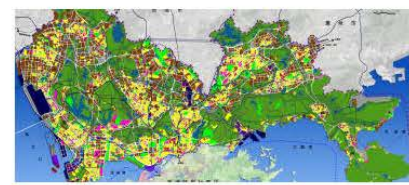
**1986**  
**Shenzhen SEZ Master Plan (1986-2000)**  
 Projected population: 1,100,000 (2000)  
 Projected urban areas: 122km<sup>2</sup> (2000)



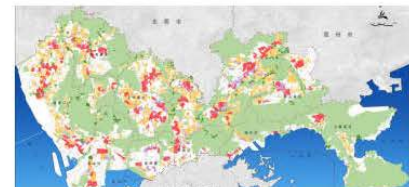
**1989**  
**Shenzhen SEZ Master Plan (1989 Rev.) (1986-2000)**  
 Projected population: 1,500,000 (2000)  
 Projected urban areas: 150km<sup>2</sup> (2000)



**1996**  
**Shenzhen City Master Plan (1996-2000)**  
**Shenzhen City Master Plan (1999 Rev.) (1996-2010)**  
 Projected population: 4,300,000 (2010)  
 Projected urban areas: 480km<sup>2</sup> (2010)



**2010**  
**Shenzhen City Master Plan (2010-2020)**  
 Projected population: 11,000,000 (2020)  
 Projected urban areas: 890km<sup>2</sup> (2020)



**2016**  
**Shenzhen urban renewal plan for the 13th 5-year plan (public consultation draft)**

--- Impact of Informal Development on Formal Planning  
 --- Impact of Formal Planning on Informal Development

**Figure 14** Impacts and Interactions between Shenzhen City Formal Plannings and Informal Urban Growth of Shenzhen's Urban Village

Ironically, yet poignantly, some urban villagers even accommodated the city planners themselves. In an internal publication by the Shenzhen Branch of the Chinese Academy of Urban Planning and Design (CAUPD SZ) to mark its 30-year history in Shenzhen, those involved in the early years revealed some humble beginnings. In 1984, CAUPD first started its Shenzhen branch in Yuan Lin New Village, one of Shenzhen's earliest government-built social housing blocks specifically for government workers and civil servants.<sup>116</sup> Due to the shortage of office space, the apartments not only served as CAUPD residences, but also as the company's workplace. One planner recalled that the earliest large-format drawings for the 1985 Shenzhen SEZ Master Plans were hand-drawn on two ping pong tables in one of the apartment units.<sup>117</sup> Within two years, CAUPD Shenzhen had grown from a handful of people to over 100 employees, and could no longer fit within the available units at the housing compound.<sup>118</sup> After months of searching, CAUPD moved to a small six-story building in 1986, this time in the *Laoweij*, or old compound, of a former agrarian village centrally located inside Shenzhen's central Luohu District. Called *Caiwuwei*, the centuries-old Village of "Cai's Family Compound." Starting in the early 1980s, the village collective built and operated many new six-story buildings to accommodate the city's growing demand for residential and commercial space. The arrangement of CAUPD's office spaces inside the urban village building was similar to their previous location of the social housing block: the planners and workers lived in the bedrooms and drafted city plans on dining tables in the living rooms. Meanwhile, the ground and second floors of the urban village building were used as laundry rooms by the nearby *Caiwuwei Grand Hotel*. Built and operated by the village itself starting in 1984, this hotel was reported the first three star hotel built by rural peasants in China.<sup>119</sup>

Decades later, senior CAUPD planner Zhao Yanqing remarked: "These days, many planners are full of instinctive hatred for urban villages, for the messiness, hazardousness, and disorderliness. However, back then I did not have any of those feelings. A group of young people, thousands of miles away from home, trying to be entrepreneurial in a land of opportunity. That feeling of youthfulness, even within the urban village, was full of passion and vigor."<sup>120</sup> The experience also influenced her professional perspective: "For planners, the experience gained in person is often irreplaceable. In later planning projects, I often faced issues regarding the urban villages. In these cases, my own experience in *Caiwuwei Village* always helped me to look beyond their disordered appearance, and allowed me to think in the shoes of the people living in the urban villages."<sup>121</sup> The early Shenzhen planners had the unique opportunity to experience a city growing on the basis of necessity and improvisation, rather than on the basis of some ideal plan, which contributed to their relative openness towards the unexpected, unregistered, unregulated, and informal. While the 1986 Shenzhen SEZ Master Plan was designed to

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<sup>116</sup> Rongyuan Zhu, "Tuibian- Shenzhen Fenyuan Bangong Changsuo Bianqian Sumiao (Metamorphosis- a Profile of the Changing Work Places of the Shenzhen Branch)," in *Liujiào Xiecuì Caupd Shenzhen 1954-1984-2014*, ed. Rongyuan Zhu (Shenzhen: CAUPD Shenzhen, 2014).

<sup>117</sup> Dawei Jiang (2014). "Sanshi Nian Qian De Pianduan (The Clip in Thirty Years Ago)". In *Liujiào Xiecuì Caupd Shenzhen 1954-1984-2014*, pp.466-469. Shenzhen: CAUPD.

<sup>118</sup> Zhu.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Translated from *Liujiào Xiecuì Caupd Shenzhen 1954-1984-2014*, ed. Rongyuan Zhu, p. 568 (Shenzhen: CAUPD Shenzhen, 2014).

<sup>121</sup> Yanqing Zhao, "Shenzhen Jishi (Shenzhen Chronicle)," in *Liujiào Xiecuì Caupd Shenzhen 1954-1984-2014*, ed. Rongyuan Zhu (Shenzhen: CAUPD Shenzhen, 2014).



accommodate a projected population of 1.1 million, informal reflections by Shenzhen's local planners indicate that they actually designed the transportation system for a population twice the size of the published figure.<sup>122</sup>

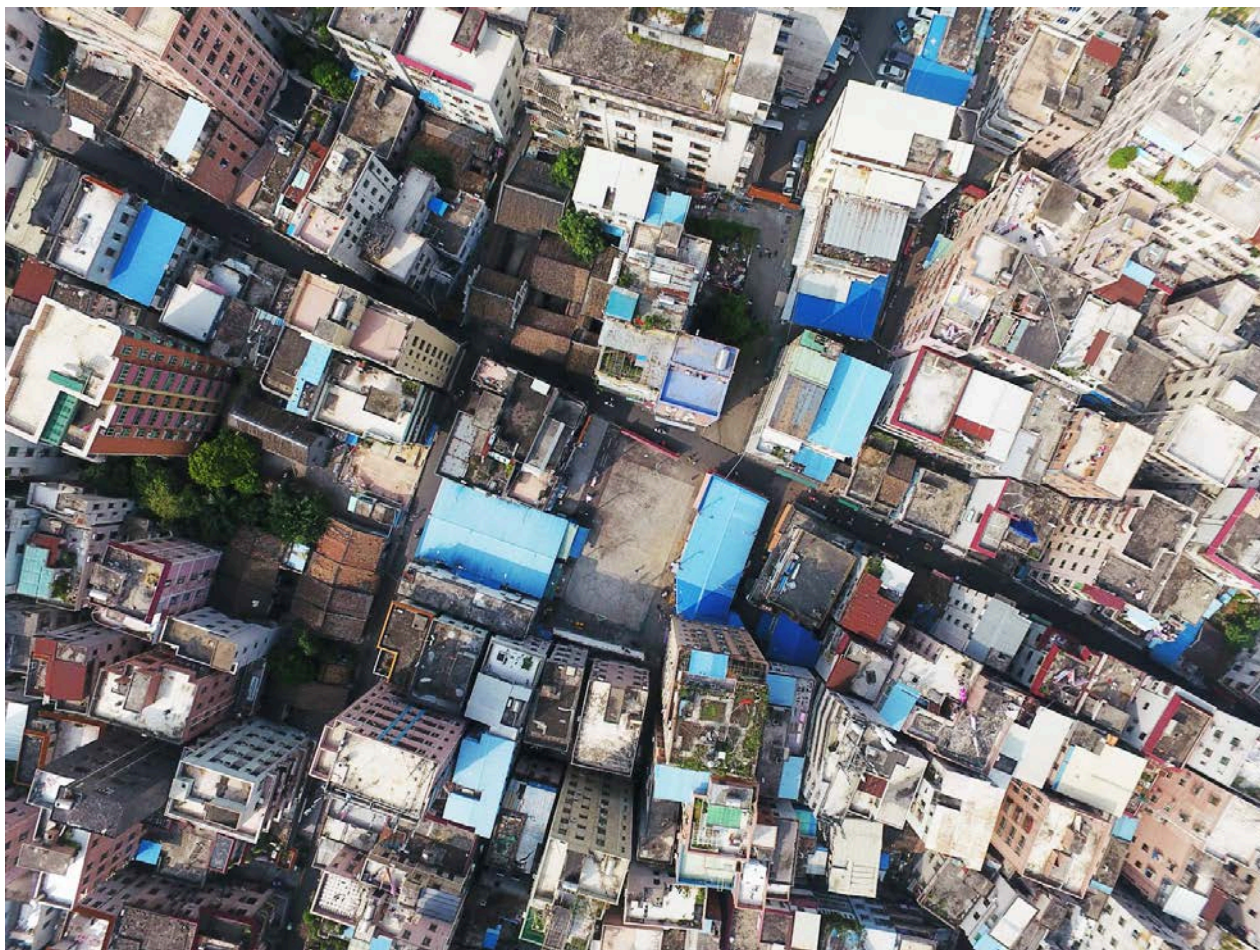


Figure 15 Individual Land Parcelization as well as Illegal Additions and Construction Created an Unplanned Supply of Cheap Housing and Lead to the Extreme Architectural and Urban Densities in Shenzhen's Urban Villages

Yet the city's formal planning continued in accordance with registered population statistics, which left the majority of Shenzhen's residents without housing and other civic provisions. Considering these conditions, it is perhaps not surprising that former agrarian villages transformed into "urban villages" made up of unplanned housing, which predominately catered to the working-class members of the unregistered population. In addition to hosting the unplanned population and industries, these village centers also accommodated formal, even state-owned enterprises and associated population, which had also outpaced the city's supply of planned commercial and residential spaces. The following chapter presents how formations and transformations of the urban villages responded to the city's formal planning, and often impacted Shenzhen's policies and engendered changes in the way the city's urban growth and development.

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<sup>122</sup> Rongyuan Zhu. Interview by the author. May 7, 2016, Shenzhen.

To cope with the rapid increase, substantial investment was necessary in social, educational, and other urban services. In fact, the new infrastructure constructed since that time was designed to accommodate a population of 1.5 million, and the transportation system to serve a population of 2 million.





## 4. VILLAGES: DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT

### Overview

Contrary to the commonly referenced "sleepy fishing village," Shenzhen has had significant historical activities since the Qin dynasty in circa 110 B.C. Perhaps most contrary to Shenzhen's modern image of a slick generic city, this region was known throughout China for its unique natural beauty and cultural landscape. When traveling was a monumental commitment, artists and poets traveled from northern China to this southernmost region to witness its cultural landscape. Known as Xin'an since the 15th century Ming Dynasty, the area also contained Nantou historic city, which was the seat of administrative governance that ruled over the region extending from 110 B.C. to 1950s. The military post of the region was located at Dapeng, from which the naval military directors fought pirates as well as the British before and after the Opium War that resulted in secession of Hong Kong to England. In addition to hosting political and military centers, coastal areas of the region saw extensive commercial, trading, and exportation activities throughout the past centuries. With the 1910 operation of the Canton-Kowloon Railway passing through Luohu, this frontier post became even more urbanized; its role of a cross-national trading town was well established before the formation of the SEZ.<sup>123</sup>

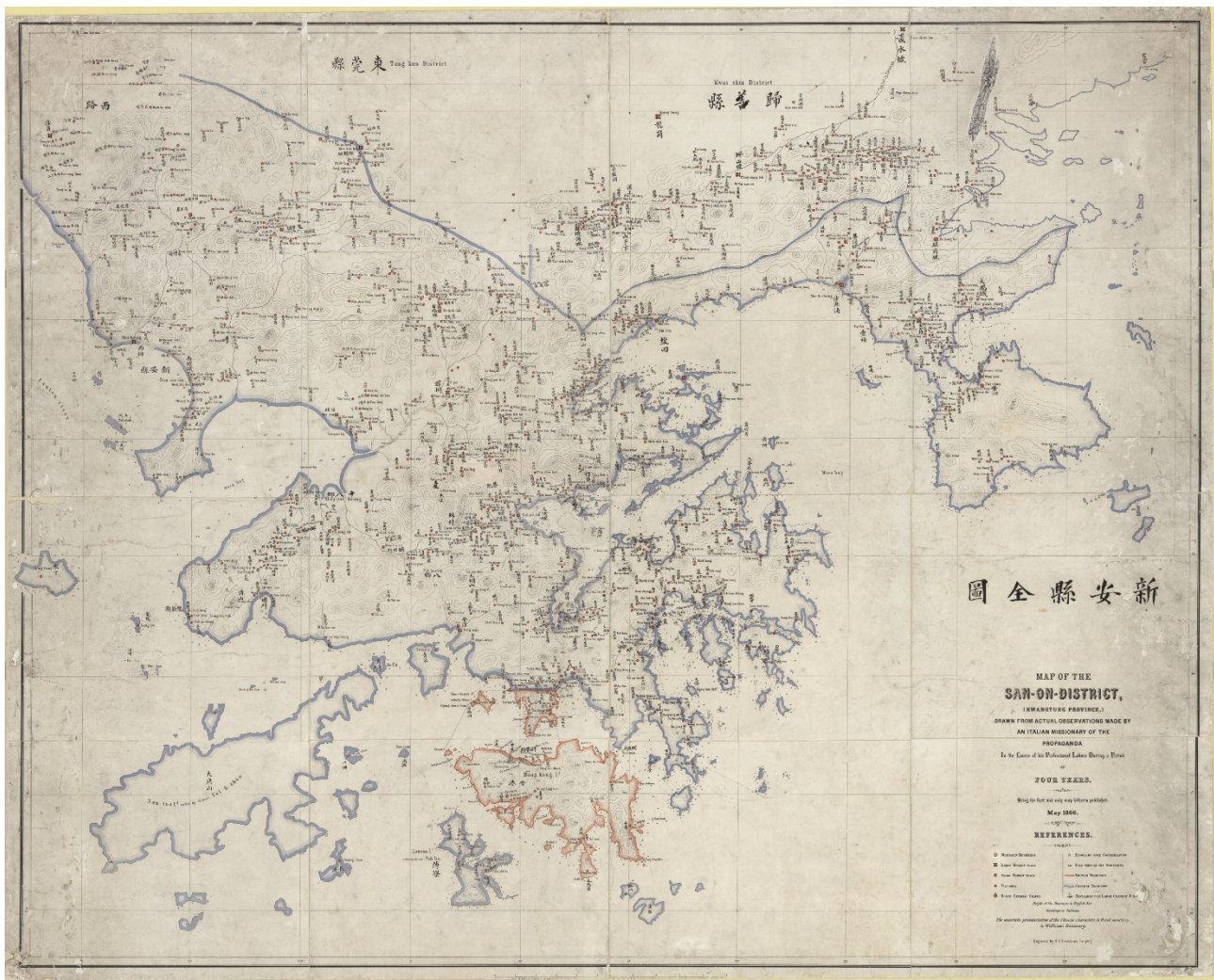
Supporting the townships and scattered throughout the area were several hundreds of villages (later urban villages) that have harvested the land for over a thousand years. Prior to becoming the prototype special economic zone, there were 70,000 mostly agrarian farmers living throughout 2,000 square kilometers of territory. Up until 1978, over 80% of the population was working in rice paddies and other farming fields.<sup>124</sup> Much of the crop harvest was exported throughout the region with the majority going to Hong Kong. In addition, many of the villages bordering the coast relied on fishery and were occupied by oyster and shrimp ponds. Consistent with rural village organization throughout China, each natural village usually consisted of extended families of one clan with a common family name. In some instances, a village may be a collection of a few clans that have developed close-knit relationships through decades of collaborative field work. While they have undergone countless political regime changes including the founding of modern China, the villages' social structures and hierarchies have been passed on from past centuries of existence. The villages' localized individual history and identity created different responses in navigating the monumental changes yet to come to their lives. Each village was an insular community with an elected head along with representatives forming a council, which usually consisted of the village elders. From decisions on when and what crop to plant, to dealing out punishments for offenses and petty crimes, the village head and council provided leadership and governance. The varying degrees of effective

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<sup>123</sup> Shenzhen Museum, *Gudai Shenzhen (Ancient Shenzhen)* (Shenzhen: Shenzhen Museum, 2009).

<sup>124</sup> Bao'an Xian Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui. *Bao'an Xianzhi [Bao'an County Annals]* (Guangzhou: Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, 1997).

leadership and organizational strength of each of the villages would later prove to be critical in the instrumental role each village would play in Shenzhen's urbanization and development post-1979.



**Figure 16** Historic Map of San-On District (Kwangtung Province), 1866. Red boundaries marked colonial British-Hong Kong while blue boundaries marked Qing Xin'an (San'on) County, as the map was made prior to the Qing Court's concession of the New Territories. The map was drawn by Hong Kong-based Catholic priests, assisted by local followers in both regions, each red dot with text identified village or township settlements.

Preliminary research has hypothesized 5 representative developmental phases of since the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone's establishment in 1979. This enables the spatial and institutional analysis of the different case studies to be examined systematically and readily cross-examined with each other. In addition, this framework allows for the examination of urban villages' process of incremental renovation in relationship to stages of Shenzhen's overall urbanization process.

**Phase 1:** Pre-industrialization (1970-1979), during which the economic productivity was led by the villages and signified by agriculture, aquaculture, cottage industry and informal cross-border trades.

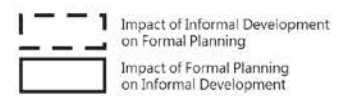
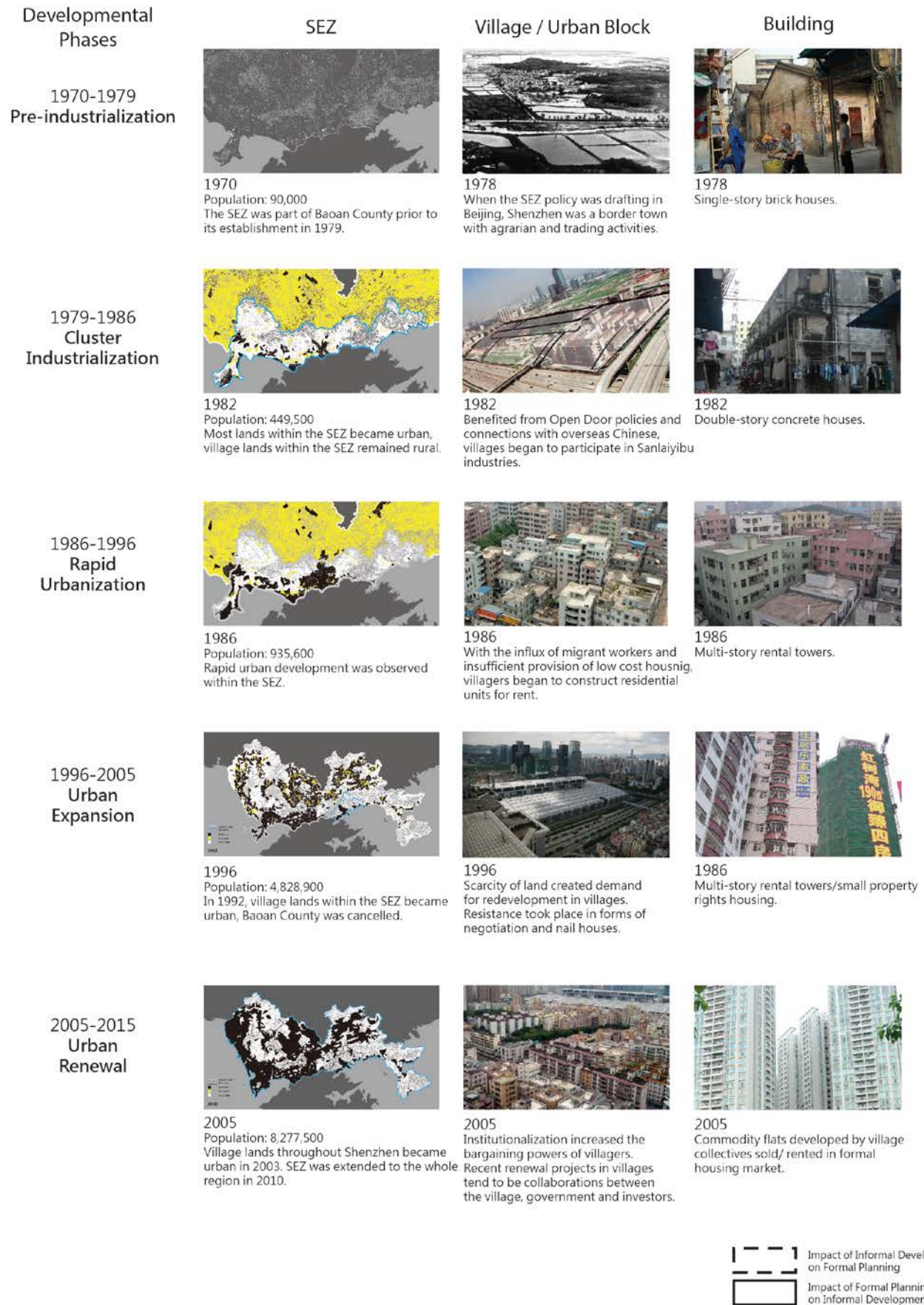
**Phase 2:** Cluster Industrialization (1979-1986), when the SEZ was established and the promotion of export processing industries was the primary goal of urbanization; the agrarian lands of villages inside the SEZ were expropriated.

**Phase 3:** Rapid Urbanization (1986-1996), within which SEZ policies became stable, domestic and foreign investments steadily came in, and the SEZ was strategically developed into a comprehensive migrant city; villages inside the SEZ were designated as urban in land status and individual *hukou*.

**Phase 4:** Urban Expansion period (1996-2005), when SEZ continued its rapid growth, at the same time faced the challenges of shortage of developable land. Self-building of villages inside the SEZ reached peak in terms of height and volume.

**Phase 5:** Urban Renewal (2005-2016), during which the city, inside and outside of the SEZ, depleted all land for development to support the rapid economic growth. The 2005 demolish-and-rebuild urban village redevelopment campaign was launched.





**Figure 17** Shenzhen's Urbanization Process in Five Stages at the Scales of the City, the Neighborhood (Village), and of Architecture

## Industrialization and Village Land Expropriation

Within five years of the formation of the SEZ by 1985, the original population of 70,000 villagers had grown to one of 470,000 of governmental workers, military construction crews, and migrant workers seeking job opportunities. In the newly formed industrial zones surrounding the villages, the state allocated large funding to initiate the construction of factories and industrial compounds. However during the initial phase of development, the city did not attract major foreign investments as planned by the central government. The SEZ was perceived as a risky investment due to the lack of large scale infrastructure to power the industrial developments.<sup>125</sup> In order to stimulate foreign investment and reduce the reliance on domestic capital, the government implemented a series of bold and influential economic and institutional reform between 1986 and 1992, ranging from private enterprise operation, land management, population control, labor contract, and social welfare. With strong direction and intervention by the central government, a second Master Plan of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone was drafted by the Chinese Academy of Urban Planning and Design, in collaboration with the newly established Municipal Planning Department in late 1984. The plan aimed to build an export-oriented city with an expanded urban area of 123 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 1.1 million in 2000. With the focus expanded from industry to finance, commerce, tourism, and real estate, the city undertook large infrastructural projects. Shennan Boulevard, the main road through the SEZ, was widened from 7 to 50 meters and supplemented by 30 meters of green belt to either side. This was coupled by the paralleled North Ring Highway and Haibin Boulevard. 12 north-south roads were planned and built along the east-west axis. Six clusters were formed along the linear axis planned with distinct features: Shatoujiao (tourism, commerce, and residence), Luohu-Shangbu (industrial, commerce, government, and residence), Futian (finance, commerce, and tourism), Shahe (tourism, education, industry, residence), Nantou (logistics, technology, industry, education, and residence) and Mawan. The city's economic operation benefited from central government favoritism and concentration of domestic resources. Some would argue however, these efforts countered the government's intention to build an export-led modern industrial city with foreign investment.<sup>126</sup>

To provide land for the industrial development within the SEZ, a huge amount of farmlands were required to be expropriated for urbanization. In many cases, expropriation processes had led to fierce confrontations between local and government bodies. In March 2007, a highly visible contestation happened in Nanadigram, West Bengal, India. Refusing to make way for a SEZ development, local farmers of Nandigram resisted the violent displacement by the authority.<sup>127</sup> The event cost 14 lives, the SEZ development immediately came into a stalemate and eventually was

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<sup>125</sup> Mee Kam Ng & Wing-Shing Tang. "The Role of Planning in the Development of Shenzhen, China: Rhetoric and Realities", *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 45, No. 3 (2004): 190-211.

<sup>126</sup> M. H. Chan, "Shenzhen de Wenti Zai Nali? (Where are the problems of Shenzhen?)" *Guang Jiao Jing* 152 Hong Kong, May 1985.

<sup>127</sup> Ananya Roy. "Civic Governmentality: The Politics of Inclusion in Beirut and Mumbai", *Antipode* 41, no.1 (2009): 159-179.

relocated. According to Levien (2011), the resistance had led to the worry that “farmers refusing to part with their land might become the largest obstacle to India’s economic growth.”<sup>128</sup> An operational mechanism in land acquisition process is a crucial first step for the development of an SEZ.

The basis of conflicts in land acquisition process is largely originated from the issue of landownership and land-use rights. The relative freedom for the self-governance of the rural villages in China is in part related to the rural-urban dichotomy of landownership structure set up since the abolishment of private landownership during the Maoist era. Land system was separated into two coexisting ownerships: collective ownership of rural land and state ownership of urban land. Unlike the state ownership of urban land in Chinese cities, the village members collectively owned the communal and farming land. As the fundamental ownership of land is different, governmental laws and regulations for planning, land use, and development are drastically different. With the designation of the SEZ in 1979, the first challenge of the new urban planning was to transfer thousands of hectares of collective village land into state ownership for urbanization. The land must be designated as "urban" in status and re-zoned from agricultural to industrial use, and the central government must expropriate the land from the thousands of villages.

The process of expropriation took many forms of negotiation. The villagers were mandated to give up their land and, in return, the government provided three forms of compensation: housing, jobs in substitution for farming, and varying amounts of return for the "sale" of the farming land. Legally, the government had the right to expropriate all the land within the special economic zone. However, to avoid the costs of relocating the villagers and providing jobs for them, for most of the negotiations, the government expropriated only the villages' farming land at a low price. The strategy was to purchase and transfer only the farmland into urban land system, leaving the villagers with Home Based Land (HBL) and Collective Development Land (CDL) for housing and livelihood since they would no longer be able to farm. The development took a piecemeal method, with the government raising funding from one site to sponsor negotiations with the next villages.<sup>129</sup> For the case of Luohu district's Caiwuwei (Cai Family Walled Village), one of the largest and oldest natural villages in Shenzhen, the village traded 5,000 hectares of its farmland to the government at a rate of 1,200 RMB per hectare. Due to lack of immediate funding, Caiwuwei received the compensation of 15 million RMB in phased installments throughout several years. This was already a relatively high compensation rate due to the villages being located at the most urbanized area next to the Luohu border crossing.

Through this process, most villages shrank to only 8-15% of its original size, and the former farming land became the canvas for masterplanning and urban development. Thus pockets of rural-status land became embedded across the now urban status land of the new SEZ. The infrastructural

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<sup>128</sup> Michael Levien. "Special Economic Zones and Accumulation by Dispossession in India." *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 11, no.4 (2011).

<sup>129</sup> Yaping Wang, Yanglin Wang & Jiansheng Wu. "Urbanization and Informal Development in China: Urban Villages in Shenzhen." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33, no. 4 (2009): 957-973.



planning and construction would be implemented around these village sites. Since the early communist era, a residency registration system called hukou tightly controlled the place of residence and employment of the country's vast population. As the villagers lived and worked on rural status land, their residency remained rural hukou rather than Shenzhen's urban residence. Hukou was the major denominator in allocating resources between the urban and rural area.<sup>130</sup> One was either an urban dweller with a "city hukou" in a specific city, or a rural dweller with a "village hukou." The countryside was mainly responsible for agriculture while the city, denounced as representative of capitalism, was strictly controlled for only industrial production. The hukou system institutionalized such a division of labor. Citizens with urban hukou were employed by the state enterprises and lived in the production work unit. Holding urban hukou also meant access to housing, food, clothing, and social welfare such as education and medical care, in the specific city of residence. Therefore, the villagers with their remaining rural hukou would be expected to be self-reliant and therefore would not have access to municipal social services such as education and medical care provided by the state to the urban hukou residents – newcomers arriving to build a brand new city. The villagers were assigned to remain in their islands of rural land within the urbanizing city, giving rise to the phenomenon that became known as "Urban Village". This peculiar parallel of land and people designation meant Shenzhen's urbanization and development would be conducted with a dual rural-urban processes, essentially "one city, two systems". This arrangement would remain until 1992, when the government passed legislation that designated all land within the SEZ as urban land and all original villagers became legal urban hukou holders.

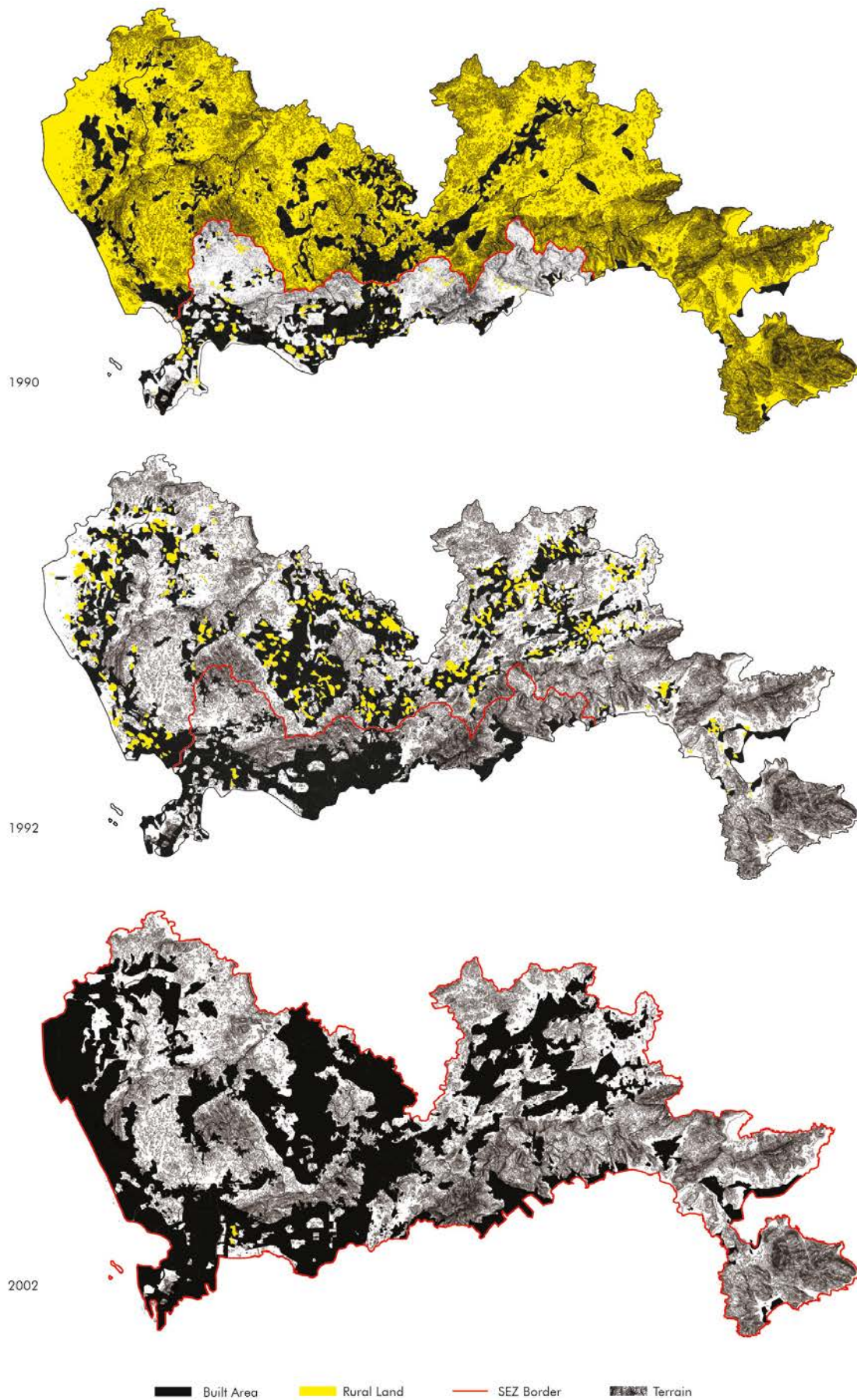
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<sup>130</sup> F. Christiansen. "Social division and peasant mobility in Mainland China: the implications of hukou system." *Issues and Studies* 26 (1990): 78-91.

Lincoln H. Day and Ma Xia (eds.) *Migration and Urbanisation in China* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994).

Dorothy Solinger. *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

Yaping Wang, Yanglin Wang and Jiansheng Wu. "Private rental housing in 'urban villages' in Shenzhen: problems or solutions?" In: Fulong Wu & Chris Webster (Eds.) *Marginalization in Urban China: Comparative Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 153-174.



**Figure 18** Rural to Urban land status changes from 1990 to 1992, and 2002. From 1979 to 1992, except for the remaining villages, land inside the SEZ was designated as urban state-owned land. In 1992, rural land north of the SEZ was also designated as urban, exception for the remaining village land. In 2002, all land in Shenzhen was designated as urban, except for Baishizhou.

## Urbanization and Urban-Rural Migration

The piecemeal approach of land acquisition conducted in the early stage of urbanization of the city had left a portion of original homes and farmland for the villagers' residence and economic development. This policy unintentionally provided villagers with opportunities to participate in economic production and real estate activities, which in turn facilitated the development of the SEZ. In 2008, a similar model in India had incorporated the return of a portion of the redeveloped land to the villagers in the process of acquisition in India. The project had proved initial success in making the acquisition of substantial area of land operational, provided that there is a generally high level of collective resistance by villagers in land expropriation activities recent years. According to Levien (2011), in Rajasthan, India, areas equivalent to 25 percent of the original land area of villagers were compensated as developed commercial and residential plots adjacent to the original site.<sup>131</sup> The so-called "compensation-through-speculation model", although effectively facilitated the land acquisition process, were deemed to divide the villagers with economic benefits to undermine any possible collective resistance movements.

While surrounding landscape altered rapidly, the villages shrunk drastically as their farming land took over by infrastructural and industrial development. The villagers complemented the initial state powered industry through the resourcefulness and entrepreneurship. Deprived of farmland passed from generations to generation, the villages had to creatively search for new sources for income. Some plots of village land were leased to state owned enterprises freely to construct new headquarters. Within the leased land, planning was controlled by the enterprises instead of the local governance. Urban land is subject to the City Planning Ordinance and the City Planning Act, while the rural land is controlled by Planning and Construction Regulations on Village and Township. Hence, when rapid urban development encroached the village-owned land, the legal ambiguity of land management created loopholes beyond the prescription of urban planning.<sup>132</sup>

The majority of the compensation for the land transaction was usually spent by the village collective on the construction of low-skill production units and light industry. Most villages hence went through a form of self-organized rural industrialization at the very early stage of Shenzhen's development.<sup>133</sup> Many village enterprises would predate the first phase of construction and operation of industrial factories formally setup by the government. Not constrained by standard policies and regulations, development on the village-owned industrial and later residential land would flourish in ways that governmental planners condemned but failed to control.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Michael Levien. "Special Economic Zones and Accumulation by Dispossession in India." *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 11, no.4 (2011).

<sup>132</sup> Him Chung. "The Planning of 'Village-in-the-City' in Shenzhen, China: A State-led Approach", *International Planning Studies*, 14, no. 3 (2009): 253-273.

<sup>133</sup> Yaping Wang, Yanglin Wang & Jiansheng Wu. "Urbanization and Informal Development in China: Urban Villages in Shenzhen." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33, no. 4 (2009): 957-973.

<sup>134</sup> Him Chung. "The Planning of 'Village-in-the-City' in Shenzhen, China: A State-led Approach", *International Planning Studies*, 14, no. 3 (2009): 253-273.

Villages quickly conjured up ways to industrialize their collective economy through private joint venture entities, despite the practice have been deemed illegal by the government. Contrary to the common stereotypes of wayward farmers, many villages in Shenzhen were exposed to certain degree of modernization and commerce through their informal overseas networks. For example, long before the establishment of Shenzhen, Caiwuwei diaspora has made their ways around the world through Hong Kong. They are enterprising, organized and progressive. The village leaders managed to put the compensation from the government into collective use. The first grassroots 'high-end' hotel (Caiwuwei Grand Hotel) was built using 70% of the compensation from government. With financial support from their Hong Kong relatives, informal industrialization quickly happened within the village. A new mode of economic cooperation emerged, termed *Sanlaiyibu*, a type localized processing for export trade. With imported supplies of materials and sample design, the village 'enterprises' built up factories and provided small-scale services of customized manufacturing. Informal workshops were set up to manufacture handbags, umbrella, electronics, toys and furniture. The cheap labor and available land resources gave the village enterprises competitive edge over production factories in neighboring Hong Kong. The business model was proven to be a huge success and the village renovated their ancestral hall and town meeting hall into more workshops to meet the incoming orders. Similar to Caiwuwei, many villages in the SEZ were industrialized paralleled to the development of state run industries. By 1988, there were more 3200 informal trade entities providing about 24,000 jobs.<sup>135</sup> In 1992, the collective asset of the Caiwuwei's village-run enterprises stood at 22 million RMB and the villagers became the wealthy middle class in the city.<sup>136</sup> Through experience and knowledge from their transnational kinship network and the capital accumulated by the early informal export processing trade, Caiwuwei managed to build joint-venture multiple high-rise hotels and office towers.<sup>137</sup> In this way, the village not only managed to establish their informal economy but also used the earlier experience and financial resources gained to enter the formal economy of the city. Unexpected and without state interventions, the former agrarian villages played a significant part to the early growth of Shenzhen's economy.

To provide the newly formed enterprises with the necessary cheap labor force, the central government started to alleviate the country's tight population control for the SEZ starting in the late 1980s. Policies that regulate movement of population to release labour productivity are, as termed by Ong (2006), "technologies of subjection".<sup>138</sup> Regulations that optimize labour productivity are regarded as neoliberal tools that change existing administrative strategies and citizenship practices. She argues that "such regulations include the fortressization of urban space, the control of travel, and the recruitment of certain kinds of actors to growth hubs." The process of rural-urban migration not only provided essential cheap labour force during the initial stages of industrialization, the

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<sup>135</sup> Fu Chen. "Caiwuwei: Gucunluo Biancheng 'Jinsanjiao' (Caiwuwei: Ancient village becoming "Golden Triad"), *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, December 18, 2008.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Aihwa Ong. "Mutations in Citizenship", *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 2-3 (2006): 499-531.

subsequent substantial portion of migrant population in the ethnographic constitution of the city had imposed major impact on the operation and cityscape of the SEZ.

To make way for rural-urban migration, Shenzhen was the first city in China to abolish the food coupon system, allowing one to purchase items freely with cash. Elsewhere in China at the time, as national resources such as fuel and food were rationed out to urban residents, food coupons must accompany cash for an urban citizen to obtain food. One simply could not purchase essentials such as rice, cooking oil, sugar, pork without special coupons. Perhaps most significantly, the government experimented with loosening up the hukou system by allowing people without SEZ hukou to come to Shenzhen for residency and employment. In order to maintain the system and control population distribution, individual movement was highly restricted in other parts of the country. Migration between cities was hence forbidden unless authorized by the government. Enforced even more strictly were laws prohibiting rural-urban migration. A person without an urban hukou could not legally live or work in the city and was subject to deportation by the police and legislative punishment by the government. As modern China's early economic development and social progress were mostly in the urban centers, rural hukou therefore meant life-long restrictions to education, employment, and social networks. Like the villagers in Shenzhen, the large population of rural dwellers without urban hukou was perceived as second class citizens with very little chance for upward social or economic mobility.

However, starting in the 1980s, this institutional division between city and countryside was gradually eroded in Shenzhen through a series of reforms. Shenzhen was the first city in China to set up new types of labor contracts and temporary residency registration for migrant workers. Shenzhen's stories of progress made the city the symbol of freedom and free-wheeling opportunities, attracting entrepreneurial and ambitious young Chinese from all over the nation. While the central government expected a population of around 1 million by the year 2000, the official registered number of working population exploded drastically to 1.76 million already by 1992, from the initial number of 44,000 in 1987.<sup>139</sup> Many new arrivals were highly educated for governmental agencies and elite corporations, most were from rural regions throughout China seeking work opportunities in production factories. Already showing signs in those early years, this characteristic mix continues to today where the city's population holds the national record for both the highest number of doctoral degree holders and yet the lowest education level of its migrant workers.

As quotas for legalized migration through the temporary residency registration were tightly controlled by the central government, in addition to the registered migrants, the flourishing industries attracted massive floods of people from all over China seeking work without formal registration. As the enterprises and factories were entirely reliant on the rural workers as their source of cheap labor force, all took risks in accepting them for employment. As most of the migrants had no legitimate documents for residency and travelled between Shenzhen and their hometowns, the name floating population (*sanwu ren yuan*) was given to these illegal residents. While they are not accounted for in

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<sup>139</sup> Shenzhen Statistics Bureau. *Shenzhen Statistical Yearbook 2010* (China Statistics Press, 2010).



the governmental statistics of Shenzhen inhabitants, these illegal residents nevertheless constitute the major portion of the city's population even today.

### **Urban Villages as Housing for the Masses**

The magnitude of rural-urban migration and the associated housing need rendered China's established state enterprise housing allocation system ineffective in Shenzhen. To simply meet the demand, the local government erected trailer type temporary housing while constructing more established public housing units. These efforts, however, could not even keep pace with the influx of educated and skilled workers. Shenzhen government set another national precedent by privatizing the housing market in 1989, allowing private developers to build commercial housing. State enterprises no longer allocated housing but gave housing subsidies for the employees to rent or purchase their own home. However, most newly arrived migrants could not afford to rent the privately developed commercial housing and were not qualified for government housing subsidy. To maintain the steady flow of working force, corporations and large scale factories bought their own premises and built dormitory-type housing. Quality housing built by enterprises was usually provided to only the educated and high-skilled working population.

The vast majority of low-skill labor population was housed in dormitories often located at extension areas to the production buildings and within the factory compound. Hence, they worked days and lived their nights in an enclosed compound, with production managers and dormitory guards constantly monitoring their sleeping, eating, and social life. There were strict rules in both dormitories and factories to ensure the efficiency of production and therefore the total control of workers.<sup>140</sup> The living conditions in dormitories were much worse than the housing standards elsewhere in the city.<sup>141</sup> However, the choice to quit and seek other jobs was rendered difficult as one would not even have a place to live. As the workers were totally dependent on the employers to provide not only work but housing, most have no choice but to accept the minimal wage, long working hours, and lack of company welfare. While children were strictly prohibited in the factory compound, married workers could not even live together as most dormitories were divided by gender. The limitation to personal freedom and the extreme social control create toxic conditions that continue today. However, as the steady arrival of migrants increased throughout the 1990s, even factory dormitory housing became scarce provisions.

When the rate of urbanization and population growth outgrow the housing capacity that a city is able to provide, in many cases, self-built/ illegal housing would play the role in accommodating the proliferating population. Illegal supply of commercial urban land, also known as Substandard

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<sup>140</sup> Chris Smith and Ngai Pun. "The Dormitory Labour Regime in China as a Site for Control and Resistance". *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 17, no.8 (2006): 1456-1470.

<sup>141</sup> Ngai Pun and Xiaomin Yu. "When Wal-Mart and the Chinese Dormitory Labour Regime Meet: a Study of Three Toy Factories in China." *China Journal of Social Work* 1, no.2 (2008): 110-129.

Commercial Residential Subdivisions (SCRSs),<sup>142</sup> emerged first in Latin America and now common in many developing countries. For example, in Mexico and San Salvador, such kind of housing covered one third to one half of the urbanized areas of the cities, accommodating one quarter to one half of the population (Baross & van der Linden, 1990).<sup>143</sup> According to Fekade (2000),<sup>144</sup> there are similar types of illegal commercial housing stock in India, Pakistan, Portugal, Colombia and Egypt sharing similar building morphology. In many instances, SCRSs share similar urban form to the rest of the city, providing the necessary infrastructure such as water and electricity supply, and hiring the same group of builders and professionals in the formal building sector of the city.

The inability by the government and industries to provide affordable housing gave opportunities to the villagers to build rental housing for the migrant workers. By late 1980s, most villages within the SEZ were surrounded by the industrial and commercial zones and in many cases were adjacent to the most dense and urban areas. The rental housing buildings, built on the subdivided individual plots of Home Based Land (HBL), would give a new identity and function to the villages. As a negotiated package in compensation for the loss of farming land, each village reserved a piece of land subdivided into a 120 square meter grid pattern. Each male member of the village, regardless of age, received a plot to eventually build a house for his family in this area referred to by the villagers as the new village. The village planning and construction regulation stipulated that construction on each of the plots of HBL must be for self-use, the first floor must be within 80 square meters in footprint, and the height was restricted to 3 stories.<sup>145</sup> By the late 1980s, however, many villagers within the SEZ demolished their single family house and illegally built new buildings within the regulated footprint but four or five stories in height to accommodate the ever increasing migrants. Then as demand for the village rental housing steadily increased, many villagers subsequently demolished their older houses and rebuilt taller buildings with 6 or 8 floors, and in some cases even up to 12 stories high. While most buildings increased only in height, some villagers even pushed the footprint of the building to the very edge of their plots and leaving minimal space in-between the buildings. The density and close proximity of windows of neighboring buildings led to nick names like the “hand-shake tower” or “kissing tower.” The densely packed buildings within a field pattern of gridded plots of the new village eventually become the iconic image that is now synonymous with the term “Urban Village.”

When it became obvious that rental income would far surpass the light industries and fabrication jobs, in addition to individualized building rental, most of the communal industry land was also leased to corporate enterprises. The former farmers and fishermen became landlords and corporate entities. The radical change of production from farming to management of renting

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<sup>142</sup> Wubalem Fekade. “Deficits of formal urban land management and informal responses under rapid urban growth, an international perspective.” *Habitat International* 24, no. 2 (2000): 127–150.

<sup>143</sup> Paul Baross & Jan Van Der Linden (Eds.). “Introduction.” In *The Transformation of land supply systems in Third World cities* (Aldershot, England: Avebury, 1990).

<sup>144</sup> Wubalem Fekade. “Deficits of formal urban land management and informal responses under rapid urban growth, an international perspective.” *Habitat International* 24, no. 2 (2000): 127–150.

<sup>145</sup> Shenzhen City Government. *Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Nongcun Sheyuan Jianfang Yongdi de Zanxing Tongzhi* [Provisional Note of Use of Construction Land of Rural Community Member in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone] (Shenzhen City Government, 1982).

completely transformed the physical and socio-cultural setting of the traditional villages. As the village lands were outside of the formal planning framework, the municipal government was not responsible for the utilities and public facilities of the older or new village buildings. So, along with the new dense buildings, the villages built their own supplies of water, electricity, gas and telecommunication network. The villages also were responsible to organize their own collective services ranging from fire fighting to waste collection. As village buildings were not required to formally submit plans and drawings to the municipal planning or building departments, qualities of construction varied greatly across the hundreds of villages. Some highly organized villages with strong leadership provided their own set of village zoning and regulations for the buildings as well as infrastructure construction. These villages tended to be those with a long history and strong former village community organization. The conditions were drastically different in poorly organized and economically weak villages, especially those displaced from their original village site due to governmental relocation. In these villages, quality of the building construction was determined by each individual owner of the land plots. While individual buildings might be dilapidated or fitted with elevators and satellite television, basic infrastructure also would suffer due to a lack of overall coordination. Unprotected wires were flying between the buildings, trash uncollected was lying all around the narrow alleys, and no measures of fire prevention were present. These villages provided the predominant images in the mass media of poor living conditions and created its infamous reputation throughout the city.

Aspiring for better income opportunities and greater degree of choice for their children, rural-urban migrants left the countryside for urban centres. Based on her study in 1968-1969 and 1999-2003, Perlman (2006) followed up families and individuals in the favelas (squatter settlements) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil approximately 30 years apart.<sup>146</sup> She had found that 40 percent of the cases had moved into legitimate neighborhoods by the time of the follow-up, either by rent or purchase. For Perlman, it is an encouraging fact that favelas did play a successful role in promoting upward economic mobility. Perlman argues that the possession of friendship, kinship ties and mutual trust among neighbors fosters upward mobility. According to Robert Sampson (2004), collective efficacy—the level of working trust and shared expectations for action, is important for a community, particularly for the up-keeping of public order and exercising of coordination.<sup>147</sup>

For all newcomers to the city from recently graduated college students to migrants from rural villages, the villages became the standard first stop and provided the migrant population with the opportunities of assimilating into the city.<sup>148</sup> The choices of rentals are as diverse as the needs. One can rent standard two or three-bedroom suite apartments with good natural light for a month to a year, or pay per night on bunk beds in shared rooms. While those with resources and good

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<sup>146</sup> Janice E. Perlman. "The Metamorphosis of Marginality: Four Generations in the Favelas of Rio de Janeiro." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Vol. 606, Chronicle of a Myth Foretold: the Washington Consensus in Latin America (Jul., 2006): 154-177.

<sup>147</sup> R. J. Sampson. "Neighborhood and community: Collective efficacy and community safety." *New Economy* 11 (2004): 106-113.

<sup>148</sup> L. Zhang, Simon Xiaobin Zhao and J.P. Tian. "Self-help in housing and chengzhongcun in China's urbanization." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no. 4 (2003): 912-937.

prospects see the village housing as starting points or transitional arrangements, the low-income working population relies on the housing as critical resources for survival in the city. Most migrant workers prefer to rent a room there than living in factory or corporate housings. According to 2004 statistics of the migrants working population, only 15% workers lived in factory dormitories while 50% lived in village housing throughout the city.

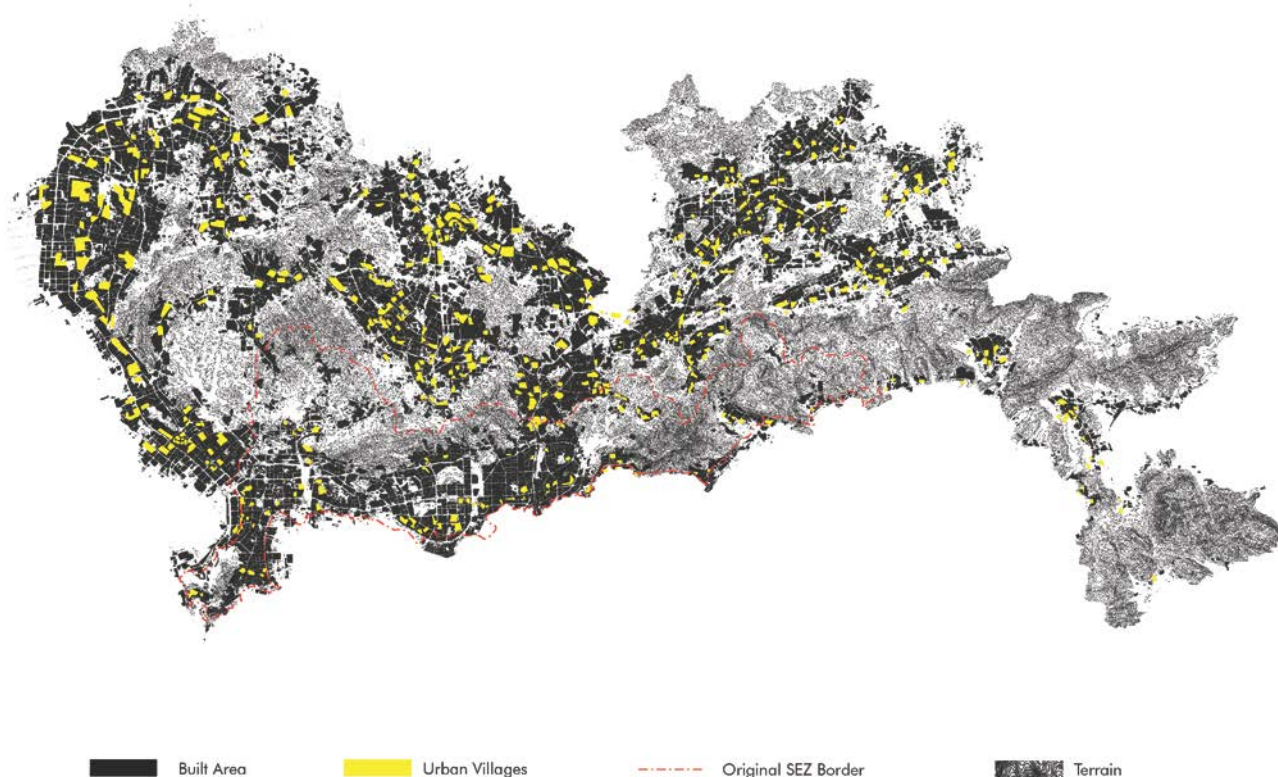
As the migrant workers formed a critical mass in the urban villages, new opportunities were formed. In addition to cheap housing, the migrant workers could also find social networks and affordable services lacking elsewhere in the city. The primary reasons for migrant workers' choosing an urban village are of course cost of rental and proximity to places of work. However, it is not unusual for migrants from the same hometown or province to group together in particular urban villages. The shared culture and background of migrants formed natural communities for mutual support. Rather than factory jobs, many migrants set up shops selling everything from food and clothing to computer electronics. Most of the migrants are not eligible for any municipal services, but clinics, schools, and hospitals can be commonly found. These are much cheaper compared to the formal establishments, but unfortunately most are unlicensed. While state and local planning still allocate resources based on formal population registration, the majority of the migrant worker population must rely on these informal services and businesses. In larger urban villages, one can hear provincial dialects from all over China, along with the associated cuisines. Thus, small scaled specialty restaurants, open air vegetable markets, crafts stalls, karaoke bars, pool tables, internet cafes line the major thoroughfares in nearly all of the urban villages. The atmosphere and abundance of diverse trades attract customers living outside of the urban villages. In many areas of the city, urban villages are the most convenient places for a quick lunch by white collar workers or shopping spree for residents in the various near-by districts. What grew out of necessity and economic creativity became new forms of informal urbanism in the city.

Currently some of the most surprising and pleasant human-scaled public spaces scattered throughout Shenzhen are in the urban villages. The land use patterns decided by individual village leaderships during the early stages of village negotiations continue to shape the spatial structure of the city. In addition to setting aside land for residential and industrial use, most villages also voluntarily designated areas for communal activities and kept historical landmarks distributed throughout the village that signified their historical identity. Most of the villages retained the central areas of their old village spatial structure, usually consisting of an ancestral hall, a temple, and a village square. When the rest of Shenzhen's rolling land was being flattened for urbanization, inside the village landscape features such as gates, wells, and ancient trees were carefully preserved. In the case of the relatively small Hakka Nanlin Village, not only were 90% of the village's trees preserved, but they also set aside 20 hectares of former farm land for educational use.<sup>149</sup> Sensing their lives and customs are about to drastically change, they used some of their land compensation money to build a Hakka cultural museum so that their future descendents could understand the

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<sup>149</sup> Wending Chen. *Weilai Meiyou Chengzhongcun (No more urban village in the future)* (Beijing: Zhongguo Minzhu Fazhi Chubanshe, 2011), pp. 19-21.

village's past history, culture, and traditions. While the outside renters often do not have the right to use to the village's cultural facilities, the open spaces and landscape surrounding these landmarks are open and accessible to all.



**Figure 19** Shenzhen's post-1979 urbanization patterns are determined by both the pre-existing townships and villages, as well as the natural geography. Shenzhen's urbanization and economic development could not have been achieved with such speed and scope without the neglected histories and overlooked communities of people.

### Urban Village Policies and Redevelopment

Initially the local Shenzhen government turned a blind eye to the illegal constructions as the re-building was relatively modest and housing was much needed. However, as the speed and scope of illegal housing construction increased, in 1989 the government issued a regulation forbidding the construction activities.<sup>150</sup> This, however, led to an instant rush of city-wide illegal construction activity in the villages. Even those who had no resources saw this as their last chance to stake out their territory, so they borrowed money for construction. In 1992, the government took a drastic measure and through policy from the central government, all remaining village land within the SEZ was re-zoned and legally designated as urban land and, therefore, owned by the state. This also turned all the original villagers from rural hukou holders to urban hukou residents. Overnight, Shenzhen was declared to be the first city in China to be without villages and villagers. The village

<sup>150</sup> Shenzhen City Government. *Shenzhen Shi Renmin Zhengfu Guanyu Zhizhi Nongcun Weizhang Shiyong Tudi, Chanzi Chuzu Tudi de Jinji Tongzhi* [Emergency Notification of Banning Illegal Use and Rent of Rural Land] (Shenzhen City Government, 1989).



administration was reorganized into urban neighborhood units.<sup>151</sup> However, despite the state ownership of village land, land use and management rights remained with the village corporations. The legislation did little to curb the construction activities by villagers willing to risk fines in exchange for the lucrative rental income. The government consecutively released two legal documents in 1999 and 2002, aiming to prohibit the unorganized construction by stipulating higher fines and more severe punishments.<sup>152</sup> However these legislations propagated a new wave of illegal constructions in Longgang and Bao'an, two large and relatively underdeveloped districts to the north of the SEZ. Between 1999 and 2002, 65,000 new illegal housing buildings were built in the city, with intensified development in Nanshan district and the two outer districts of Longgang and Bao'an. The government legislatively urbanized all the villages of Shenzhen in the name of better control and integration of village land into the urban planning system in 2002. With state ownership extended to all land in the city, all villages in the Bao'an and Longgang districts were transferred to government control. However, the illegal building construction still carried on and only slowed down by 2004, when the government formed special task forces and dispatched state-paid employees into the management organizations of each village. By that time, 50% of the working population was living in the urban villages.

By 2005, the illegally built housing in the urban villages accounts for 64% of Shenzhen's total housing floor area. Despite the highest population density in the city, the villages are referred to as the under-utilized land, whose real value is waiting to be recaptured by the government's planning.<sup>153</sup> The seemingly chaotic and backwards image of the villages increasingly became an embarrassment to the government as it did not align with the city's new image of a high-tech oriented modern city. In addition, governmental statistics indicated that land remaining for development is only 2.23% of the city's total territory. The need to free up land for better use and development justified the inevitability of demolishing the villages. Renewed efforts were spent to overcome the systemic defeats of incorporating the redevelopment of urban villages into the formal planning system, and to legitimize governmental control over the renewal of urban villages.<sup>154</sup> In 2004, the government issued new provisional regulation with guidelines and a five-year plan of redevelopment of urban villages in 2005.<sup>155</sup> These regulations and plans were to give legal and institutional authority to the government to leverage its negotiation with the villagers. The government also began to produce

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<sup>151</sup> Shenzhen City Government. *Guanyu Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Nongcun Chengshihua de Zanxing Guiding* [Provisional Regulations of Rural Urbanization in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone] (Shenzhen City Government, 1992).

<sup>152</sup> Shenzhen City Government. *Guanyu Jianjue Chachu Weifa Jianzhu de Jueding* [Decisions on Banning Illegal Construction] (Shenzhen City Government, 1999).

Shenzhen City Government. *Guanyu Chuli Lishi Yiliu Weifa Sifang He Shengchan Jingjingxing Weifa Jianzhu de Ruogan Jueding* [Decisions on Handling Former Illegal Housing and Commercial Construction] (Shenzhen City Government, 2002).

<sup>153</sup> Yan Song, Yves Zenou and Chengri Ding. "Let's not throw the baby out with the bath water: the role of urban villages in housing rural migrants in China." *Urban Studies* 45, no. 2 (2008): 313-330.

<sup>154</sup> Him Chung. "The Planning of 'Village-in-the-City' in Shenzhen, China: A State-led Approach", *International Planning Studies*, 14, no. 3 (2009): 253-273.

<sup>155</sup> Shenzhen City Government. *Shenzhen Shi Chengzhongcun (Jiucun) Gaizao Zanxing Guiding* [Provisional regulations of the redevelopment plan of Shenzhen urban villages] (Shenzhen City Planning Bureau, 2005a).

Shenzhen City Government. *Shenzhen Shi Renmin Zhengfu Guanyu Chengzhongcun (Jiucun) Gaizao Zanxing Guiding de Shishi Yijian* [Implementation notes of the provisional regulations of the redevelopment of Shenzhen urban villages]. (Shenzhen City Planning Bureau, 2005b).

Shenzhen City Planning Bureau. *Shenzhen Shi Chengzhongcun (Jiucun) Gaizao Zongti Guihua Gangyao (2005-2010)* [Master plan of villages-in-the-city redevelopment (2005-2010)] (Shenzhen City Planning Bureau, 2005c).

annual development plans to initiate this massive scale of changes to the urban environment. The plans fall loosely into three types: complete demolition and reconstruction, partial redevelopment, and enhancement projects. In 2006 alone, the plan outlined intentions to completely demolish 14 villages, partially demolish 26 villages, and renovate 73 villages distributed across the entire city. In order to finance this ambitious plan, the government allocated capital from the city's central planning budget and established separate funding at both municipal and district levels. In some cases, the government, private developers, and the villagers led by the Village Corporation, formed collaborations and achieved the redevelopment intentions. Most of the villagers acted, individually or collectively, against the governmental redevelopment plans. However, the opposition by villagers mostly centers on the amount of monetary and real estate compensation package.

The first complete demolition and reconstruction was Yumin Village, a small yet prosperous urban village located in Luohu district. Covering a land of 20,000 m<sup>2</sup>, there were only around 200 villagers and 10,000 migrants living the villages' rental housing. The village's rural industrialization in the 1980s and 1990s was particularly successful and became the first village in modern China to have an average annual income per household of more than 10,000 RMB. During Deng Xiaoping's 1984 southern tour, he visited the village and openly cited its important role of confirming the government's experiment of Opening Up and Reform. The village's political symbolism and relatively simple village organization rendered its idea as a test case for redevelopment. Due to the strong organization and economic resources, the Village Corporation held a strong position in its negotiations with the government. In addition to large governmental compensation, the Village Corporation became its own developer for the reconstruction. The village buildings and "kissing towers" were demolished and replaced by garden villas and high-rise luxury apartments. Each village household acquired an apartment of 1,320 m<sup>2</sup>, worth around 20,000 RMB per square meter. The villagers became millionaires overnight with the total individual assets of more than 20 million. In 2012, Xi Jinping visited the new Yumin neighborhood, "tracing the steps" of his predecessor Deng. Yumin once again filled front page news throughout China and Hong Kong for having demonstrated the possible future of all urban villages, contributing to the desired urban image of modern Shenzhen. However, unnoted by the state and popular media were the 10,000 renters who lost their homes without any compensation or consideration. As they do not own any of the land or property, the migrant workers living in the urban villages have no rights of participation in the negotiations and decision making process. This particular group of course cannot afford the rent of the newly built high-rise apartments. They quietly moved into neighboring urban villages and contributed to increased congestion of those areas.

To date, three urban villages have been completely demolished and many more partially redeveloped. While the speed of redevelopment is a fraction of the initial planning, the government is determined to "reform" all urban villages. The 2010 fourth Master Plan of Shenzhen Municipality brought up the issues of the urban villages for the first time in the official master plan documents.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Mee Kam Ng. "Strategic Planning of China's First Special Economic Zone: Shenzhen City Master Plan (2010-2020)," *Planning Theory & Practice* 12, no.4 (2011): 638-643.

The proposal plans to redevelop more than 13 areas of urban villages in major development areas of the city. The power play between the villagers and government continues to create countless village millionaires and influential developer corporations. Each transaction of village redevelopment also meant the displacement of thousands of working class renters.

## Humans of Shenzhen

A 2004 novel entitled *Heaven to the Left, Shenzhen to the Right* was published by Beijing-based writer Murong Xuecun and became widely read in Shenzhen. Centered on the lives of a few young white-collar migrant workers, the novel portrayed the corruptive powers of the city's market mechanism as well as the resultant spirit of self-reliance and social relationships among the people of Shenzhen. For those recently arrived in the city, the "Shenzhen Principle" is communicated as: "I can invite you to a meal, but cannot lend you money, because I do not know if I will ever see you again. Please do not beg me to find you a job; I found my job by myself. Yes, you are my friend, and that is why you can stay with me for a few days."<sup>157</sup> The book and its outspoken author are relatively popular with the young working population of Shenzhen, but not with the Chinese government.<sup>158</sup> The people of Shenzhen—or Shenzheners, as they call themselves—added a spin to the Shenzhen Principle: "Heaven to the Left, Shenzhen to the Right; make a turn and you will end up in an urban village." For many who arrive in Shenzhen, a landing place in a friend's home is an unattainable luxury. To the majority of the low-income workers and young migrants, the city's urban villages have become the ultimate home base. The relatively affordable home and work spaces have made it possible to earn a living and even start up a business. According to research conducted between 2009 and 2016, there are 7 to 10 million people living in Shenzhen's urban villages, accounting for a little more than half of the city's total population in that period.<sup>159</sup> This is especially meaningful when contextualized with the Shenzhen housing crisis. Since 2016, real estate value in Shenzhen has exceeded that in all the other Chinese cities, and housing affordability ratings were found to be worse than those of Hong Kong.

Shenzhen's latest round of digital revolutions, as well as the city's numerous past innovations, are part of a deep history of entrepreneurial practices. Urban villages provide an ecosystem of affordable housing, along with inexpensive services and facilities, which has allowed Shenzhen to continuously evolve and exceed predefined expectations. Shenzhen's success cannot be attributed to a single policy. Some of the city's most remarkable innovations are the result of local responses to top-down planning, responses that sometimes directly contradicted those plans. The story of Shenzhen did not originate from a single leader or even a collective governmental vision, but rather was borne from hundreds of millions of individual personalities and aspirations, a handful of which are revealed in the following chapters.

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<sup>157</sup> Xuecun Murong. *Tiantang Xiangzuo Shenzhen Wangyou* [*Heaven to the Left Shenzhen to the Right, or Another Way to Heaven*] (Beijing: Writers Publishing House, 2004).

<sup>158</sup> "Chinese Internet: "A New Censorship Campaign Has Commenced,"" *The Guardian*, May 15, 2013.

<sup>159</sup> National School of Development, "Shenzhen Tudi Zhidu Gaige Yanjiu Baogao (a Study Report on Land Policy Reform in Shenzhen)," (Beijing: Peking University, 2013).

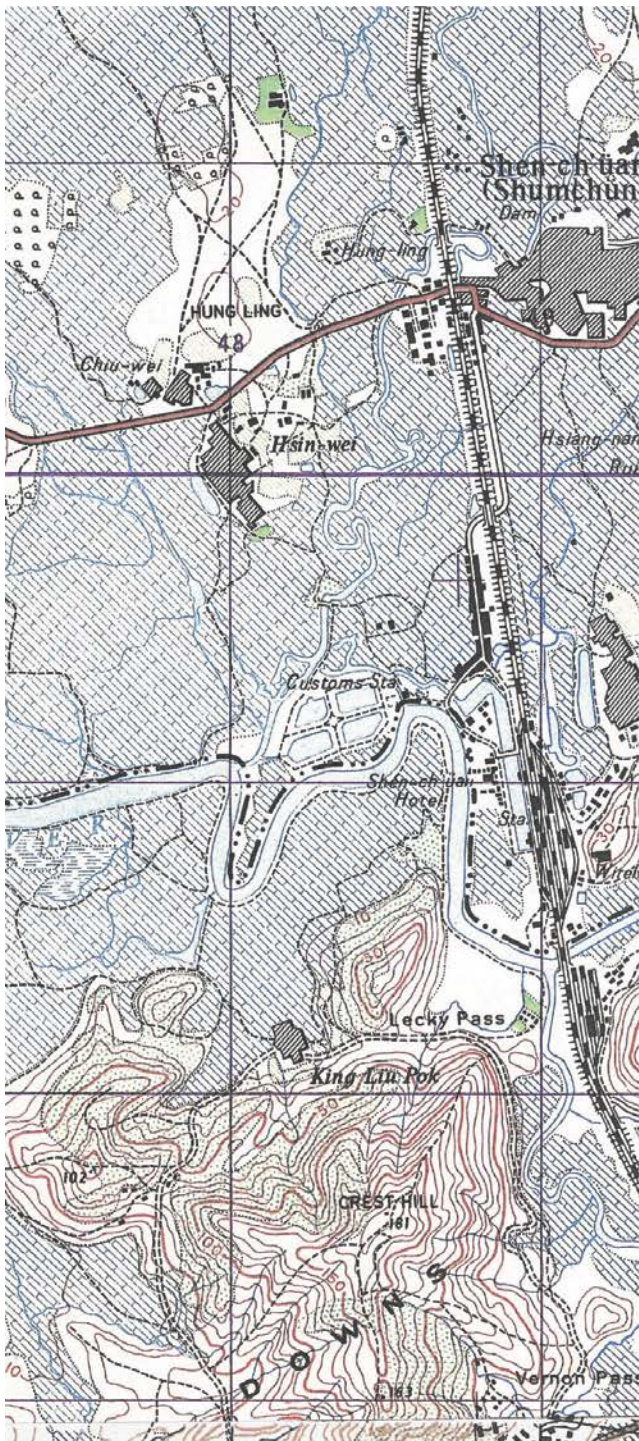
Ruichuan Guo, "Chengzhongcun Buyinggai Chengwei Wuye Guanli Mangqu (Urban Villages Should Not Become a Blind Spot of Property Management)," *Southern Metropolis Daily*, August 23, 2016.

## **PART III ETHNOGRAPHIC URBANISM: IN-DEPTH CASE STUDIES**

## 5. Caiwuwei: Clan Village in the Financial District

**Figure 20** Next Page: Survey Map (1950s) compared with satellite image (2010) in Luohu District. Caiwuwei Village is divided by the Shennan Boulevard, just as the original village was divided by an early twentieth century country road that stretched from the Shenzhen Old Town westward to the Nantou Ancient City.



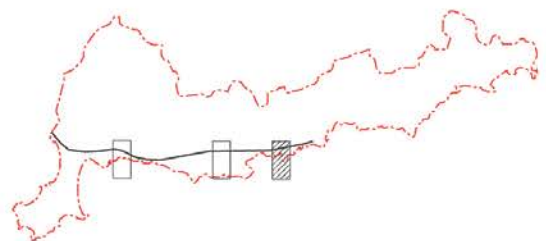


1952



2014

Boundaries		Scrubs	
Railways		Orchards	
Roads		Marsh or Swamp	
1st Class		Mangrove	
2nd Class		Irrigated Land	
Cart Track		Sand	
Footpath		Ditches or Trenches	
Villages		Salt pans	
Isolated Houses			
Woods			





## The Nail-House of Shenzhen

In March 2007, an online post titled “Forced Land Acquisition for the Tallest Tower in the South Makes Me Feel Helpless” quickly went viral in Shenzhen, initiating a local—and soon national—media storm. The open letter stated not only the real name and age of its author, but also her address: “My name is Zhang Lianhao, female, 60 years old. My current household residence is at 12 Old Neighborhood, Caiwuwei, in Shenzhen's Luohu District, known as the *dingzi hu* of Shenzhen!”<sup>160</sup>

*Dingzi hu*, literally meaning nail-house or household, refers to the houses of individuals who have refused to move when facing eviction notices from developers or the government. China's nail-houses have attracted global attention since dramatic photos of a house stranded in the middle of an active construction site in Chongqing, one of the largest cities in China, appeared in local and international news outlets in early 2007.<sup>161</sup> The owners of the house, a middle-aged couple, had refused the terms of the relocation compensation initially offered by the developer, and had not reached an agreement after three years of negotiations. Finally, through local and national media, they waged a successful publicity campaign that garnered widespread public sympathy and pressed the developers and local government to accept the house owners' terms. This was a rare victory in China for individuals protesting big business interests and taking on the complex legal issues of land use and property rights. While not all protesting nail-houses in China have been successful, and some have had tragic results, they have acquired quite an online following, with numerous websites and blogs dedicated to the phenomenon.<sup>162</sup> A two-story, life-sized replica of the Chongqing nail-house even appeared as an exhibit at the 2010 Venice Biennale, the most prominent international architecture event.<sup>163</sup>

While the 2007 Shenzhen nail-house, owned by Zhang Lianhao and her husband Cai Zhuxiang, also appeared in media profiles showcasing “the coolest Nail Houses in China,” locally it is usually referred to as the “Most Expensive Nail-House in China.” The monetary compensation Zhang and Cai were demanding was unprecedented, and seen by most as astronomical. However, their demands should be contextualized by the fact that their house was located in the middle of Shenzhen's Caiwuwei Village area, the commercial and financial center of Shenzhen, which was one of the most densely populated and most expensive street blocks in China. Back in 2003, their house was located squarely in the middle of the planned “Wall Street of Shenzhen.”<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Lianhao Zhang to Nanfang diyi gaolou zhi zhengdi chaiqian lingwo gandao ruoshi, Oeeee, March 29, 2007, Blog.oeeee.com/zlh1947.

<sup>161</sup> “I'd Rather Be a Hammer, China,” *The Economist*, April 7, 2007.

Hpward French, “Homeowner Stares Down Wreckers, at Least for a While: One Women Is an Island,” *New York Times*, March 27, 2007.

Zhiling Huang, “We Are Not Going Anywhere,” *China Daily*, March 31, 2007.

<sup>162</sup> Lei Wang and Ye Chang, “Jiexi Xinlangwang Dui Chongqing “Dingzihu” Shijian De Wenben Jina (an Analysis on Sina's Text Collection Strategy on the Chongqing “Nailhouse” Incident)” (Southwest University of Political Science and Law, 2007).

<sup>163</sup> *Caruso St. John Architects and Thomas Demand, “Nagelhaus”*.

<sup>164</sup> Ying Liu, “Chengshi Gengxin Bu Tingbu “Shenzhen Huaer Jie” Zheyang Liancheng (Urban Renewal Never Stops- the Making of Shenzhen Wall Street),” *Nanfang Metropolis Daily*, July 10, 2015.



**Figure 21** The Nail-House of Caiwuwei in 2007, the last village building standing in the construction site of the Kingkey Tower. Remaining area of the urban village unaffected by the Kingkey construction could be seen on the right side of the photo.

The “Wall Street” project was initiated in 2003, when the People’s Bank requested to expand its Shenzhen headquarters because its current facilities were no longer large enough to support its growing business. Because the branch is located adjacent to Caiwuwei Village's Old Neighborhood, the expansion

would involve the demolition and resettlement of some village housing. The city government decided to take this as an opportunity to create a more ambitious plan, which became the “Caiwuwei Financial Central District Urban Renewal Masterplan,” designed make Shenzhen even more attractive to multinational finance corporations and major state-owned banks.<sup>165</sup> It was Shenzhen’s first major urban renewal project focused on boosting development in the 20-year-old “old district” of Luohu—but at the expense of the historic Caiwuwei Village. The redevelopment would demolish over 100 existing residential and commercial village properties owned by 386 village households, impacting roughly 2,000 villagers.<sup>166</sup> Zhang Lianhao, her husband, and their two children were among these villagers. They owned their house and the land use rights, which is extremely unusual for residents in China. According to Zhang Lianhao: “In May of 1977 in accordance with a national policy, each village household was allotted land for homestead. We built a house on the land allotted to us and after the reform and opening-up of the country, our lives stabilized. However, the good times did not last forever. In 2006, land developers came in the name of remodeling villages in the city to target our village for construction development.”<sup>167</sup>

The developer, Kingkey Group, signed onto to the project in 2004 and started negotiations with village leaders at the Caiwuwei Village Corporation. After reaching general terms in 2006, the developer started negotiations with individual villagers. At first the majority of the impacted villagers did not agree with the terms offered, and were upset that the village leadership had reached an overall agreement with Kingkey without notifying the villagers first. In her letter, Zhang Lianhao detailed the terms and the reasons for her objections:

They did not put the villagers’ interests first, but rather aimed to profit from land acquisition and sales. The land developers, who had the support of the regional government, flaunted their tough attitude and emphatically expressed their insistence on negotiating with me in a high-handed fashion, stating our property would be acquired at a far lower value than the surrounding properties. The arbitrary terms included “a compensation at the rate of 6,500 yuan per square meter,” or “a 1 to 1 area house of unknown structure and quality to move back into in four years,” “no compensation for balcony or roof garden,” and “no homestead land compensation.” While the surrounding properties were valued at 16,000 yuan or higher per square meter, my 7-story single-family house in the solid, bright, beautifully decorated villa-style, with permanent land use rights, was valued by the land developers at only 3,000 yuan per square meter! My homestead land (usage rights) would be given away for free, without a single penny of compensation! Being just a plain citizen, how can I even think of fighting the government? I just want to be able to live and work in peace. The Communist Party’s reform and opening-up policies provided me with a happy life, but now this happiness

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<sup>165</sup> Yu Zhang and Kaiwen Zhong, “Zouxiang Shendu Chengshihua De Duoyuan Lujing (Multiple Ways to Achieve Heightened Urbanization),” *China Land and Resource* 5 (2015).

<sup>166</sup> Jie Tang, “5 Nianqian Huopei 1700 Wan Shenzhen “Zhongguo Zuigui Dingzihu” Jin Hezai ” Daily Sunshine, November 1, 2012.

Zhang and Zhong.

<sup>167</sup> Lianhao Zhang to Nanfang diyi gaolou zhi zhengdi chaiqian lingwo gandao ruoshi, Oeeee, March 29, 2007.

is being destroyed by land developers. Such unfair terms of compensation, how can I accept them?<sup>168</sup>

On September 15, 2006, with the majority of the villagers in support of relocation but without a final agreement on exact terms, the developer's bulldozers started demolition. Soon, the redevelopment site was reduced to bare reddish earth and the few nail-houses were left standing alone in a desolate field. Eventually, the developer increased the compensation to 12,000 yuan per square meter for the ground floor area of each house and offered immediate partial cash compensation. By October 2006, 370 village households had signed the relocation agreement.<sup>169</sup> Zhang and Cai, along with 16 other "hold-out" families, did not agree to the terms. The Caiwuwei nail-houses soon became regarded as "nails" against progress, delaying the entire project. Intensified negotiations continued into early 2007. By March 2007, there were only six nail-houses left. Zhang Lianhao experienced coercion and, at times, threats:

During this time, land developers, district government, sub-district office, village committee, and task forces were calling upon us non-stop. Even the requisition office under the land bureau had summoned me twice to answer to a ruling, threatening to proceed with forced demolition once the ruling took effect! When they saw I did not give up, they proceeded to harass me: cutting off water and power supply for seven months, blocking traffic passages, disconnecting the telephone line and cable TV. After the developers had put up a wall around the demolition site and placed guards at the gate, they would repeatedly send someone to defecate in the front and back of our house. I called the local police seven times to no avail. Being in my 60s with a weak heart, these hurtful acts lead to my frequent loss of consciousness and the need for resuscitation. I am a Chinese citizen protecting my legal rights and trying to lead a peaceful life. Am I wrong in choosing to do so? Do they mean to hound me to death?<sup>170</sup>

It is important to note that from the start of negotiations in 2006 throughout 2007, Zhang Lianhao and her husband Cai Zhuxiang gave numerous interviews to the local and national media. The Chongqing nail-house couple had set a precedent by holding interviews and press conferences, and mounting large TV-friendly slogans on their nail-house to attract maximum attention. These practices, conveying the image of the "heroic Nail-House defender," were emulated by many owners of other nail-houses around the country.<sup>171</sup> Zhang and Cai kept the names and contact information of all the journalists in a small notebook and regularly gave them updates, using the press to gain attention and public support against their forced eviction. Zhang went a step further, posting a public letter online in March 2007. Rather than relying on news outlets to translate her message, she directly tapped into the

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Jianfeng Fu, "'Zuigui Dingzihu' Huo Buchang Yu Qianwan Quanli Huifou Bei Lanyong ('the Most Expensive Nailhouse' Was Compensated with 10 Millions, Will the Power Be Abused?)," *Southern Weekly*, October 18, 2007.

<sup>170</sup> Lianhao Zhang to Nanfang diyi gaolou zhi zhengdi chaiqian lingwo gandao ruoshi, Oeeee, March 29, 2007.

<sup>171</sup> Steve Hess, "Nail-Houses, Land Rights, and Frames of Injustice on China's Protest Landscape," *Asian Survey* 50, no. 5 (2010).

tremendous influence of social media with her impassioned online letter. Cai told a reporter that their idea of using the internet came from what they read about the Chongqing nail-house online, which encouraged them to ask someone to help them post the open letter.<sup>172</sup>

The internet response was explosive. The online letter was instantly reposted in hundreds of blogs and chatrooms. Thousands of comments, mostly from Shenzhen residents, were swiftly posted in response. These resembled the original letter in zealotry, and displayed a mostly consistent attitude: opposition to Zhang Lianhao. Instead of the sympathy that Zhang and Cai had anticipated, public sentiment gravitated towards criticism and ridicule. One of the responses reads as follows:

I have always thought indigenous landlords like the owner of this post are the most shameless horde in Shenzhen. They benefitted from reform and opening up and made a fortune from rent that they collected from their dense village housing properties and year-end dividend from collective village property and land use, thus becoming members with vested interests. The pitiful white-collar workers who work day and night ultimately paid their hard-earned money to the landlords. It is just this indigenous horde that gained the benefits but still do not let up. They got rich as a result of reforms and now they turn around to hinder reform and opening up! It is this group of people who did illegal construction and engaged in violent confrontation against the law! The shameless landlord, why doesn't she stop and think, if it wasn't for reform and opening up, would that old building of yours be worth even 3,000 yuan? Urban renewal is for the strategic development of Shenzhen. I hope the indigenous understand this truth and that resistance shall be met with harsh punishment! I strongly urge the government to severely punish illegal construction and violent resistance against the law! For those who do not listen to this reasonable advice and insist on having their own way, they deserve to be buried by the bulldozer!<sup>173</sup>

The responses revealed several obscured realities of life in Shenzhen. The general public resented the villagers, who were seen by most as slumlords who simply took away their hard-earned wages. Nearly 50% of Shenzhen's total population still live in illegal, villager-built houses, similar to the one owned by Zhang and Cai. According to an April 2007 government survey, there were 358,000 local villagers and 350,000 villager-built houses in the city at that time.<sup>174</sup> These houses, the majority of which were illegally constructed, totaled 120 million square meters in floor area.

The story of Zhang Lianhao and her nail-house not only sheds light on Shenzhen's rapid urbanization, but also illustrates the complex process whereby the self-financed and illegally built "peasant house" became the most common building block in the city after 1979. That process, however, did not begin in 1979. In fact, the forces that shaped the Shenzhen nail-house controversy actually date back to pre-reform China.

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<sup>172</sup> Fu.

<sup>173</sup> Huanggang Cunmin to "Nanfang diyi gaolou zhi zhengdi chaiqian lingwo gandao ruoshi" ("Forced Land Acquisition for the Tallest Tower in the South Makes Me Feel Helpless"), March 29, 2007.

<sup>174</sup> Fu.

Bin Li et al., "Shenzhen Qidong Shishang Zuiqiang Chengzhongcun Gaizao (Shenzhen Kick Started the Largest Urban Village Redevelopment Project in History)," *Nanfang Metropolis Daily*, October 27, 2004.



## Sent-Down Youth in Caiwuwei Village

One important aspect of the Shenzhen nail-house debate does not seem to have aroused much interest. In the second line of Zhang Lianhao's public letter, she stated: "I was 17 years old when I answered the Party's call that 'Educated Urban Youth Go and Work in the Mountain Areas and the Countryside.' I came from Guangzhou to the present-day Caiwuwei Village and joined the Number One Red Team to support rural development."<sup>175</sup> In 1964, when Zhang Lianhao left her home city of Guangzhou, she was a teenage girl with a long braid of shiny black hair. In 2007, aged 60, Zhang still self-identified as a *zhiqing*, or "educated youth"—one of those sent down to the rural countryside to help develop the villages.

The controversial "Sent-Down Movement" began with the goal of reinforcing rural production while addressing the problem of unemployment in cities; however, it later evolved into a frenzied political campaign that affected nearly every family in the country. This frenzy reached its height during the fervent "Up the Mountain and Down to the Countryside Movement," which followed Mao's call on "educated youth to go to the countryside to be reeducated by poor and lower-middle [class] peasants."<sup>176</sup> Between 1968 and 1980, 18,000,000 urban youths were sent to work in China's undeveloped wilderness and remote mining fields, with the largest number being sent to rural villages.<sup>177</sup> The current Chinese President Xi Jinping spent seven years working in the farming fields of rural Shaanxi. The Sent-Down Movement had an enormous impact on an entire generation, and, along with other hidden consequences of the Cultural Revolution, still haunts China today.

While the majority of the Sent-Down Youth were deployed after 1968, the central government had advocated sending urban youth to villages a decade earlier. From 1958 to 1962, China's Great Famine caused 36 million deaths and prevented the birth of another 40 million in a country with a population of 650 million at the time.<sup>178</sup> During the 1960s, even the relatively better-off Guangdong province experienced widespread mass starvation and violence, with even a few reported incidents of

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<sup>175</sup> Lianhao Zhang to Nanfang diyi gaolou zhi zhengdi chaiqian lingwo gandao ruoshi, Oeeee, March 29, 2007.

<sup>176</sup> "Zhishi qingnian dao nongcun qu" "Mao Zhuxi Yulu (Quotation from Chairman Mao)," *People's Daily*, December 22, 1968.

<sup>177</sup> Michel Bonnin and Krystyna Horko, *The Lost Generation: The Rustication of China's Educated Youth (1968-1980)* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2013).

Yiran Pei, "'Zhiqing Xue' Ji Dacheng Zhizhu (a Comprehensive Work on the Educated Youth)," *Twenty-first Century* 121 (2010).  
Yizhuang Ding, *Zhongguo Zhi Qing Shi: Chu Lan, 1953-1968 Nian (a History of the Chinese Educated Youth: Beginning 1953-1968)* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998).

Xiaomeng Liu, *Zhongguo Zhiqing Shi: Dachao, 1966-1980 Nian (a History of the Chinese Educated Youth: Peak 1966-1980)* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998).

*Zhongguo Zhiqing Koushu Shi (an Oral History of the Chinese Educated Youth)* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2004).

<sup>178</sup> Jisheng Yang, *Tombstone - the Great Chinese Famine, 1958-1962*. Translated by Stacy Mosher and Jian Guo. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012).

Xizhe Peng, "Demographic Consequences of the Great Leap Forward in China's Provinces," *Population and Development Review* 13, no. 4 (1987).

Ansley J. Coale, "Population Trends, Population Policy, and Population Studies in China," *Population and Development Review* 7, no. 1 (1981).

Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine*. (London: John Murray, 1996).

Penny Kane, *Famine in China, 1959-61: Demographic and Social Implications*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988).

Basil Ashton and Kenneth Hill. "Famine in China, 1958-1961." *Population and Development Review* 10, no. 4 (1984): 613-645.

Carl Riskin, "Seven Questions About the Chinese Famine of 1959-61," *China Economic Review* 9, no. 2 (1998).

Felix Wemheuer. "Sites of Horror: Mao's Great Famine." *The China Journal* 66, July (2011): 155-164.

cannibalism.<sup>179</sup> In order to escape extreme food shortages and starvation, enormous numbers of villagers in Guangzhou risked their lives to illegally cross the border over to adjacent colonial Hong Kong. In 1961 alone, there were 19,000 documented “deserters” in Guangdong.<sup>180</sup> Abandoned farm fields and the lack of agricultural laborers further contributed to the disastrous food shortage throughout the region. As the countryside emptied, the Guangzhou government came under particular pressure to send urban youth to live in rural villages. On September 17, 1964, Guangzhou City complied and sent 100,000 “unemployed urban youth” between the ages of 15 and 20 to rural villages throughout the province.<sup>181</sup>

Even though it was less than a day’s journey from Zhang Lianhao’s home in Guangzhou City to Caiwuwei Village, living conditions at Caiwuwei Village were much less comfortable than those in the metropolitan Guangzhou. Zhang Lianhao should have felt some consolation, though: Caiwuwei was more centrally located than other rural villages, being adjacent to the Bao’an County Government Headquarters, which had been relocated from the historic Nantou Fort to Caiwuwei Village in 1957. The village’s eastern boundary was marked by the Canton-Kowloon Railway, built in 1911, and the adjacent *Shenzhen Xu*, a centuries-old market town. The term Shenzhen Xu, or Market of Deep Channels, first appeared in written records in the 1688 *Xin’an County Annals*.<sup>182</sup> The market arose on the site of a squatter camp that first appeared around 1510, occupying a barren field amidst villages including Caiwuwei, Luohu, Chikan, Hubei, Xiangxi, Getang, Huangbeiling, Sungang, and Buxin. The squatter camp eventually became known as Nantang Village, and housed migrants with 23 different family names, who came from various distant provinces: Shanxi, Shaanxi, Henan, Hebei, Gansu, Anhui, Shandong, Jiangsu, and Jiangxi.<sup>183</sup> Nantang Village grew to nearly 300 brick houses, arranged along eight east-west and six north-south street grids. Shenzhen Xu’s layout was based on these original village streets.<sup>184</sup> By the early Qing Dynasty, Shenzhen Xu was already a thriving trading town. The streets were lined with narrow shophouses, each two or three stories tall, along with eateries, banks, clinics, brothels, and a Buddhist temple. Many villagers from the surrounding areas owned and operated shops in the market town. When the Qing Dynasty government ceded the New Territories region south of Shenzhen River to Great Britain in 1898, Shenzhen Xu became a gateway between China and the rest of the world. The opening of the Canton-Kowloon Railway and the Luohu Railway Station in 1911 introduced even more economic activity to the area. Close proximity to the trading center gave nearby villages access and early exposure to national and international commerce.

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., pp. 320–323.

<sup>180</sup> Zewu Zhang, “Shenzhen Chengshihua Licheng Zhong De Shequ Bianqian (Community Changes During the Urbanization Process of Shenzhen),” *Practice and Theory of SEZs* 10, no. 1 (2011).

<sup>181</sup> Haihua Ma, “Zhishi Qingnian (Educated Youth),” *Zhongguo pinglun xueshu chubanshe*.

<sup>182</sup> Honglei Liao, “Dongmen Laojie Jianzheng Tequ Bianqian Lingnan Mingzhen Puxie Shangye Chuanqi (Shenzhen Old Town Witnessed Changes of the Sez, the Renowned Town in the South Created Commercial Legends),” *Shenzhen Economic Daily*, March 15, 2010.

<sup>183</sup> Honglei Liao, Huangyou He, and Qun Li, “Jing, Jie, Shi: Cong Shenzhenxu Dao Dongmen Shangye Qu (Shenzhen Town).” *Architectural Worlds*, no. 10 (2013): 18-20.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 22** Reconstructed historical transformations of Caiwuwei and surrounding circa 1954

Zhang Lianhao heard accounts from the old villagers about the history of Caiwuwei Village, dating even further back than the time of Shenzhen Old Market Town. The villagers were proud of their humble beginnings and their status as one of the largest and oldest villages in the then-rural Bao'an County. Located north of the Shenzhen River and spanning more than three square kilometers, the village was home to a single clan with the family name "Cai." *The Cai Clan Genealogy* asserts that its ancestral history dates back to the Southern Song Dynasty. According to the *Genealogy*, their ancestor Cai An migrated from rural Fujian Province to settle in Guangdong Province's Dongguan area.<sup>185</sup> Some nine generations later, around the fourteenth century Ming Dynasty, Cai An's descendant Cai Jijuan migrated to the village's modern-day location. Caiwuwei villagers consider the village in Dongguan an ancestral home and still make yearly ritual visits. Cai Jijuan was first hired by the local "Chikan," the Red Cliff Village, to raise their flock of ducks. Eventually, descendants of Cai the Duck Breeder became so populous that a Cai family compound was built.

Chikan Village was officially renamed Caiwuwei, or the "Cai Family Compound," in the early Qing Dynasty. Eventually, as the Cai clan continued growing, a new settlement called "Xinwei" was built a little further south across a dirt path that separated the village from the farm fields. That dirt path later became Shennan Boulevard, the main transport artery of Shenzhen. This area of Laowei (Old Compound) is where Zhang would come to live centuries later, and where she would eventually build her nail-house.

While many Sent-Down Youth traveled for weeks across the country, Zhang Lianhao's journey was relatively short. At such a short distance from home compared with her peers, she was able to stay in the village longer than most of the other Sent-Downs. Nearly all these urban youths returned home to their cities when the central government retracted the unpopular policy in 1978. However, Zhang

<sup>185</sup> It refers to the version of clan genealogy hand copied by villager Cai Diesen in 1986. The original manuscript of the genealogy was lost; while this version can't be proven historically, it is widely accepted by local villagers.

Lianhao stayed, and by the time she became nationally known for the “most expensive Nail House in China,” she had lived in Caiwuwei Village for 43 years.

### An Unusual Marriage

In 1966, the 11 Caiwuwei Village production brigades were reorganized to form three “Red” production teams. Zhang Lianhao was assigned to work on the Number One Red Production Team, where she earned 29 cents per day doing farm work.<sup>186</sup> Caiwuwei offered a more colorful life than other villages in the region, owing to its proximity to the Hong Kong border and its connection with an international network of former villagers who had migrated to other countries in Asia and beyond. The members of the Caiwuwei diaspora maintained close relationships with one another and their home village for centuries. In 1929, Cai Taihua, a villager who settled in the United States, funded the construction of the first modern school for young pupils in Bao’an County. Located on a campus of 6,000 square meters, the school had, in addition to classroom buildings, a library, meeting hall, basketball court, volleyball court, playground, and housing for teaching staff. The school’s operation was collectively funded by the village’s overseas members. Later migration waves during the twentieth century kept this support going. Today, there are estimated to be 3,500 descendants of the Cai Clan around the world.

In 1961, the village’s international community donated funds to purchase a tractor to contribute to agricultural production.<sup>187</sup> <sup>188</sup> Cai Riguang, the village’s finance brigade leader, traveled to Hong Kong and brought back a UK-made Ferguson tractor. The 8,000 yuan “Fergie” was one of the more popular tractor models internationally at the time. It was the first mechanized farming vehicle in Bao’an County, and the pride of Caiwuwei Village. As all agricultural land was collectively owned in accordance with the people’s commune policies at the time, the tractor was shared by all production teams. The tractor driver, a spirited young villager named Cai Zhuxiang, caught the attention of the young Zhang Lianhao. Cai Zhuxiang relished the attention he received when driving the tractor at top speed on the country roads. A childhood friend recalls Cai as a leader of their boyhood pack, especially after he became the tractor driver: “To be able to drive a tractor at that time would be like driving a Rolls-Royce today—so amazingly impressive!”<sup>189</sup>

After a few years in Caiwuwei Village, Zhang Lianhao made an unusual decision in 1969. Aged 22, she married the 19-year-old Cai. The marriage was notable for various reasons. While villagers in China’s countryside do marry fairly young, the 1950 Marriage Law of the People’s Republic of China stipulates the minimum age at which women can marry is 18; for men, it is 20. A union involving an older bride would normally have been frowned upon by society, and it is a considerable social stigma even today. The marriage was also extraordinary because it united an urban *hukou* holder and a rural *hukou*

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<sup>186</sup> Yi Song and Xiaopeng Chen, “Luohu Cunzhuang 60 Nian Zhi Caiwuwei (60 Years of Villages in Luohu- Caiwuwei),” *Yangcheng Evening News*, September 2, 2009; Tang.

<sup>187</sup> Song and Chen.

<sup>188</sup> Alan Smart and George Chu Sheng Lin, “Local Capitalisms, Local Citizenship and Translocality: Rescaling from Below in the Pearl River Delta Region, China,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 31, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>189</sup> Tang.

holder.<sup>190</sup> Even though Zhang was “Sent-Down” to work in the rural countryside, she still held the Guangzhou City registration or *hukou*. Inter marriages between urban and rural *hukou* holders were extremely rare. Furthermore, as a “Sent-Down Youth,” Zhang Lianhao’s marriage to a villager was an exceptional act during a highly exceptional time. Being “Sent-Down” to the villages was deemed a patriotic act, a show of loyalty to the Party and the motherland. However, the ultimate patriotic act was to marry a local villager, which proved one’s loyalty and commitment to the village. From the late 1960s to the 1970s, local and national papers carried reports of Sent-Down women marrying villagers and hailed them as model examples.<sup>191</sup> While some married villagers as an idealistic declaration, some for companionship, some simply for reprieve from hard labor, there were also numerous reports of women forced into such marriages.<sup>192</sup> However, when interviewed, many of the women “role models” reportedly explained their decision to marry local villagers by citing Mao’s words verbatim: “even with blackened hands and cow dung on the feet, they (the peasants) are still cleaner than the Bourgeois intellectuals.”<sup>193</sup>

With the encouragement of national media attention and political campaigning, around 43,000 women (0.2% of the total “Send-Down Youth”) married local rural *hukou* villagers.<sup>194</sup> Regardless of whether Zhang Lianhao’s marriage was an act of patriotism or love, the union between the “Sent-Down” girl from Guangzhou and the village tractor driver was celebrated, and Cai became the envy of other village youth. In the same year they were married, Zhang gave birth to a healthy baby boy. Although not in fear of starvation, the young married couple did not have an easy life. Their combined household income was less than 30 yuan a month. In 1972, the birth of their second child, a baby girl, added to the financial burden. Feeling pressure to make more money, Cai decided to slip away to Hong Kong. Unlike most of the “Escape to Hong Kong” army, Cai found it relatively easy to cross the border by following in the footsteps of many of his village ancestors. Unlike the “Iron Curtain” surrounding the Soviet Union, the “Bamboo Curtain” across the Shenzhen River border between communist China and capitalist Hong Kong was rather porous for local villagers.

It would be more fitting to compare the Shenzhen River border with the Berlin Wall between communist East and capitalist West Germany, as they both separated families. However, the Shenzhen River border also separated properties, due to the unique history of Caiwuwei and all nearby villages. These villages had farming fields that extended south of Shenzhen Old Market Town, across the Shenzhen River and into Hong Kong’s New Territories. The villagers crossed the many shallow and narrow segments of the waterway daily in order to farm their fields. For convenience, some villagers set up village settlements next to their fields. When the Qing government ceded the land south of the

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<sup>190</sup> Under Mao’s Household Registration System, enacted in 1958, at birth every citizen is assigned a registration *hukou* for his or her location of residence. Goods and services are collected and distributed to the registered population in each province’s cities and villages.

<sup>191</sup> Cong Cong, ““Hong” Paifang – Baiqixian Hunyin Wenti Diaocha Zhuiji (“Red” Memorial Gateway- a Historic Study on the Marriage Issues of Baiqixian),” *Zhongguo Funu* 8 (1987); Xiaomeng Liu, “Xiexiang Nu Zhishi Qingnian Hunyin Pouxu (an Analysis of the Marriage of the Female Educated Youth),” *Twenty-first Century* 30 (1995).

<sup>192</sup> “Xiexiang Nu Zhishi Qingnian Hunyin Pouxu (an Analysis of the Marriage of the Female Educated Youth).”; Cong.

<sup>193</sup> Zedong Mao, *Zai Yanan Wenyi Zuotanhui Shang De Jianghua (Speeches in the Yanan Cultural Symposium)* (Shanghai: Xinhua Shudian, 1942).

<sup>194</sup> Xiaomeng Liu, “Xiexiang Nu Zhishi Qingnian Hunyin Pouxu (an Analysis of the Marriage of the Female Educated Youth).” *Twenty-first Century* 30, (1995): 57-65.



Shenzhen River to Great Britain as the New Territories of Hong Kong in 1898, those villagers who had settled south of the river became "Hong Kong villagers." A makeshift border crossing station was set up at Luohu Bridge, which at first was simply a few wood planks. A traditional carved stone bridge was built in the late Qing Dynasty, collectively funded by the nearby villages. Yet farmers in the border region villages seldom bothered to use the crossing station at the bridge. With border patrols watching, many villagers simply nodded in their general direction and waded across the river with farming equipment on their backs or on top of water buffalos. In addition to this connection through farming, many villagers on either side of the Shenzhen River shared common ancestry and often worshipped at the same ancestral hall. Many villagers along the river shared the same clan heritage and family names. For example, several villages on the Hong Kong side bear the family name "Chen," the predominant village clan in Caiwuwei prior to the Cai clan's ascendancy. The long-established practice of intermarriage between the villagers from either side of the border continued well past 1898. Familiarity with the geographical features of the Shenzhen River and the border regions enabled many villagers in the area to illegally cross the border with ease, particularly during the subsequent years of intense civil and political unrest in China.



**Figure 23** Survey map (1950s) and satellite image (2014) of the Shenzhen and Hong Kong border region along the Shenzhen River. Caiwuwei, and other villages in the area once held land and farm fields on both sides of the river.

By 1949, the communist-led People's Liberation Army was winning China's civil war against the nationalist government; consequently, there were periods of tension at the border. The British government worried that the communist government would cross the river to reclaim the New Territories and more. Newspapers in Hong Kong were filled with sensational headlines such as "Communist Army Prepares to Push South." Ultimately under Beijing's command, the Liberation Army halted its southern advancement at the northern part of Shenzhen and chose to avoid further military conflicts. The British-Hong Kong government soon erected wire fencing along the entire southern edge of the Shenzhen River. Both sides stepped up border patrols and maintained a heightened military presence. Despite this drastic political change, villagers on both sides of the river continued their farming activities. However, they were no longer allowed to cross the river wherever they wanted: designated border crossing points were established for each village, and only members from designated villages were given permits to cross.

Even during the height of the Cultural Revolution, the Bao'an Police Department continued to issue cross-border farming certificates to Hong Kong villagers who had ancestral farm fields north of the political border. During those frantic years, in addition to showing the certificates each time they crossed, the Hong Kong villagers also needed to declare their "love for Chairman Mao."<sup>195</sup> Having been inspected repeatedly when crossing the Luohu border in 1971, *New York Times* journalist Seymour Topping described the relative ease with which local villagers proceeded through one of the crossing points: "A narrow railway bridge over a thin, muddy, desultory river separated Lo Wu from Shum Chun [Shenzhen], the station on the Chinese side. Atop the bare hills about us, British observation posts faced out on China. The British Union Jack hung limply in the humid air matched on the other side by the red flag with yellow stars of the People's Republic of China. Local peasants carrying vegetables and live chickens in straw cages and other farm products at the ends of poles across their shoulders seemed to be passing back and forth over the bridge without more than an exchange of nods with the guards."<sup>196</sup>

Thus in 1972, at the height of the Cultural Revolution, Cai Zhuxiang easily crossed the otherwise tightly controlled border. Perhaps due to the historical "normalcy" of Cai's "escape," Caiwuwei Village still managed to obtain 125 cross-border farming certificates in 1976, when certification was formally re-established. The "Cross-Border Farming Certificate" was designed to encourage greater agricultural production. At that time, three types of passes were issued: "Cross-border Horticulture Pass" for vegetable and fish farming; "Temporary Mariculture Pass" for oyster, shrimp, and fish harvesting; and "Family Visit Pass." In the late 1980s, the three passes were combined and named the "Shenzhen Cross-border Farming Pass." These passes were issued to individual villagers in around 30 villages neighboring the border.<sup>197</sup> This legal access to both sides of the river brought a series of benefits to the villagers. Not only did it increase the village's arable land and agricultural output, but it also offered access to and

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<sup>195</sup> Poyee, "Bianjing Jinqi: Huoyu Jiafeng De Cunlao (Frontier Closed Area: Villages That Survived in between)," *Ming Pao*, January 4, 2015.

<sup>196</sup> Seymour Topping, *Journey between Two Chinas* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 208–209.

<sup>197</sup> Chunliang You, "Shen Gang Bianjing Guanlixian Shang Xianwei Renzhi De "Gengzuokou " (Lesser Known Farming Ports Along the Control Lines between Shenzhen and Hong Kong)," *Legal Daily*, May 15, 2012.

knowledge of the more developed Hong Kong. The villagers soon learned to modernize their agricultural methods and increase production. Some villagers took the opportunity of working illegally as day laborers in Hong Kong because the jobs earned them much higher salaries. Many others who crossed the border, like Cai, stayed in Hong Kong. The exodus from these villages became one of the primary motivations for establishing the Special Economic Zone in Shenzhen.

As Cai crossed the border undetected, he was one of those who benefitted from Hong Kong's "Touch Base Policy," a short-lived Hong Kong governmental policy (1974–1980) that gave residency permits to any illegal immigrant who had family members in Hong Kong and could reach the city center without being caught by Hong Kong's border police. Cai was able to obtain a work permit and the coveted Hong Kong resident status. However, like most other immigrants, he could only find low-wage employment in Hong Kong. He drifted in and out of various jobs, from washing dishes to janitorial service.<sup>198</sup> The highest wages he earned were 300 yuan a month as a construction worker, 10 times more than the average villager north of the border. Cai regularly sent money back to his family in Caiwuwei. However, life for his wife Zhang Lianhao became increasingly difficult.

Left behind in Caiwuwei, Zhang Lianhao did not have a good relationship with the rest of the villagers. She was proud of her Sent-Down Youth status and urban background, but as an outsider and a woman with two young children, she was an easy target for exclusion and scorn. Cai was Zhang's only link to the village's social network of bloodline kinship, and she desperately needed additional income in order to raise two young children. Suddenly in 1979, months prior to the establishment of Shenzhen, money and news from Cai stopped arriving. Life in the village became even more difficult and her status in Caiwuwei more strained. Decades later during the nail-house controversy, some villagers speculated that perhaps retaliation underlay Zhang's insistence on holding out for cash compensation rather than relocation housing.<sup>199</sup> Accepting relocated housing as compensation would have meant Zhang's continuing to live with the rest of the villagers, as neighbors within one residential tower.

The villages' centuries-old rural social structure was ill-suited to outsiders like the Sent-Down Youth. In 1976, there were nearly 10,000 reported cases of abuse and 4,970 "unnatural deaths" among Sent-Down urban youths.<sup>200</sup> The majority of reported abuses were directed at women, and most of the charges were of rape. There were also complaints from rural villagers, most of whom viewed the youths as a burden on the villages' limited food and resources. In addition to these complaints in the countryside, there were nationwide protests by the urban youths demanding to be allowed to return to the cities. From 1978 onwards, massive resistance was mounted. There were protests in 21 provinces, including a demonstration in Shanghai that blocked the city's railroad transportation for 12 hours.<sup>201</sup> By the end of 1980, over 90 percent of the "Sent-Downs" had returned to their home cities. Yet, Zhang did not return to Guangzhou. Despite the disappearance of Cai, she chose to remain in the village with her two young children. Over the next decade, Caiwuwei Village was drastically transformed.

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<sup>198</sup> Tang.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Xiaomeng Liu, *Zhongguo Zhiqing Koushu Shi (an Oral History of the Chinese Educated Youth)* (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2004).

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

When 327.5 square kilometers of land bordering Hong Kong were designated as the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone in 1980, Caiwuwei found itself surrounded by the political and commercial activities of the new city. The village's land was among the first in Shenzhen to be expropriated by the newly established Shenzhen government. There were no regulated rates of village land compensation; the local government negotiated with each village individually. The first round of government land requisition in Caiwuwei comprised 3.3 square kilometers. At a rate of 4.5 RMB per square meter, the total compensation to the village collective amounted to 15 million RMB.<sup>202</sup> However, because the newly formed Shenzhen municipal government lacked a reserve of funds, the compensation was paid in several installments spanning multiple years. For example, in 1982, the village's large lychee fruit orchard was acquired and modelled into the Lychee Lake Park. Compensation for loss of the land and the lychee trees totaled about one million RMB, and reimbursement to Caiwuwei Village was not settled until a few years later. This was a common strategy used by the Shenzhen government during the early years, raising funds from one area of land development to pay for the next phase of requisitions.

In 1981, SEZ land policy designated that all land in the zone was owned by the state and stipulated that enterprises or individuals could only maintain right of use, not ownership.<sup>203</sup> Limited government funding also influenced the policy of keeping villages in place, so that they wouldn't have to be paid for relocation. In 1982, Shenzhen unveiled the first SEZ policy on land use in the villages: "Interim Provisions for Rural Commune Members' Land Use for Housing Construction in Shenzhen SEZ."<sup>204</sup> With this policy, the government reserved the right to expropriate all village land in the future; for the time being, however, it waived the requisition fees for residential areas of villages inside the Special Economic Zone and permitted continued usage of the land by the villages. In addition, each village household became eligible for an additional 150-square-meter plot of Home Based Land (HBL). Construction of a village home was allowed on each individual HBL plot, provided the building was no larger than 80 square meters in footprint and did not exceed two stories in height. This village policy determined the future land use pattern of all the villages in Shenzhen, as well as the spatial characteristics of future peasant houses in the villages. The gridded pattern of square HBL plots became the foundation for construction of all future village houses, later commonly referred to as "Handshake Towers."

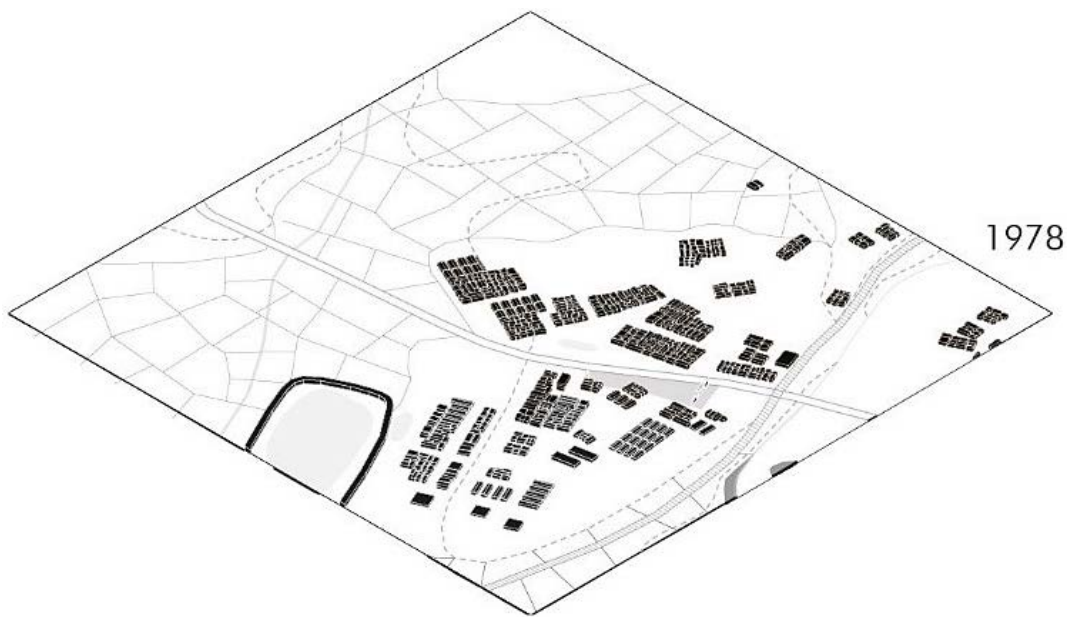
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<sup>202</sup> Doutian Wang, "Zai Xiwang De Tianye Shang— Caiwuwei Gufen Gongsi Ershinian Fazhan Jishi (on a Field of Hopes- a Chronology of the 20 Years of Development of Caiwuwei Shareholding Company)," *Shenzhen Economic Daily*, January 11, 2013.

<sup>203</sup> Shenzhen Municipal Government, "Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Tudi Guanli Zanxing Guiding (Interim Provisions of Land Management in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone)," (Shenzhen 1981).

<sup>204</sup> "Shenzhen Shi Jingji Tequ Nongcun Sheyuan Jianfang Yongdi Zanxing Guiding (Interim Provisions of Village Commune Members Housing Construction Land in Shenzhen Sez)," (Shenzhen 1982).





**Figure 24** Reconstructed historical transformations of Caiwuwei and surrounding circa 1978

Following the implementation of this policy, Caiwuwei village leaders designated an area adjacent to the existing village dwelling area for the “new village,” divided into square land parcels of 150 square meters each. Allocation of HBL was usually determined by male members of the villages, who were assumed to be heads of each nuclear family. Despite the absence of Cai Zhuxiang, Zhang Lianhao successfully lobbied the village in 1982 for a land parcel on which to build a home for herself and their two children. With money saved from working multiple jobs and from Cai’s mailed earnings over the previous years, Zhang managed to build a two-story house in the new village of Caiwuwei. However, her relationship with the villagers did not improve. If anything, she became even more detached, always rushing to leave the village for work early in the morning and returning late at night.<sup>205</sup> While Zhang grew more reserved, the village grew livelier.

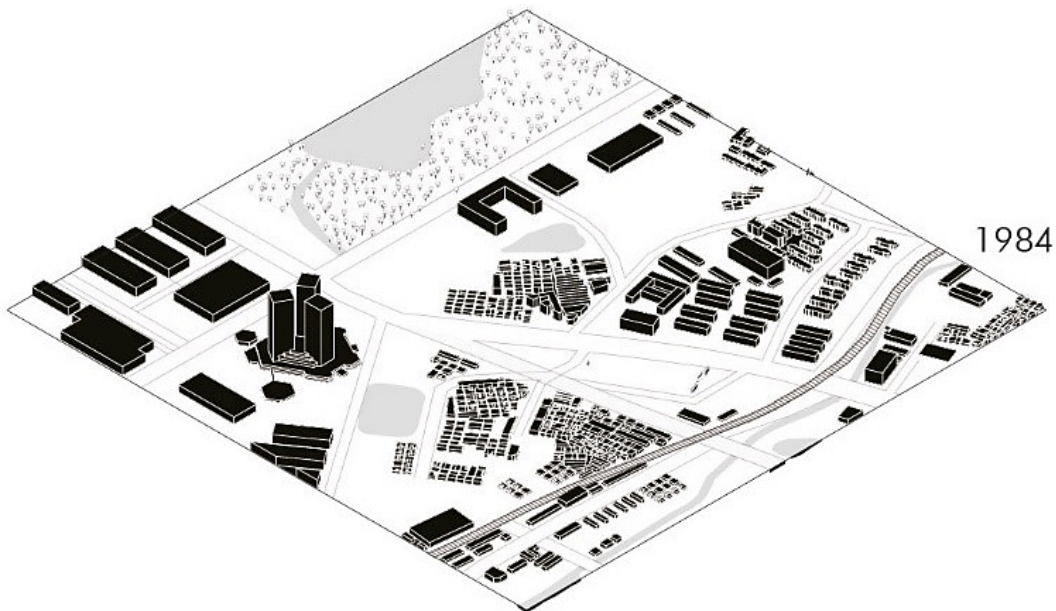
### **Village Industrialization in the New City**

In November 1984, as the record-setting International Trade Center approached completion nearby, the Caiwuwei Grand Hotel, built by the village, opened its doors for business. The village took advantage of its rapidly urbanizing surroundings by setting up numerous hospitality establishments, including restaurants and hotels. In addition to recognizing existing residential land (old village) and permitting new allocations of Home Based Land (new village), the 1982 policy also enabled each village to reserve land for collective industrial and commercial use. A village could reserve a total area of 15 square meters per member of the village commune. Since the villagers no longer had access to agricultural land, it was assumed that each village would have to develop new economic activities to provide income to the village population. The Caiwuwei Grand Hotel was built on the village collective land that had been designated for industrial and commercial use, using 70% of the 15 million yuan paid by the government

<sup>205</sup> Tang.



as compensation for lost village agricultural land. The hotel was the village's first major collective investment. An understated eight-story concrete building in black and white, the hotel stood out among the garish colors and configurations of neighboring buildings. Its 100 guest suites were fitted with modern hotel amenities, and it soon became known as China's first "peasant-built star-rated hotel."<sup>206</sup> Following this success, the village formed joint ventures with national and international partners to open a series of hotels, upscale restaurants, and clubs in the area.



**Figure 25** Reconstructed historical transformations of Caiwuwei and surrounding circa 1984

By the mid-1980s, Caiwuwei also had the largest number of village-operated manufacturing factories in Shenzhen, solidifying its status as the city's leader in village industrialization.<sup>207</sup> Caiwuwei's connections with Hong Kong and early experience of *Sanlaiyibu* enterprises helped pave the way for this development. The first *Sanlaiyibu* enterprise in Caiwuwei was a broomstick factory established in 1979, in the Assembly Hall of the Commune. Over the next few years, more than 30 *Sanlaiyibu* factories were established in the village, producing electronics, furniture, toys, and many other consumer goods. The village's Ancestral Hall and grain storage warehouses were all adapted as small factory spaces. With the abolition of the people's communes and associated production teams in 1984, the village enterprises provided villagers with necessary jobs and income. The peasants all became factory workers. One of the most successful early village factories was the Times Handbag Company, established in 1982.<sup>208</sup> It was a joint-venture between a then-small Hong Kong-based company, Times Corporation, and Caiwuwei's production team.<sup>209</sup> The Times Corporation sent technical personnel from Hong Kong to train local

<sup>206</sup> Fu Chen, "Caiwuwei: Gu Cunluo Biancheng Jinsanjiao (Caiwuwei: An Ancient Village That Transformed into a Golden Triangle)," *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, 2008.

<sup>207</sup> Lei Feng, "Shenzhen Huaerjie Ruhe Tuwei? (How Can the Shenzhen Wall Street Stand Out?)," *Nanfang Metropolis Daily*, January 12, 2010.

<sup>49</sup> Zhiwei Ye, "Caiwuwei Diyi Dachang Dingdan Jiedao Shouruan (the Largest Factory in Caiwuwei Got Too Many Orders)," *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, March 5, 2010.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

villagers and provided designs and raw materials. The villagers working on the assembly line were paid wages, while the village collective received rental fees. Profits from sales were retained by the Hong Kong parent company of Times Corporation. The Shenzhen-based Times Handbag became a successful operation and the number of employees grew from the initial 50 local villagers to more than 1,500 workers. The village enterprise had to hire migrant workers from outside Shenzhen. By 1987, the original factory space in mudbrick sheds could no longer house the growing staff. In order to keep the company going, Caiwuwei village leaders agreed to build new factory spaces and dormitories for the enterprise. In 1988, another assembly line was added and the monthly production capacity of Times Handbag reached more than 10,000 pieces, most of which were exported to European and American markets.

Low production costs combined with high profit margins and relatively low risk inspired nearly all Shenzhen's villages, townships, and neighborhoods to run *Sanlaiyibu* enterprises. These spanned more than 30 different industries such as electronics, textiles, garments, food processing, toys, leather, plastics, crafts, horticulture, aquatic farming, and so on. In 1982, when Shenzhen's state-owned enterprises and formal Sino-foreign joint ventures were just emerging, the city's overall industrial production value stood at 390 million yuan, 70% of which came from the thousands of self-organized *Sanlaiyibu* enterprises.<sup>210</sup> It was during this era that some of the earliest signs indicating the advantages and unexpected influence of small, flexible, bottom-up economic activities at the village level became evident. By 1983, these enterprises had hired more than 100,000 migrant workers from other regions, making up more than half Shenzhen's total migrant labor force. The labor-intensive, low technical content, and low-cost nature of the *Sanlaiyibu* products were criticized for not rivaling the far loftier ambitions of the high-tech, high-value industrial sector in the Special Economic Zone. However, as the village enterprises were less negatively impacted by the reduction in large-scale investments as well as increased restrictions and monitoring, the city would ultimately come to rely heavily on these types of businesses to prop up "export" revenues. It should be noted that these village enterprises greatly benefitted not only from the large state-built or state-supported factories in Shenzhen, but also from the extensive civic infrastructure investment and construction that took place between 1980 and 1986—which had been the primary target of Shenzhen's early critics.

By 1988, Shenzhen had more than 3,000 *Sanlaiyibu* enterprises specializing in export processing alone, having signed 3,561 export-processing contracts. Collectively, these enterprises were attracting foreign investment of over \$1 billion USD.<sup>47</sup> By 1990, Shenzhen had formally approved more than 8,000 *Sanlaiyibu* licenses, with over 1 billion US dollars of processing fees paid by the foreign partners of these industries. It was Shenzhen's main source of foreign currency. In 1990, in the still-rural Bao'an County outside the Special Economic Zone, 80% of the total annual income came from the processing fees generated by *Sanlaiyibu* enterprises.<sup>211</sup> During Shenzhen's difficult start-up decade, the village *Sanlaiyibu* enterprises were the predominant source of industrial production and revenue

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<sup>210</sup> Dingguo Huang, "Shenzhen Nongcun Jingji Fazhan De Zhuyao Xingshi - Sanlai Yibu Qiye (Enterprises of Processing Industries and Compensation Trade - Foundation of Rural Economic Development in Shenzhen)." *Shenzhen University Journal (Humanities & Social Sciences)*, no. 4 (1992): 113-119.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

generation. The proportion of export revenue generated by *Sanlaiyibu* enterprises eventually decreased to 35% by 1996, as the state-supported enterprises and industrial zones matured.<sup>212</sup>

Meanwhile in Caiwuwei village, the abundance of factory jobs both in and around the village attracted thousands of migrant workers. Because there was simply not enough factory-associated dormitory housing for the expanded population, the migrants sought housing in village homes. Zhang Liaohao no longer needed to work multiple low-paid jobs to raise her children and make ends meet. She rented out rooms in her home and was able to finally support her family comfortably from the rental income. Zhang did not receive any news from Cai until 1988.

While in Hong Kong, Cai was persuaded by a friend to leave for an even bigger land of opportunity: America. He was smuggled onto a seafaring ship in the spring of 1979, only to discover on arrival that he was in Latin America. News of the dramatic transformation of his village did not reach Cai Zhuxiang for nearly a decade. He arrived in Ecuador in 1979, when there was no diplomatic relationship between that country and China. In the ensuing years, he married a local woman and they had a son. Working various low-paid jobs in Ecuador, Cai gave up any idea of returning home. A chance meeting with an overseas Chinese resident from Guangdong Province alerted Cai to China's opening-up policies and the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone.<sup>213</sup> He got back in touch with Zhang Lianhao in 1988 and returned alone to Shenzhen.

Cai Zhuxiang returned to a thriving village in a booming city. With the increase in output by village factories, all peasant houses were full of rent-paying migrant workers. The high demand for rooms prompted Shenzhen villagers to add multiple floors to their houses. Recognizing this increased demand, in 1986 the government released a "Notice of Further Reinforcement of Rural Villages Planning in Shenzhen SEZ."<sup>214</sup> The policy endorsed an increase of maximum floor height to three stories, with the maximum total area to be capped at 240 square meters for households greater than three persons. Those occupied by less than three were required to maintain the original 150 square meter limit. However, the increased legal limit was quickly superseded in villages throughout Shenzhen.

From 1987 to 1989, Shenzhen's reform policies effectively privatized land use and the housing market, triggering the city's first major wave of real estate development in the commercial housing sector. State-owned and private enterprises no longer allocated housing to employees as a part of a salary package but provided subsidies to employees to purchase or rent their own homes. This increased the demand for rental housing, especially in the Luohu District, which was becoming the financial and commercial center of Shenzhen. Eager to encourage economic activity, like other local district governments in the SEZ, the Luohu government did not take aggressive action against the rampant illegal construction in the villages of the district. Many villagers built multiple houses, and most of these newly built houses exceeded the original land area and height limitations. In 1990, Zhang and Cai added

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<sup>212</sup> Yihua Deng and Shenghua Deng, "Shenzhen Waimao Fazhan Ruogan Wenti De Tantaoyao (a Study of the Several Issues Regarding External Trades Development in Shenzhen)," *Special Zone Economy*, no. 9 (1996).

<sup>213</sup> Tang.

<sup>214</sup> Shenzhen Municipal Government, "Guanyu Jinyibu Jiaqiang Shenzhen Tequ Nongcun Guihua Gongzuo De Tongzhi (Notice of Further Reinforcement of Rural Villages Planning in Shenzhen Sez)," (Shenzhen 1986).

two more floors to their two-story house, a modest expansion in comparison to those made by their by fellow villagers.

The most significant village policy to affect Caiwuwei was the 1992 “Interim Regulations regarding Village Urbanization in Shenzhen SEZ.”<sup>215</sup> Implemented following Deng Xiaoping’s second visit to Shenzhen, it had a drastic impact on the village collectives and individual villagers.<sup>216</sup> It promoted the urbanization of individual villages, village land, village communities, and village businesses. A separate policy changed the rural *hukou* status that applied to all villagers inside the SEZ to urban *hukou* status. While the villagers retained property rights over their own village-built residential and industrial buildings, all remaining land inside the SEZ, including land occupied by individual villager homes and collective village industries, was expropriated as state-owned urban land. All former village organizations and committees of the 173 villages inside the SEZ were abolished, impacting 450,000 villagers.<sup>217</sup> The collective organizational role played by the former Village Committee was split across two separate entities. Neighborhood Committees were established with government staff to provide sociopolitical leadership, and Incorporated Companies became responsible for managing the economic activities of the numerous village enterprises.

In 1992, Caiwuwei Village held 45 meetings and discussions to determine eligibility requirements for membership and other mechanisms for forming Incorporated Companies. The village’s three production teams were turned into three Incorporated Companies, namely, “Golden Dragon,” “Golden Pond,” and “Golden China.” Village leaders concluded that 1,229 villagers were eligible to own shares.<sup>218</sup> This eligibility was coveted, as Caiwuwei was a financially well-off village in 1992. The net assets of the three newly formed companies were 202 million yuan.<sup>219</sup> Cai Zhuxiang, however, was deemed ineligible, as he had given up his PRC citizenship when he became a permanent resident of Hong Kong in 1984. However, Cai and Zhang still lived relatively comfortably due to the rental income from their house full of tenants.

The Shenzhen government took notice of the building activities in all of the villages and attempted to regulate it. In 1992, it introduced “Bylaws of Rental Housing in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone.” These bylaws required villagers to register rental income and seek formal government approval to rent out their homes, stipulating that “any houses without government’s property confirmation cannot be rented.”<sup>220</sup> The rental policy was designed to curb illegal construction, of both new buildings and extensions to existing buildings. “Some Provisions for Resolving the Remaining Problems concerning Real Estate Ownership in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone” followed in 1993.<sup>221</sup> The provisions

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<sup>215</sup> “Guanyu Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Nongcun Chengshihua De Zanxing Guiding (Interim Regulations of Village Urbanization in Shenzhen Sez),” (Shenzhen 1992).

<sup>216</sup> Shuxiong Zhuang and Lina Xu, “Shenzhen Chengzhongcun Gaige Mouqiu Poti (Searching for a Breakthrough for the Reform in Urban Villages in Shenzhen),” *Nanfang Metropolis Daily*, February 13, 2014.

<sup>217</sup> Defa Pu and Bin Li, “Shenzhen Chengshihua Quanmian Tisu Jiang Chengwei Quanguo Shouge Wunongcun Chengshi (Acceleration of Urbanization Process ),” *ibid.* October 31, 2003.

<sup>218</sup> Lei Feng, “Shenzhen Huaerjie Ruhe Tuwei? (How Can the Shenzhen Wall Street Stand Out?),” *ibid.*, January 12, 2010.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> Shenzhen Municipal Government, “Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Fangwu Zulin Tiaoli (Bylaws of Rental Housing in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone ),” (Shenzhen 1992).

<sup>221</sup> “Guanyu Chuli Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Fangdichan Quanshu Yiliu Wenti De Ruogan Guiding (Management of Problems Caused by Property Right of Real Estate in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone),” (Shenzhen 1993).

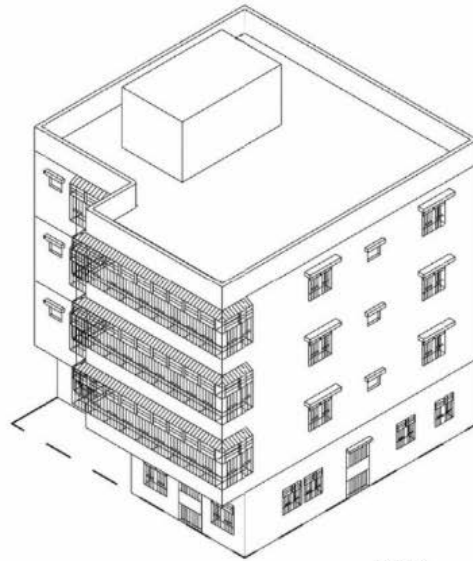
specified four types of land use in the “urban villages”: industrial and commercial land use within the legal property boundary, more commonly referred to as the “red line;” industrial and commercial land use surpassing the legal “red line” (which could be registered for property rights after payment of fines); private housing land use (each household could legally register only one property); and “old village” land that held the historic village structures such as older village houses, traditional squares, temples, and ancestral halls. The regulations were intended to curb illegal construction on village land and establish a method of property registration and standards for fine payment. However, the villagers simply did not recognize or accept the fact that they no longer owned the land occupied by their homes. They continued to believe that industrial-use land in each village belonged to the village collective. Successive regulations failed to curb illegal extensions and construction in urban villages, which only escalated as the years went by.

In 1996, Cai and Zhang followed the trend and demolished their four-story house to construct a new six-story building. Though limited by the size of the land parcel, Cai wanted to build a modern apartment building. He rejected the common practice of incorporating small one-bedroom units and insisted that each floor of the new building consist of a three-bedroom apartment with a large living room, kitchen, and balcony. Having seen similar layouts outside Shenzhen, Cai felt this would “future-proof” their building as compared with other “Handshake Towers.” Even though the three-bedroom layout later proved to generate less rental income than buildings with smaller individual units, Cai and Zhang were proud of their house. Little did anyone know that this building would later become the most expensive nail-house in China.

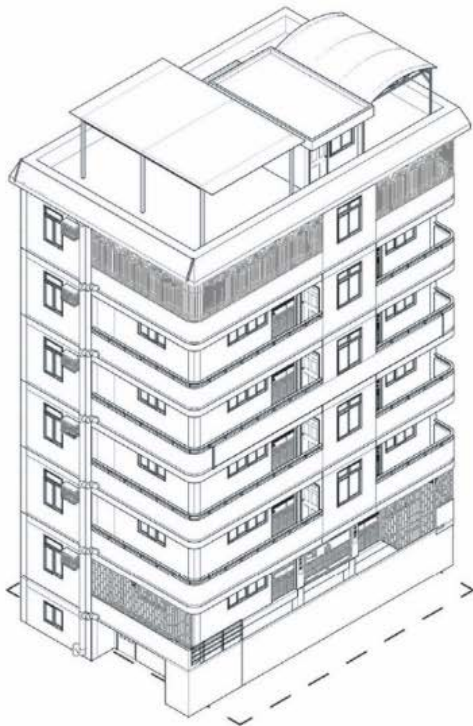




1982



1990

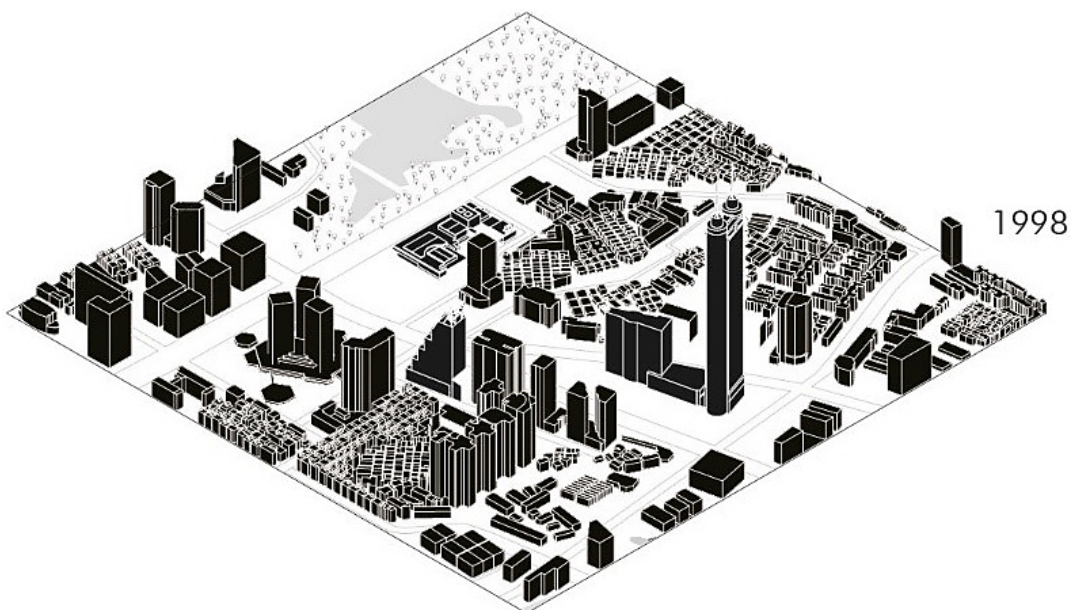


1996

**Figure 26** Evolution of the Caiwuwei “Nail House” from 1982 to final demolition in 2007. The self-built structure is representational of the approximately 350,000 other such “peasant houses” in Shenzhen. This humble building type altogether houses approximately 10 million people, half of the city’s total population.

## Illegal Construction and Legal Redevelopment

By the end of the 1990s, hundreds of villages outside the Special Economic Zone also began large-scale illegal construction, building larger and taller buildings at a rate that would far surpass anything inside the SEZ. In 1999, a “Decision by the Standing Committee of Shenzhen People’s Congress on Investigating and Punishing Illegal Constructions” was introduced.<sup>222</sup> This was the first time that the local government clarified the definition of “illegal construction” in Shenzhen. According to the policy, illegal construction encompassed all private and collective buildings constructed against planning regulations and without building permits. This announcement, however, led to another surge in illegal construction in villages all over Shenzhen, as the villages feared this was their last chance to build before more specific policies on punishments were established. From the same land parcel of the village house rose taller mini-towers, mainly 6 to 8 floors but some up to 12 stories, and even taller still in Shenzhen northern suburban areas. These buildings were still called *Nong Min Fang*, or peasant houses, but they were also nicknamed “Handshake Towers” and “Kissing Towers,” referring to activities that are possible with one’s neighbor in the adjacent building, through the open window, due to the narrow space between the buildings.



**Figure 27** Reconstructed historical transformations of Caiwuwei and surrounding circa 1998

Zhang Lianhao and Cai Zhuxiang resisted the temptation to build an even taller tower, but even at six stories, their house was still defined as an illegal construction by the 1999 policy. However, a subsequent set of policies introduced in 2002 created a mechanism to legalize their building. “The Shenzhen SEZ Provisions for Dealing with Remaining Illegal Private Houses” and “The Shenzhen SEZ Provisions for Dealing with Remaining Illegal Buildings of the Production Management Type” were

<sup>222</sup> "Shenzhen Shi Renmin Daibiao Dahui Changwu Weiyuanhui Guanyu Jianjue Chachu Weifa Jianzhu De Jueding (Decisions by the Standing Committee of Shenzhen People’s Congress on Inspection and Punishment of Illegal Constructions)," (Shenzhen 1999).

instituted in 2002, introducing a mechanism for authorizing village-built properties that exceeded the previous legal limits.<sup>223</sup> The penalty amounts were staggered, increasing as the volume and height that exceeded the limits increased. As Cai and Zhang had followed the most fundamental regulation of “one building per household,” their modest excess was relatively easy for the government to accept. According to this new set of provisions, Cai and Zhang’s house fell into the category of “total architectural area more than 480 square meters but less than 600 square meters and more than four stories but less than seven stories in height.” Their fine would have been a few thousand yuan in order to meet the requirements for rental registration and property rights confirmation. The fines were minor in comparison to the rental income, and the peasant house building boom continued.

While villagers rushed to build housing for rental, developers also rushed in to build commercial real estate on village land. During the first decade of the SEZ, demolition and redevelopment mostly occurred on collectively owned village land and buildings. To make room for the iconic towers of the Luohu financial cluster, such as the Land King Tower, a series of historic buildings in Caiwuwei Village were demolished in 1993, including the Yanyi Elementary School and the Caiwuwei Ancestral Hall. Originally built in 1856 and renovated in 1916, the ancestral hall comprised three courtyards and five pavilions of traditional brick and wood carvings. The building hosted historic events well into the modern era. In August 1924, it was used as the base of the peasant movement against raiding warlords in the region. In 1925, Zhou Enlai, at the time Director of the Political Department of Huangpu (Whampoa) Military Academy and concurrently the secretary of the Communist Party's Guangdong-Guangxi Committee, delivered a historic speech in the plaza in front of the ancestral hall, urging villagers of the area to revolt against the local warlord.<sup>224</sup> The demolition of the ancestral hall was the most difficult for the villagers, as it was the ceremonial site and community center of the village.

The first large-scale redevelopment of land occupied by peasant houses was for the construction of Metropolitan Gardens. Approved by the Luohu district government, the development was led and financed by the Shenzhen Palace Property Development Co. Ltd., a company formed primarily for the construction of the Land King Tower, and jointly partnered by the Luohu Zhengyang Investment Development Company and Hong Kong Jianqiao International Development Co. Ltd. The project area of 32,900 square meters was in a prime location adjacent to Shennan Boulevard and was packed full of peasant houses. Negotiations with the villagers started in 1992 and took three long years to complete. According to the final agreement, all affected villagers would receive compensation housing in the future new residential towers in the same location. The compensation package was set at a “ratio of one to one,” meaning that villagers would be eligible for new accommodation based on the equivalent size of their peasant house. Metropolitan Gardens was completed in 1999 and comprised six 32-story and 100-

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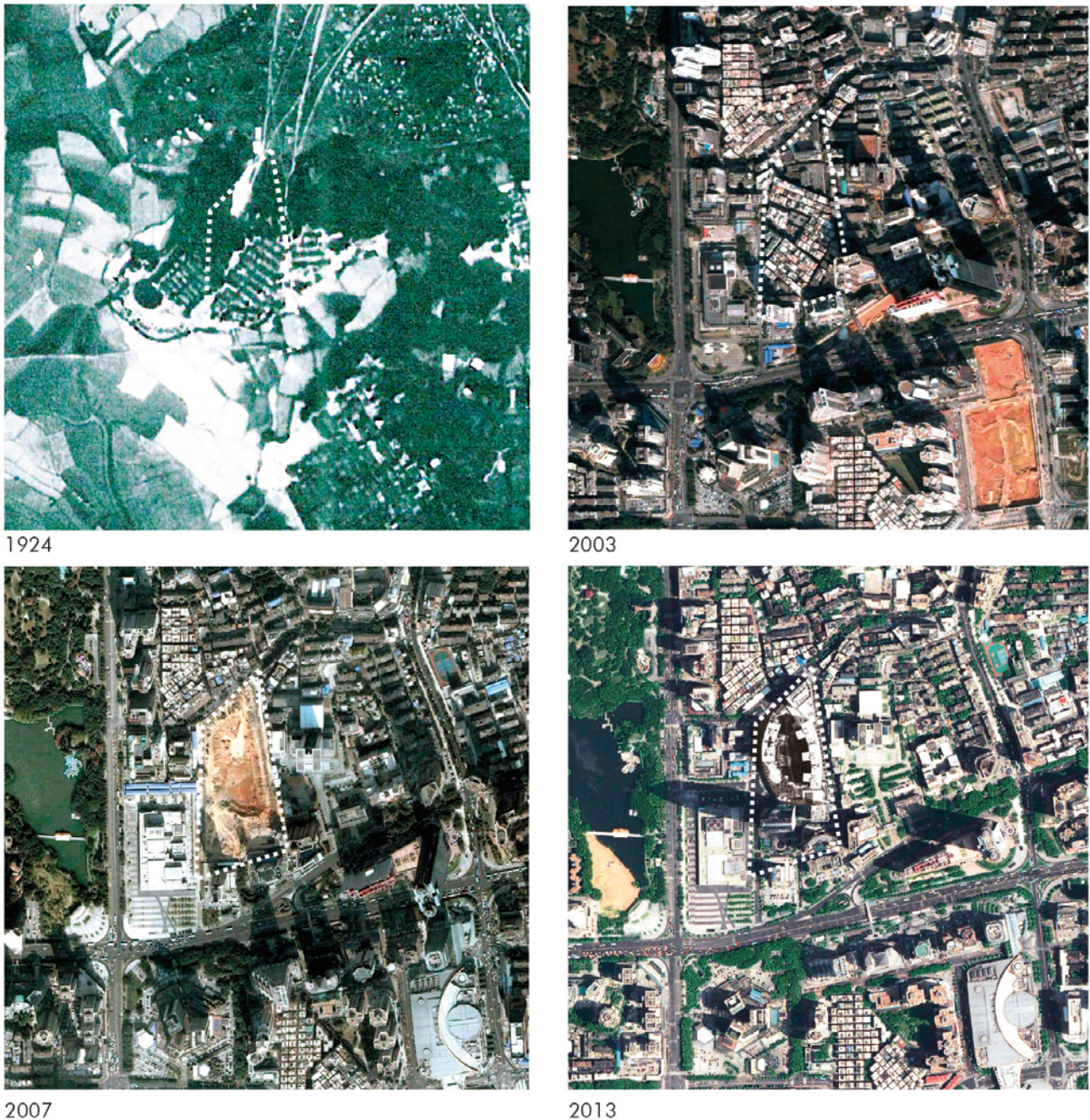
<sup>223</sup> "Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Chuli Lishi Yiliu Weifa Sifang Ruogan Guiding (Provisions for Dealing with Remaining Illegal Private Houses)," (Shenzhen 2002).

"Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Chuli Lishi Yiliu Shengchan Jingyingxing Weifa Jianzhu Ruogan Guiding " (Shenzhen 2002).

<sup>224</sup> Lei Feng, "Shenzhen Huaerjie Ruhe Tuwei? (How Can the Shenzhen Wall Street Stand Out?)." *Nanfang Metropolis Daily*, January 12, 2010.



meter-tall residential towers, which offered 1,300 high-end apartment units.<sup>225</sup> This successful development was the precursor to the so-called “Caiwuwei Model.”



**Figure 28** Transformations of the Caiwuwei Village Area that became site of the KK100 Development

### China's Most Expensive Nail-House

The first time Zhang Lianhao and Cai Zhuxiang learned of the relocation plans for their house was when they read about it in the November 11, 2005 edition of the *Shenzhen SEZ Daily*. The newspaper published the government's “Permit for Housing Demolition and Relocation” for the Caiwuwei Financial Central District Urban Renewal Project. It was news to most of the other villagers, too. Only then did they

<sup>225</sup> Rong Wang, Shaoqiang Jia, and Doutian Wang, “Shenzhen Chengzhongcun Gaizao Xingcheng Duzhong Moshi (Various Ways of Redeveloping Urban Villages in Shenzhen),” *Shenzhen Economic Daily*, July 28, 2006.

find out that the head of the Caiwuwei Company had signed an agreement to sell land use rights for the village's 46,000 square meters to Kingkey Group on October 15, 2004.<sup>226</sup> Most of the villagers were angered by this and did not approve the compensation terms set out in the original agreement. Negotiations between villagers, the Village Company, and the developer came to a standstill until the mayor of Shenzhen, Xu Zongheng, intervened in August 2006.<sup>227</sup>

Village representatives reported to the mayor directly, and articulated four problems: first, the villagers should have been notified prior to the negotiation of the sale agreement; second, there was no guarantee regarding the quality or completion of their future relocation housing; third, 6,500 yuan per square meter was well below the market rate of the surrounding real estate; and lastly, the proposed design of the relocation housing was not suitable for their future needs. With facilitation from the city and district government, new terms were added to the relocation agreement that addressed the villagers' concerns. Kingkey offered an additional 300,000 yuan per building; the Luohu district government also added another 360,000 yuan per building, along with increased rental compensation during the entire relocation period until move-in. To provide further insurance and security, the government ordered Kingkey to deposit 450 million yuan into a bank account monitored by the Shenzhen Lands Bureau. Furthermore, the local government promised that, should the developer fail to deliver the future compensation housing, the government would do so instead. Lastly, the government invited a group of village-elected representatives to give input on the layout and design of the compensation properties. By October 23, 2006, 95% of the village households had finally signed the new agreement.

Of the 16 remaining households, Zhang Lianhao and Cai Zhuxiang were the most vocal. As Cai was legally a Hong Kong resident, their case attracted attention not only from local press but from most Hong Kong news outlets too. For reasons only known to them, Zhang and Cai resolutely refused to accept the future compensation housing and demanded cash compensation at the market rate of 12,000 per square meter, consistent with real estate in the surrounding area. After they rejected Kingkey's increased offer of 9,000 yuan per square meter, Kingkey turned to the Shenzhen Lands Bureau for a verdict. On March 22, 2007 the Lands Bureau ruled in favor of Kingkey and ordered Zhang and Cai to move out of their house in 20 days. The couple swore to remain in their property. On March 29, Zhang posted her public letter online, which ended with the following questions: "In China's modern, civilized and harmonious society, am I right to assume there should not have been such bullying acts of robbery? Are there laws in China to protect me? As a Chinese citizen I am crying out for my basic rights: Who will help me?"<sup>228</sup>

While the unexpected backlash to her article deeply hurt Zhang Lianhao, she soon learned that there was a law to protect her. Zhang's questions were addressed by the landmark passing of the "Property Law of China" on March 16, 2007. To take effect on October 1, 2007, China's National Day, the Property Law was the first law in post-1949 China intended to ensure equal protection to owners of both public and private properties. The passing of the Property Law was a necessary legal mechanism as

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<sup>226</sup> Fu.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Lianhao Zhang to Nanfang diyi gaolou zhi zhengdi chaiqian lingwo gandao ruoshi, Oeeee, March 29, 2007, Blog.oeeee.com/zlh1947.



the country transitioned from a planned economy to a market economy. In many ways, the 2007 Property Law was a reversal of China's land reforms in the 1950s, which had turned land ownership from private to public.<sup>229</sup> Similar to eminent domain, however, the Chinese Property Law does give special powers to the government for expropriation of privately or collectively owned land for public interest.

Cai Zhuxiang bought copies of the published Property Law booklet and studied it in depth. When the Lands Bureau eviction order was upheld by the Shenzhen municipal government in May, Cai and Zhang sued the Shenzhen government. While Zhang stopped vocalizing their case in public or to the press, Cai continued: "The newly published Property Law clearly explained the protection of the private resident's property rights. We are protecting the dignity of the civil law. However, the Property Law does not detail regulations regarding public interest. As a result, in the relocation of Caiwuwei, they say building the Financial Center is public interest; individual interest must step aside. But I think building a financial center is for commercial interest. They must give me adequate compensation."<sup>230</sup>

Over the following months, the real estate market value surrounding Caiwuwei continued rising to nearly 20,000 yuan per square meter. With the support of the Property Law and higher real estate values, Cai and Zhang raised their asking price to 18,000 yuan, making the total compensation 14 million yuan, which is unprecedented in China's recent history of urban renewal.

They may have had the assurance of the new Property Law, but they did not have public sympathy or local government support. By mid-August, the Shenzhen Luohu District Court reached a ruling and again upheld the original eviction order. Along with two other nail-house families remaining on the construction site, Zhang and Cai locked themselves inside their house and braced for the worst. Then on August 18, 2007 the China Ministry of Lands and Resources in Beijing issued a national order to stop all eviction processes across the entire country. Things moved quickly after the serendipitous national order. On September 21, Cai and Zhang signed their relocation agreement with Kingkey Group for 12 million yuan. On October 22, the developer's construction team demolished the most expensive nail-house in China.

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<sup>229</sup> Mo Zhang, "From Public to Private: The Newly Enacted Chinese Property Law and the Protection of Property Rights in China," *Berkeley Business Law Journal* 5, no. 2 (2008).

<sup>230</sup> Fu.



**Figure 29** Zhang and Cai standing in front of their Nail House

Construction on the KK100 tower broke ground on November 11, 2007. By the year's end, Caiwuwei Village's total net assets were estimated to be 68.7 million yuan, its yearly revenue was over 140 million yuan, and its total tax paid to the government was over 10 million.<sup>231</sup> The village collective and individual assets had doubled and tripled a few times over, and this process was universally celebrated as a case of sustainable community relocation. The "Caiwuwei Model" became the gold standard for future urban village redevelopments in Shenzhen. This precedent gave birth to a new era of power play, in which villagers debated with the government and developers over the progress of subsequent redevelopment projects in Shenzhen. The apparent success of Caiwuwei's redevelopment attracted the attention of other urban villages seeking redevelopment, not only in Shenzhen but across the region. Caiwuwei villagers hosted visitors from villages in both Guangdong Province and the New Territories of Hong Kong.

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<sup>231</sup> Chen.

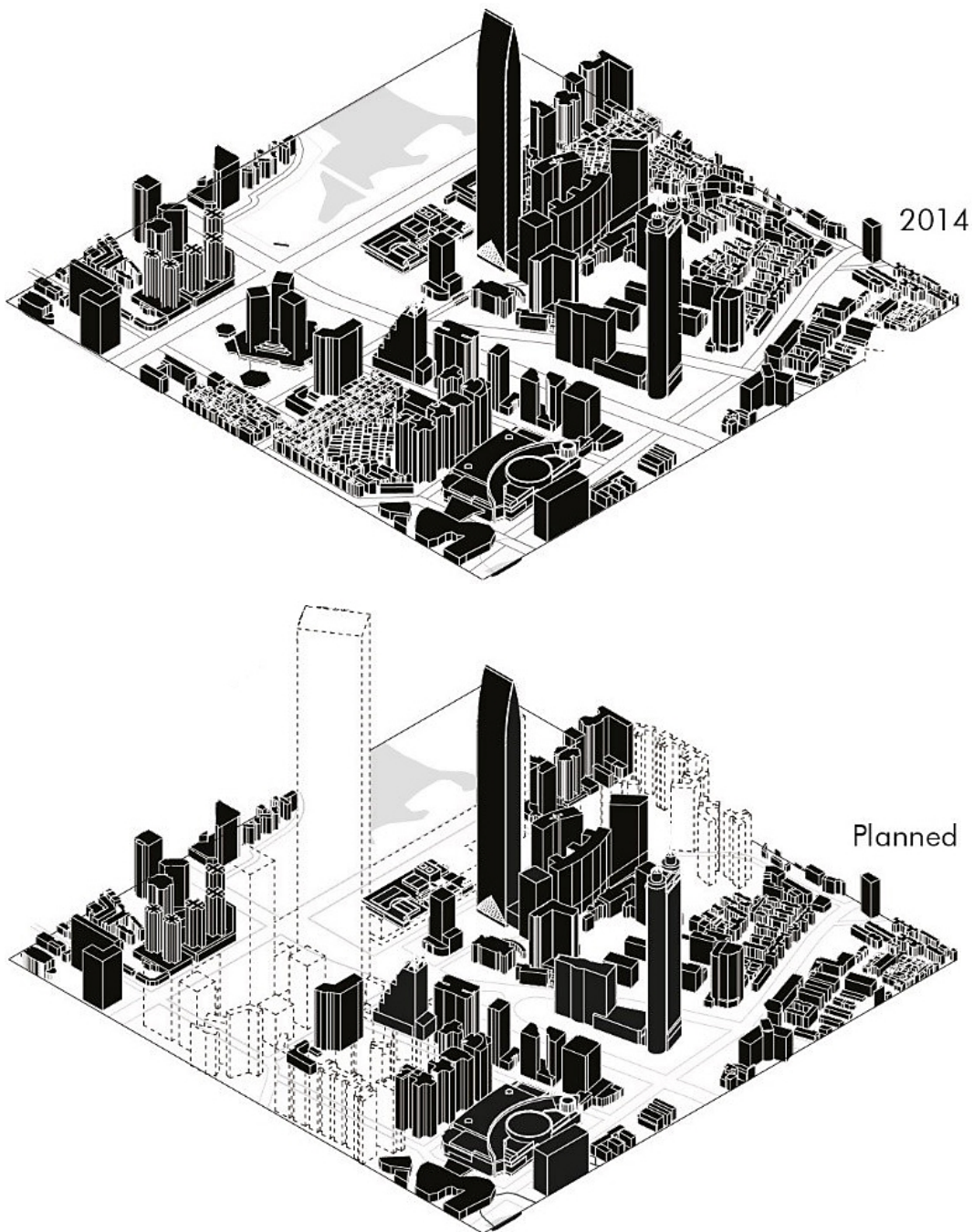
## The “Caiwuwei Model”



**Figure 30** The KK100 Development completed, Designed by London-based architect Terry Farrell

In early 2012, the Caiwuwei Village households that had agreed to the property compensation package moved into their new homes next to KK100, the "Tallest Tower of Shenzhen." The 2,000 villagers all moved into their own high-rise tower apartments on top of the commercial-use podiums, surrounded by a private gated fence. Nearly all the village families moved into Block E tower, a 32-story high-rise of spacious three- and four-bedroom apartments, with views of the adjacent Lychee Lake and Park, formerly the village's lychee orchards. Block B was the Caiwuwei Village Corporation Service Apartments, collectively owned by the villagers. Block C was also a residential high-rise, but small one- and two-bedroom apartments; these were the compensation rental properties for the villagers. And Block D was the Caiwuwei Golden Dragon Company Office Tower: the top floors (18 to 29) were used as offices, while the floors directly below (7 to 17) were used as company apartments. The fifth floor of Block D was entirely dedicated to village community facilities, such as tea houses and game rooms. The first four floors of Block D, like all the other blocks, constituted a large podium for retail space rentals above ground, along with a few floors of underground retail and parking space, which quickly filled with luxury cars.





**Figure 31** Reconstructed historical transformations of Caiwuwei and surrounding. The remaining village buildings, along with some building structures from the 1980s and 1990s in the area, are planned to be demolished and redeveloped into tall high-rises.

The Caiwuwei Golden Dragon Company owned a total of 62,500 square meters of collective rental property: while the Service Apartments were managed by the Village Collective Corporation, the remaining 30,000 square meters of mostly high-end retail spaces were all managed by the Kingkey Group. The collectively owned properties together generated a yearly profit of 60 million yuan; prior to redevelopment, the village's collectively owned properties had

generated a yearly profit of 18 million yuan.<sup>232</sup> The successful relocation sparked a round of news reports on Caiwuwei. Its most famous nail-house was also dragged back into the limelight. Many were eager to criticize the “foolishness” of Zhang Lianhao and Cai Zhuxiang in demanding 18,000 yuan per square meter, which in 2007 was judged to be ridiculously high but seemed absurdly low in 2012. However, the 26,000 working-class tenants who were displaced as a result of the 2007 Caiwuwei redevelopment received almost no media attention except for a brief reference in a Chinese academic journal eight years later.<sup>233</sup> When the villagers returned to their compensation properties in 2012, the market real estate value of their relocation housing had increased to 35,000 yuan per square meter.<sup>234</sup> By 2017, it was 66,000 yuan per square meter.<sup>235</sup> The nail-house couple was ridiculed again in the local press, this time for their short-sightedness in not having agreed to compensation real estate. International coverage of the redevelopment project also joined in the commentary: “Caiwuwei Village was a warren of tenement housing, knocked up quickly to accommodate an exploding population as Shenzhen famously erupted from fishing villages into a megacity of 10 million in the mere three decades since Deng Xiaoping made it China’s first special economic zone. Many such neighborhoods still remain, blocks packed so tight that merely a meter often separates them. Caiwuwei was ridden by crime and, unusually, Kingkey offered its residents not only a new flat on-site but a second one to give them a rental income. One couple held out, and parallel to an earlier case in Chongqing, became stranded in the otherwise cleared site in their ‘Nail House.’”<sup>236</sup>

However, for the Shenzhen couple—especially for Zhang Lianhao—the initial rejection was not strictly about the unfavorable monetary terms. It was also about distrust of both the developers and the village leadership, who had signed the agreement without consulting all the villagers. In some respects, Zhang’s insistence that the negotiated terms disadvantaged “rule followers” like herself, who had built and owned only one peasant house, was proven correct. She contended: “I am not like some of the villagers who are officials or have connections. These people were allotted multiple homesteads and have built multiple houses. They took the lead in signing the agreement because they have other properties to live in. Yet they are brazen enough to say to me sarcastically, ‘How can you fight the government?’”<sup>237</sup>

Of the 1,627 total apartments in all the compensation towers, around 500 were set aside for self-use, and the rest were all quickly snapped up by renters. Each household typically received three to four units; however, there were stories of one family receiving 23 rental units.<sup>238</sup> When Zhang Lianhao and Cai Zhuxiang received their financial settlement, it was split into four equal portions. They each took

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<sup>232</sup> Doutian Wang, “Luohu Yuanzhuimin Gongxiang Gaige Kaifang Chengguo (Luohu Indigenous Villagers Share the Fruits of Opening up Reform),” *Shenzhen Economics Daily*, June 23, 2011.

<sup>233</sup> Zhiwang Deng, “Chengshi Gengxin Dui Renkou De Yingxiang: Jiyu Shenzhen Yangben De Fenxi,” *China Opening Journal* 180, no. 3 (2015).

<sup>234</sup> Wang, “Luohu Yuanzhuimin Gongxiang Gaige Kaifang Chengguo (Luohu Indigenous Villagers Share the Fruits of Opening up Reform).”

<sup>235</sup> Qfang, “Jingji Caiwuwei Laowei Huayuan, Kk100 (Kingkey Caiwuwei Old Village Garden, Kk100);” Fang Tian Xia, “Caiwuwei Ershoufang Fangjia Zoushi (Property Price Trend of Second Hand Flats in Caiwuwei).”

<sup>236</sup> Herbert Wright, “A Personal Tour of the Tallest Building by a UK Architect,” *Blueprint Magazine* 311(2012).

<sup>237</sup> Lianhao Zhang to Oeee, March 29, 2007.

<sup>238</sup> Shenzhen Channel China United TV, “Caiwuwei Huiqianfang Zhengshi Ruhuo (Resettlement of Caiwuwei Started Moving in).”



a quarter; the other two portions were given to their son and daughter. Many online posts continued to disapprove of their greed in making such high demands for compensation. In addition, the couple regularly received hoax phone calls from people claiming to be tax collectors, and worse still, death threats. They quickly changed their phone numbers and disappeared from the public eye. When Shenzhen news reporters tracked down Cai Zhuxiang in 2012, they were surprised to discover that he was living with another woman in Shenzhen's suburban district of Buji. Cai and Zhang Lianhao were divorced.<sup>239</sup> Zhang was nowhere to be found. Along with her adopted village and house, it seems that Zhang Lianhao has disappeared.

On July 7, 2012, having benefitted from the tremendous wealth generated by the KK100 development, 90% of Caiwuwei Village Corporation's shareholders voted in favor of developer Kingkey undertaking an even more ambitious project, which would involve the demolition of 440,000 square meters of the remaining Caiwuwei Village properties. This new round of development would encompass all the areas not yet redeveloped in Caiwuwei, with a gross floor area reaching 2,000,000 square meters. The project included commercial buildings: two current hotels, three bank headquarters, the Grand Opera House, Caiwuwei Village Corporation's office tower, and school campuses.<sup>240</sup> Throughout 2012, reports of the future design appeared in local newspapers.<sup>241</sup> The design concept was billed as "Streets of the Sky and Street of the Earth," a horizontal megastructure that would be suspended over Shennan Boulevard and connect the high-end commercial establishments at either end. The project was expected to take 10 years to complete.<sup>242</sup> With the implementation of this latest urban renewal plan, all physical traces of Caiwuwei Village would disappear from the city.

The Luohu district government strongly endorsed the project, which promised to revitalize the old financial industries in Caiwuwei and incorporate an international commercial center, with 15 million square meters of new space. The project would involve one quarter of the entire district's land area, totaling 8.3 square kilometers. It was proposed that the redevelopment—which spanned 368,000 square meters distributed over 47 different land parcels, involving 31 property entities or individuals—be subdivided into five areas: "The Golden Triangle" from Dongmen to Southern Renmin Road, Sungang-Qingshui River, Shuibe-Buxin, East of Shennan Boulevard, and Liantang. Altogether, the 48 urban renewal projects would cost about 100 billion yuan.<sup>243</sup>

Luohu District's urban renewal efforts, with the objective of bolstering the area's image as Shenzhen's financial hub, lie at odds with the subsequent relocation of the Shenzhen Stock Exchange out of Luohu, a decision made by the municipal city government. In 2013, the Shenzhen Stock Exchange moved westward to the adjacent Futian District, where it occupied a new tower designed by the Rotterdam-based Office for Metropolitan Architecture. Shenzhen's city hall had moved out of Luohu into Futian district in 2004, initiating Futian's preference over Luohu as the city's political and

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<sup>239</sup> Tang.

<sup>240</sup> Doutian Wang, "Shenzhen Caiwuwei Jiang Zhengti Gaizao Jingji Zaicheng Kaifa Zhuti (Overall Redevelopment of Caiwuwei Kingkey Will Be the Lead Developer Again)," *Shenzhen Economic Daily*, July 9, 2012.

<sup>241</sup> "Luohu Tianjie + Dijie Caiwuwei Nijian 666m Shenzhen Diyi Gaolou (Sky and Earth Streets of Luohu, a 666m Is Proposed to Become Shenzhen's Tallest Tower)," *Shenzhen Economic Daily*, March 19, 2012.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

commercial center. Since then, the city mayor's office and other municipal offices have been housed in Futian's Shenzhen Citizens Center, a massive building designed by New York-based Lee Timchula Architects. These shifts in Shenzhen's urbanization process have had significant implications for villages located in the central districts of Luohu, Futian, and Nanshan. As each of the three central districts transformed, the villages located in these areas also adapted and evolved with varying degrees of socioeconomic success. The urbanization of the formally developed city districts and the informally developed village neighborhoods are relational and deeply intertwined. The next chapter traces the parallel and entwined stories of Futian's Central Business District and Huanggang Village, the centuries-old urban village that found itself at the center of the district's new construction efforts. Huanggang Village leaders played influential roles in the development of the CBD area, and Huanggang Village itself was also transformed in the process. The final chapter turns to Baishizhou Village, a "slum" village in Nanshan, the tourism and educational district of Shenzhen, which reflects a very different set of power dynamics between village leaders, district leaders, and urban developers.

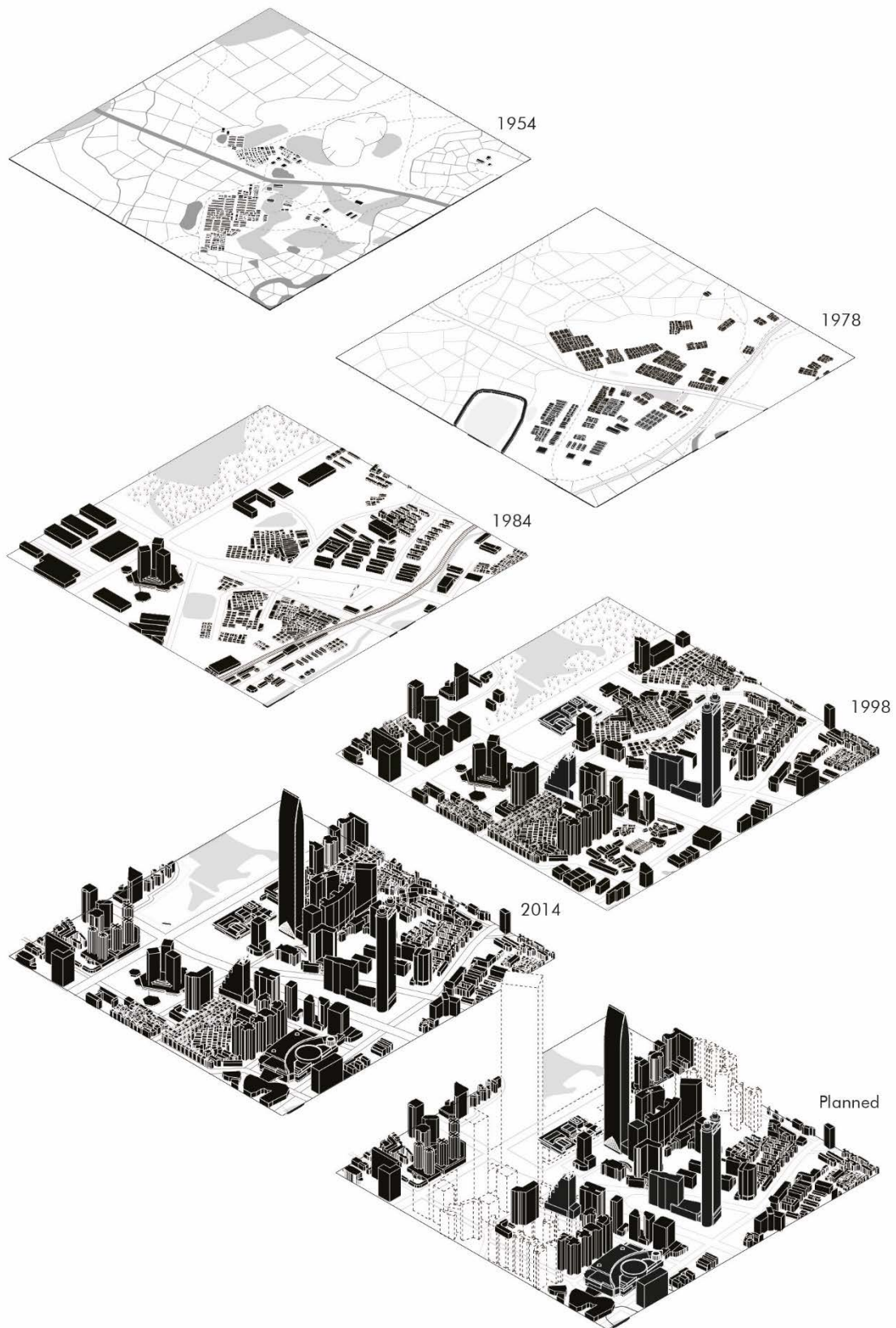
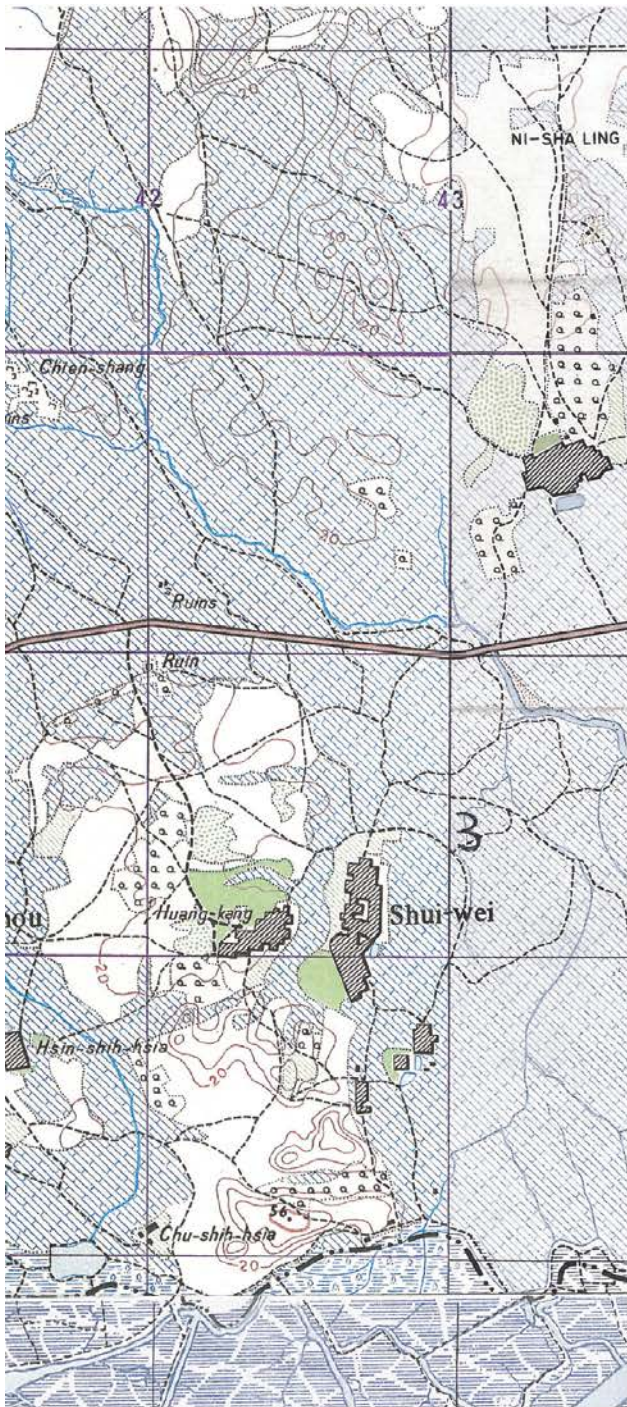


Figure 32 Past and Future Transformations of Caiwuwei Village

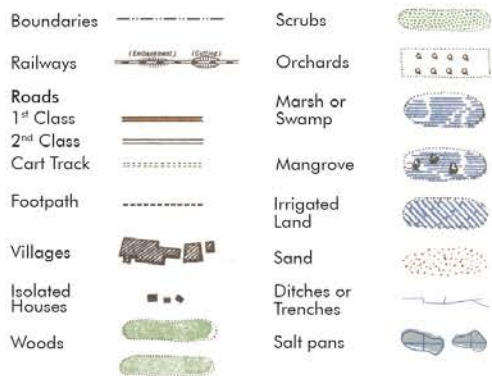
## 6. Huanggang: Corporate Village in the CBD

**Figure 33** Next Page: Survey Map (1950s) compared with satellite image (2010) in Futian District. Huanggang Village found itself to be on the central axis of Shenzhen's new Central Business District. Taking advantage of its central location along with effective village leadership, Huanggang is one of the wealthiest urban villages in Shenzhen.

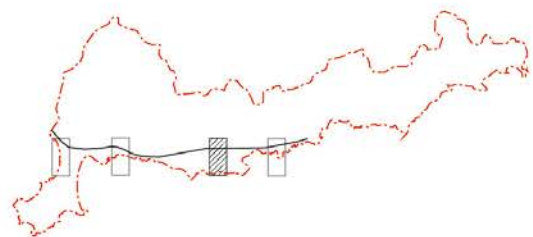




1952



2014





## What Happened in Shenzhen?

The success of Luohu District's Caiwuwei redevelopment project brought tremendous media coverage and public attention to the developer Chen Hua, founder and chairman of Kingkey Co. Ltd. Kingkey and Chen Hua became known as the pioneers of urban renewal in Shenzhen. The KK100 tower made Kingkey sought-after developers for the redevelopment of urban villages and other old urban neighborhoods. Chen Hua added KK100's logo, an image of the tower, to his private jet—a Bombardier Challenger 605.<sup>1</sup> Following KK100, Chen successfully invited several international figures to publicize his real estate projects. In 2002, former US president Bill Clinton delivered a speech titled “World Trade Organization and the Chinese Real Estate Economy.” He was addressing a VIP audience at the launch event of the Kingkey Bi Hai Yun Tian, a luxury housing estate in the city's affluent Overseas Chinese Town district. Described in Shenzhen as the “Clinton Show,” in part due to his appearance fee of 250,000 US dollars, the event was both celebrated and satirized in the local and international media.<sup>2</sup> Clinton's appearance generated enormous publicity, prompting Chen Hua to invite other international political figures—including former UK prime ministers John Major and Gordon Brown—to subsequent Kingkey real estate events. Kingkey and Chen Hua became the go-to real estate enterprise for both local government and urban village corporations. In the decades that followed the redevelopment of Caiwuwei Village, the majority of Kingkey's projects were associated with the urban renewal of older neighborhoods. Most of Kingkey's ongoing urban renewal projects concern the redevelopment of urban villages, such as Mumianwan, Shuibei, Changyuan, and Shayi; and more urban village projects are slated to begin in the coming years, including Shangxiawu, Tianxin, Zhuguang, Meifu and Caiwuwei Phase 2.<sup>3</sup>

In 2012 alone, Kingkey was appointed to embark on urban renewal projects within the districts of Luohu, Nanshan, Bao'an and Longgang—four of Shenzhen's five administrative districts. The Kingkey projects in those four districts had a total estimated demolition area of 630,900 square meters and would incorporate new development in the realm of 3,000,000 square meters. In the same year, Chen Hua's name appeared on the *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily's* honor roll of “30 Practitioners Contributing to the City's Development and Habitats Upgrade,” in a special issue marking the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the influential newspaper. Under the title “Chen Hua, Chairman of Kingkey Group: Expanding the Space and Height of a City,” the article described Chen's contribution: “Chen Hua and his Kingkey Group were the first redevelopers to focus on urban villages. They were successful pioneers, who pushed forward the urbanization process of the city. First hailed as the ‘Big Hero of Urban Renewal in Meilin,’ then achieving sweeping success with his intervention into the ‘longstanding, huge, and difficult’ redevelopment project

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<sup>1</sup> Rupert Hoogewerf, "China Business Aviation Special Report," (Shanghai: Hruan Report, Minsheng Financial Leasing, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> John Gittings, "Rambling Clinton Strolls Off with \$250,000," *The Guardian*, May 25, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> "Jingji Jiugai Xiangmu Huizong (an Overview of Kingkey's Redevelopment Projects )," *Read01*, April 13, 2017.

of Chiwei community, and later erecting Kingkey 100, the city's urban redevelopment model of success, Kingkey Group is the 'Benchmark Enterprise' for Shenzhen's urban renewal."<sup>4</sup>

In addition to Kingkey and its chair Chen Hua, several other developers featured in the *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily's* "Top 30 Honor Roll" have business and personal ties to various urban villages. The most intriguing, yet least known, is probably the link between Huanggang Village and Wang Shi. As founder and former chairman of China Vanke Co., Ltd., the world's largest residential property developer, Wang Shi is one of China's most influential entrepreneurs.<sup>5</sup> The *Special Zone Daily* characterized Wang Shi as "a contemporary entrepreneur holding adamant beliefs and facing the challenges of globalization. . . . In May 1984, Wang Shi founded China Vanke Co. The watershed moment was 2007 when Vanke leapfrogged from 'China's Largest Residential Developer' to 'the World's Largest Real Estate Enterprise in Development Volume.'"<sup>6</sup> Propelled by Wang's near-mythical personal aura as an Everest-climbing and environment-saving trailblazer, China Vanke's genesis in Shenzhen is a source of pride for the city.

However, Wang Shi's account of his early experience as a construction technician on Shenzhen's railroad system from 1978 to 1980 was unfavorable.<sup>7</sup> In his autobiography *Vanke and I in Twenty Years*, Wang describes how poor his first impressions of Shenzhen were in 1978 and notes that he "was eager to complete the project within the shortest possible time so that I could get far away from Shenzhen that bordered on Hong Kong across a river."<sup>8</sup> Wang's description of Shenzhen in the late 1970s was one of poverty and desperation. The only warm memory of his initial foray into Shenzhen involved an exchange with a villager he called "Cowboy":

One Sunday morning, a sturdy peasant carried me on the back rack of his reinforced bicycle to Huanggang Village, which lay six kilometers from the North Sungang Railroad Station and one river away from Hong Kong. During the Rural Socialist Education Movement, my father-in-law stayed in the village to observe work in this primary-level unit. His host happened to be my bicycle-riding host, Zhuang Shunfu (nicknamed "Cowboy"), Head of the Huanggang Village. I followed "Cowboy" into an ordinary house—furnishings a little messy, a black iron wok on the stove using a bellows and firewood for cooking, and a straw rain cape hanging on the wall. "Cowboy" was quiet and spoke such awkward Mandarin that I often misunderstood what he said in our conversation. As for his mother who handled things in the house and his wife who farmed in the fields, I found them even harder to communicate with. At dinner, the two women kept chuckling and placing food in my bowl.<sup>9</sup>

While Wang appreciated the hospitality of Zhuang and his family, the poverty and hopelessness of their village life only reinforced Wang's pessimistic view of the place. Wang Shi had no idea that the

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<sup>4</sup> "Wei Chengshi Jianshe He Renju Shengji Gongxian De Sanshi Da Jianshizhe" Rongyubang (30 Practitioners Contributing to the City's Development and Habitats Upgrade)," *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, May 25, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Yangpeng Zheng, "Real Estate Giants Toast Debut Listing in Fortune 500," *South China Morning Post*, July 20, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> "Wei Chengshi Jianshe He Renju Shengji Gongxian De Sanshi Da Jianshizhe" Rongyubang (30 Practitioners Contributing to the City's Development and Habitats Upgrade)."

<sup>7</sup> Shi Wang and Chuan Miao, *Wang Shi: Twenty Years with Vanke* (Beijing: China Citic Press, 2006), pp. 6–12.

<sup>8</sup> Wang and Miao, pp. 6–12.

<sup>9</sup> Wang and Miao, p. 8.

“sturdy peasant” and his village would eventually become his conduit to Shenzhen. Often described by others as “a man of few words,” Zhuang Shunfu was nicknamed “Cowboy” from a young age. This moniker had no association with the cowboy persona of the American West; it most likely connected with his farm duties as a young boy growing up in Huanggang Village. Zhuang demonstrated maturity and leadership quite early on, and was a village production team leader at the age of 23.<sup>10</sup> Back in 1978 when he carried Wang Shi on his bicycle, Zhuang was not yet the Village Head; he was a production team leader and leader of the Village Militia Team. While Huanggang’s armed village militia followed a proud local tradition, it was common practice for China’s villages to employ armed village troops to protect their people, farmland, and livestock. It is documented that Caiwuwei Village, for example, was involved in a number of village turf wars involving hundreds of armed fighters along with the exchange of cannon fire. However, in 1987 Zhuang confessed to Wang that the Huanggang Militia was sparsely manned, as he was the only one left on the Team amongst his old classmates from the village school.<sup>11</sup>

Wang Shi fled Shenzhen in 1980 as soon as his assignment was over, returning to the relative comfort of the more urban Guangzhou. He did not give Shenzhen another thought until a chance visit by “Cowboy” Zhuang:

Spring 1983 arrived before we knew it. "Cowboy" and his wife came to Guangzhou to visit my parents-in-law, bringing with them freshly caught shrimp, a case of Sunkist oranges and a case of Californian red apples. "Cowboy" was wearing a light-colored bomber jacket made in Taiwan, his hair much better groomed than before. What amazed me most was Mrs. Cowboy's headful of curly permed hair. When asked where she had her hair done, she just looked down, giggled with a hand over her mouth, and blushed. I wondered what, in three short years, had happened in Shenzhen?<sup>12</sup>

### **The History of Huanggang- Village of the Imperial Mount**

Wang Shi’s surprise and astonishment at Zhuang’s Taiwan-made bomber jacket and his wife’s fashionable hairstyle were indicative of the clash between their appearance and the norms of daily life in China, outside Shenzhen. Even in Guangzhou, one of China’s most cosmopolitan cities, live seafood and fresh fruit were impossible to get, even with money. At that time, regulations governing the planned economy meant that even the basic necessities of food and clothing could not be purchased with cash and were instead rationed through “Flour Stamps,” “Meat Stamps,” “Fabric Stamps,” etc. Both political necessity and cultural norms prescribed the notion that frugality was patriotic and physical conformity reflected one’s high moral standards. Images of genderless masses with short cropped hair and

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<sup>10</sup> Nanling Li, "Gongtong Fuyu Shi Genben "Deng Xiaoping De Hua Wo Mingji Yi Beizi " (Becoming Wealthy Together Is the Basis I Remember Deng's Teaching for a Lifetime)," *CCTV International* (2004).

<sup>11</sup> Wang and Miao, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

uniformly blue Mao jackets epitomized some of the most widely reported impressions by foreign visitors to China throughout the 1980s.

Zhuang's metamorphosis was so remarkable that it ignited Wang Shi's curiosity and ambition. In addition to the sophistication and economic prosperity conveyed by Zhuang and his wife, what struck Wang Shi was the contrast between this image and what he had witnessed in Shenzhen when he left in 1980. What exactly had happened in Shenzhen during those few intervening years? In the experience of Zhuang "Cowboy" Shunfu and his Huanggang Village, it was a drastic change to a village history already highly dramatic.

In his autobiography, Wang Shi mentions that his father-in-law stayed at Zhuang's village home in Huanggang. However, he does not elaborate on the prominence of his father-in-law Wang Ning, or what his relationship was with Huanggang Village. Wang Ning (1923–2013), an important figure in the Communist government, was already active in the party prior to the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. During the 1980s and 1990s, he served as Deputy Secretary of the CCP Provincial Committee of Guangdong, heading its Political and Legal Affairs Committee.<sup>13</sup> With his experience in the region, Wang Ning played a part in the early decision-making process for the policy outlining Guangdong Province's special economic zones. His stay in Huanggang and experience with local villagers such as Zhuang Shunfu gave him first-hand knowledge of Huanggang's long agricultural and unique political history. This would have facilitated his approval of reform policies, including the policy that allowed Shenzhen's local villagers to cross the Hong Kong border to carry out daily farming activities.<sup>14</sup>

Residing on the north banks of the Shenzhen River, villagers of Huanggang have fished, farmed, and operated ferry boats along the river since its first settlers, led by Zhuang Run, arrived in 1426 during the Ming Dynasty.<sup>15</sup> Like many of Shenzhen's early settlers (mentioned in Chapter 3), the Zhuang Clan originated from northern Henan Province. They migrated southward during the Tang Dynasty, and later during the South Song Dynasty. The Zhuang Clan's genealogy book recorded the reason for the particular site of to be chosen for their new village: "relocated to the country of the Yellow Mount due to its fertile land."<sup>16</sup> In the Kangxi Period's *Xin'an County Chronicle* (1688), a chapter on geography refers to Huanggang as the "Yellow Mount Pier," where ferry services operated, taking passengers across the Shenzhen River.<sup>17</sup> The village name was officially changed to "Imperial Mount" after one of the Zhuang descendants ranked first in the national examinations, during the reign of Emperor Qianlong in the Qing Dynasty (1735–1795 AD).<sup>18</sup> In the early Qing period, the villagers built a wall around their settlements and introduced water from a nearby river to form a canal around the wall. Agricultural production in

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<sup>13</sup> "Wangning Tongzhi Shengping (a Biography of Wangning- a Eulogy)," *Communist Party of China*, September 5, 2013.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Musheng Dai and Yanzi, *Jinxu Huanggang (Splendid Huanggang)* (Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1999), pp. 13–14.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

*Zhuangshi Zupu- Huanggang Xiang (Genealogy of Zhang- Huanggang Village)*, (Shenzhen).

<sup>17</sup> Wenmo Jin (ed.). *Xin'an Xianzhi - Kangxi (Chronicle of Xin'an County - Kangxi Version)* (Beijing: Qing Government, 1688).

<sup>18</sup> Yanting Tong, "Cong Yucun Dao Cbd Hou Huayuan Zuimei Huanggangcun (from Fishing Village to the Backyard of Cbd the Most Beautiful Huanggang Village)," *Shenzhen Evening News*, March 19, 2013. Dai and Yanzi, p. 14.

Huanggang Village peaked in the mid-Qing dynasty (1700–1800 AD), when 4,000 men farmed fields spanning approximately 3.3 square kilometers.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the village operated 43 fishing boats and conducted aquaculture production, making Huanggang Dried Shrimp—a famous regional delicacy. Huanggang Village grew to become a collection of four natural villages: Shangwei (upper court), Xiawei (lower court), Jilong (auspicious dragon), and the namesake Huanggang (Imperial Mount).

Huanggang Village is one of the few historic Ming dynasty villages in Shenzhen still remaining today, despite multiple clearance orders by the imperial government during China's Ming and Qing periods, which sought to destroy Huanggang and other villages so that their crops and fishing boats could not be used by pirates and sea invaders. The imperial army was ordered to burn the villages' homes and farming fields to force the villagers off of the land. A number of villages in today's Shenzhen and Hong Kong were returned to settle on their original sites when resettlements were once again allowed.<sup>20</sup> The proud and persistent villagers have played active roles in many historic events in the region. When the Qing government's 1898 Second Convention of Peking conceded all land south of the Shenzhen River to Great Britain, more than one hundred Huanggang villagers refused to recognize this agreement, and led the 1899 Anti-British Uprising with other villagers along the Shenzhen River in order to defend their farmland south of the river. Only the young flag bearer returned alive following defeat by the British colonial army.<sup>21</sup> The names of the villagers killed in the uprising were carved into stone tablets, and they were worshipped as heroes in Huanggang's historic Village Ancestral Hall. Built during the Qing Dynasty, the ancestral hall, with its three halls and three courtyards, continued to host remarkable historic events in the twentieth century. In 1925, the Huanggang Ancestral Hall became the headquarters of the Communist Peasant Association and the Peasant Defense Army. While the innermost hall was still devoted to ancestral worship, in 1932 the rest of the complex became the village school, where communist party members were disguised as recruited teachers. In 1927, the provincial communist party committee set up an underground Communication Center in Huanggang as a liaison point between communist activists in Hong Kong and Guangzhou. The operation of the communication center was secretly financed by a merchant from nearby Caiwuwei Village, who owned a bank and a jewelry shop in Shenzhen Old Town. The communication center was used to organize guerilla forces and pass military intelligence to the Chinese, as well as other Allied Forces, during the Japanese occupation in the region.<sup>22</sup> During the Pacific War from 1941 to 1945, Huanggang Village once again served as an underground communist safe house. Initiated by CCP leader Zhou Enlai and led by the Dongjiang

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<sup>19</sup> Tong.

<sup>20</sup> James L. Watson's ethnographic study on a village in Hong Kong showed that the agrarian history of the community had prevented the community from dissolving amid large-scale emigration trends. See L. James Watson, "Saltwater Margin: A Common-Fields System in South China," *Past & Present* 224, no. 1 (2014).

<sup>21</sup> Tong.

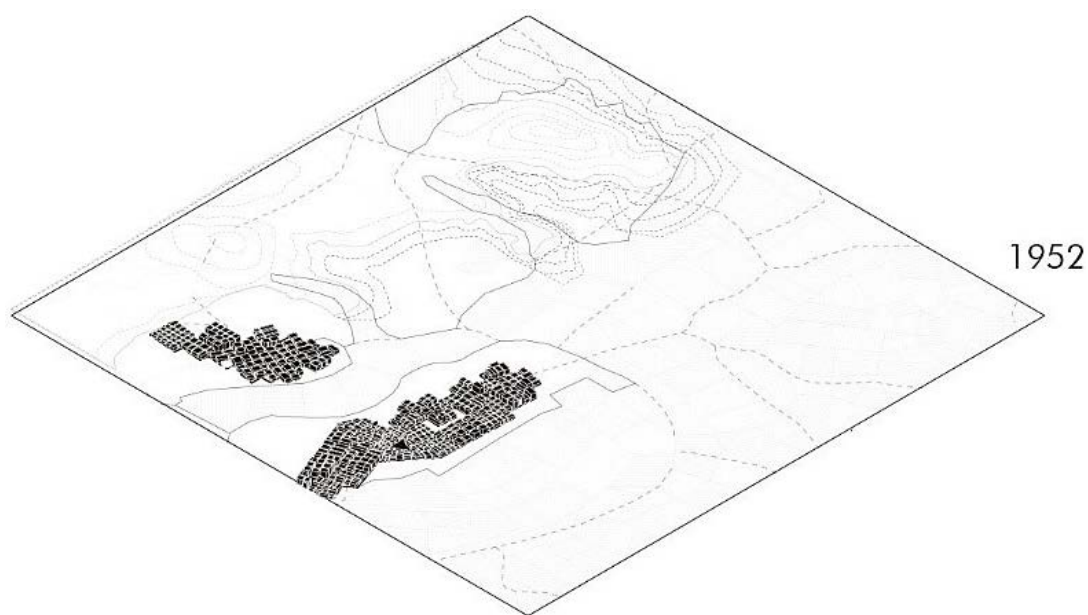
Zhonggui Shan, "Huanggangcun Sanshinian Jingli San Da Jubian (3 Major Changes During the Past Thirty Years of Huanggang)," *Shenzhen Economic Daily*, July 2, 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Buyun Yang, "Hongse Shengmingxian (the Red Lifeline)," (2013).

Zhonggong Shenzhen shiwei dangshi bangongshi (Office for party history of Shenzhen Municipal Communist Party), *Shenzhen Dangshi Ziliao Huibian (a Compilation of Information on Shenzhen Municipal Communist Party)*, 4 vols., vol. 1 (Shenzhen: Zhonggong Shenzhen shiwei dangshi bangongshi (Office for party history of Shenzhen Municipal Communist Party), 1985).



Column, “The Great Rescue” mission smuggled important cultural and political figures with alliances to the Chinese communists out of Japanese-occupied Hong Kong across the Shenzhen River into China’s then-rural Bao’an County.<sup>23</sup> Huanggang Villages was one of the most important connection stations for the rescue efforts. The mission rescued over a thousand people, including some British, American, and other Allied Forces personnel fighting the Japanese in the region, many of whom crossed the Shenzhen River under cover of darkness with the help of Huanggang villagers in fishing boats.<sup>24</sup> During the ensuing Communist-Nationalist civil war, Huanggang villagers continued to smuggle weapons, medicines, and other desperately needed provisions from Hong Kong to communist operations throughout China.<sup>25</sup>



**Figure 34** Reconstructed historical transformations of Huanggang and surrounding circa 1952

Huanggang Village’s strategic contribution was recognized and praised following the Communist victory and establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. However, the enduring disasters of the Great Leap Forward (1958–1960) depleted village resources and Huanggang fell into abject poverty. As a historic and established village, Huanggang experienced much chaos and destruction during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). The village’s Ancestral Hall was heavily damaged and the stone tablets of the anti-British village heroes were destroyed. By the late 1970s, most of the able-bodied villagers were smuggled across the border to Hong Kong to seek work. Daily wages in the village production team were as little as one yuan, while in Hong Kong daily wages reached several hundred yuan. The village’s farming fields and fish ponds were abandoned, and children were taught to swim

<sup>23</sup> Shimou Sun, "Aiguo Rexue Zhangliutang Gaige Kaifang Huanxinzhuan (Patriotic Blood Flows, New Appearance During the Reformation)," (2010).

<sup>24</sup> Xiaohong Yi, Tianli Jiang, and Xiaodan Cui, "74 Nian Qian Dongjiang Zongdui Bannian Yingjiu 800 Duo Wenhua Mingren Chuang Kangzhan Qiji (the Dongjiang Column Rescued 800 Cultural Celebrities in Half a Year 74 Years Ago- a Defense War Mircale)," *Shenzhen Evening*, August 10, 2015.

<sup>25</sup> Sun.

from an early age to prepare for crossing the river undetected.<sup>26</sup> Wang Shi's first stay in Shenzhen from 1978 to 1980 was during one of Huanggang Village's historical low points.

### **Metamorphosis Post-1979**

Thoroughly discouraged, Wang Shi left Shenzhen in 1980. That same year, "Cowboy" Zhuang Shunfu turned 30 years old and faced his first major challenge as a newly elected village leader. Although the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone had been formally established in 1979, the economic turn-around was not immediate and the villages were still organized within the structure of the socialist commune. Faced with continued poverty and eager to participate in the new economy, the better-off sub-village of Shuiwei filed for separation from the rest of the Huanggang Commune. During the separation negotiations, Shuiwei Village elders made a verbal pact with the other three villages: while all assets—including land, people, livestock, and equipment—would be split, the Zhuang Clan Ancestral Hall and the village school inside would remain a shared property with continued support from Shuiwei. This decision recognized the common clan ancestry as well as the remarkable history of the ancestral hall, which was well known to the village elders. Following the withdrawal of Shuiwei from the village commune, the remaining villages faced even greater hardship after handing over 10,000 yuan to Shuiwei. Given these abysmal prospects, Shangwei Village also expressed its intention to separate. Zhuang Shunfu made an impassioned plea to the elders of Shangwei to resist further fractioning Huanggang Village:

What I most want to say today is, Huanggang is our Huanggang; it belongs to everyone. When Shuiwei and Huanggang split, I was not in charge. I was just the Security Director, not in a position to approve or disapprove the splitting. But Shangwei, Xiawei, and Jilong have no historical precedent for separation; we absolutely cannot split. From now on, no one should ever bring up the matter of Shangwei's desire to split. Allowing it to separate from the team is the one thing I am least willing to do. I think it is not really what you want to do, either. . . . Now, the entire Huanggang is like a large ship. We are all on the same ship together. If this ship overturns, we will all be in the water. Do you want to see the ship being wrecked? <sup>27</sup>

Persuaded by Zhuang Shunfu, Shangwei Village agreed to remain in the commune and even offered a private loan of 40,000 yuan to fund new village businesses that had sprung up as a result of the urban construction surrounding the village. Huanggang villagers went on to provide driving and transportation services to Infrastructure Corps' construction teams. With the implementation of the Household Responsibility System in 1982, Huanggang formed trucking teams that carried sand from the banks of the Shenzhen River to all the construction sites. In addition, another village team was formed to collect refuse from Hong Kong and re-sell the recyclables—such as old tires and construction waste—in

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<sup>26</sup> Hui Lei, "Huanggang Taogang Zhongzaiqu Bian Guoji Cbd (Huanggang- from the Base of the Great Escape to an International Cbd)," *Nanfang Daily*, May 24, 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Li Li and Nan Mei, "Yige Pingfanren Puxie Chu De Bupingfan Yuezhang (a Normal Person Writes an Exceptional Piece of Song)," *China Outlook* 30 (2007).

Shenzhen during its initial infrastructure construction boom.<sup>28</sup> Like nearby Caiwuwei Village, Huanggang began to establish numerous light industrial “San Lai Yi Bu” ventures, with Hong Kong relatives as partners and investors. Working together, the Shenzhen villagers and Hong Kong investors managed to create booming cluster of businesses and lift Huanggang village out of debt. During his visit to Guangzhou in 1983, Zhuang Shunfu described Huanggang’s village businesses and large constructions projects to an incredulous Wang Shi. Zhuang’s account of his life and the drastic changes in Shenzhen made such a strong impression on Wang Shi that he immediately made plans to return to Shenzhen to “restart” his life. When he arrived at the Shenzhen train station, “Cowboy” Zhuang was there to pick him up in a beat-up Japanese car. Wang Shi’s first Shenzhen business venture, in 1983, involved importing 20,000 tons of corn for chicken feed via the newly constructed Chi Wan Harbor. In a dramatic twist of fate, he had to rely on Huanggang Village’s construction trucks to help him out, fortunately preventing bankruptcy. As a friend, Zhuang Shunfu had bailed him out on more than one occasion. Zhuang took pity on him after the chicken feed near-miss and implored him to join the village recycling business.<sup>29</sup>

In 1984, Zhuang Shunfu became Secretary of the Communist Party, Huanggang Branch. As Wang Shi’s business ventures in Shenzhen became more firmly established and successful, Huanggang Village also dramatically transitioned. The end of the Commune System in 1983 was officially sanctioned by the State Council document “Notice on the Separation of Governance from the Commune and the Establishment of Township Governments.” In 1984, the 24 production teams collectively formed Huanggang Industry Limited and received 40 million yuan from the Shenzhen government as compensation for village land requisition. Huanggang Village used the funds to set up the Shapuwei Industrial Zone, and the 10,800 square meters of factory facilities soon attracted enterprises such as the Weihuang Knitting Factory and Lilai Electronics Factory.<sup>30</sup> Factory space was in such high demand that Huanggang invested a further nine million yuan to build the Jilong Industrial Zone in 1988. Factories in these two large industrial zones attracted tens of thousands of workers from all over the country. Like the villagers in Caiwuwei, the Huanggang villagers became rent-collecting landlords instead of working in the factories, and re-built their two-story village homes into taller and taller rental housing blocks within the footprint of the original buildings. The spaces between these village buildings in Huanggang are relatively wide and airy, unlike those in Caiwuwei. Each village building is set back an equal distance from the street, creating pleasant and airy pedestrian alleyways. This feature was attributed to the relative success of the Huanggang village collective under Zhuang Shunfu’s leadership, and its policy of consistently upgrading the village’s civic infrastructure and public amenities.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Wang and Miao, pp. 19-23.

<sup>30</sup> Tong.



**Figure 35** Reconstructed historical transformations of Huanggang and surrounding circa 1984

In 1985, the Huanggang Primary School was moved out of the Ancestral Hall to a land plot of 20,000 square meters. An elderly home was built in 1987, and all villagers over the age of 55 received a monthly subsidy. In 1988, the Huanggang Kindergarten was built with 1.3 million yuan of collective village funds.<sup>31</sup> The Huanggang Primary School received an upgrade that year, and was given an additional 10,000 square meters of land for a basketball court, as well as a soccer and track field. In 1991, a large complex was built to house an auditorium, a computer lab, a dance studio, and a swimming pool; the addition cost 3.8 million yuan.<sup>32</sup> In addition to these physical upgrades, the village set up an initiative to award 10,000 yuan to any villager accepted by national or international universities, and 5,000 yuan to those enrolled in community colleges.<sup>33</sup> In 1992, 1.2 million yuan was invested in computers and learning tools for the village school and community center. Another eight million yuan funded a large library for the village in 1993. In addition, Huanggang Village participated in China's large-scale "Project Hope," which had the goal of building schools in rural regions with poor facilities, the village collective donated to the construction of four schools in China's rural regions as a part of this initiative.<sup>34</sup> Zhuang Shunfu's leadership in prioritizing education was evident both in the construction of facilities and the allocation of scholarships. In addition, he sent his two sons to study finance and design in the US, Canada, and the UK.

The year 1992 was an important one for Huanggang, and for all the other villages within the Special Economic Zone. It was the year in which all remaining land held by the villages received urban status, and the villagers' rural *hukou* was converted to urban *hukou*. In addition, all village enterprises

<sup>31</sup> Li and Mei.

<sup>32</sup> Dai and Yanzi, pp. 285–296.

<sup>33</sup> Li and Mei.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

were encouraged to form incorporated companies with the villagers as shareholders. The Shenzhen Huanggang Real Estate Holdings Company Limited was established in 1992, with Zhuang Shunfu as its founding director and CEO. Huanggang's 1,680 villagers, comprising 520 households, all became shareholders in the company. Over the following decade, Huanggang Real Estate Holdings developed major construction projects and established over 50 subsidiary companies specializing in businesses from electronics to garments to chemicals.<sup>35</sup> In 1995, all the villagers in Huanggang moved out of their original village housing blocks into a garden villa-style residential development named Huanggang New Village. The vacated old housing blocks then became entirely occupied by renters. The 22-story Huanggang Tower was the first village-funded real estate project, built in 1997. In addition to accommodating the offices of Huanggang Holdings, the tower contained office space, a hotel, and retail facilities. By 1998, the 300 million yuan Huanggang development master plan—which had been drawn up back in 1990—was nearly complete.

In 1987, Huanggang Village had commissioned Shenzhen International Landscape Development Company to formulate the upgrade and development master plans.<sup>36</sup> Subsequently, in 1990, the village commissioned the China Academy of Urban Planning, the same urban planning firm hired by the Shenzhen government for the city's overall master plan. Construction began in 1991. The project created a series of expansive public structures and spaces along an east-west axis, following the orientation of the historic village. A gilded Village Gate in Qing Dynasty style marked the eastern village entrance, leading to a street wide enough for vehicles and lined with modern shopping spaces. The street leads directly to an open space marked by a large bronze sculpture of a big bull leading three smaller bulls. This sculpture was not a reference to the economy's bullish market, but rather a privately acknowledged tribute by the villagers to their respected village leader—none of them would have dared to refer to him as the "Cowboy." The pedestrian space opened onto the Huanggang Cultural Plaza with a large musical fountain in the center, flanked on the north side by a shady grove of palm trees. The south side, meanwhile, featured a European-style clock tower and shopping arcade with a large outdoor LED screen. The axis continued westward with ceremonial steps ending at an expansive raised platform, the location of the stately new Huanggang Ancestral Hall. The original ancestral hall appeared to be abandoned; neither Zhuang nor any of the other Huanggang leaders seemed to invest much historic or sentimental value in it. The newly built ancestral hall was larger and taller, with imperial-style stone pillars of carved flying dragons. The raised area was originally a gentle wooded mount named Zhuzilin, or the Bamboo Forest. Finally, this eclectic collection of civic spaces stood next to the 20,000 square meter Huanggang Village Park, built in the Southern Scholars Garden style commonly found in China's Zhejiang Province. Unlike the Ancestral Hall, which is open only to the Huanggang villagers, the lush Huanggang Village Park is open to all: villagers, renters, and the wandering public alike. The park

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<sup>35</sup> "Huanggang Dai "Huangguan "De Quanguo Wenmingcun (Huanggang- a National Cultural Village with a Crown)," *Shenzhen Economic Daily*, February 16, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Dai and Yanzi, p. 198.



includes a well-stocked koi pond and stone bridges, pavilions with flying roofs, and rock sculptures, and its original function as the village orchard can be seen in the numerous lychee trees throughout the garden space.



**Figure 36** Reconstructed historical transformations of Huanggang and surrounding circa 1997

Compared to most other urbanized historic villages, Huanggang enjoys an unusually high quality of urban space, services, and maintenance. This difference is most attributable to the village's leadership and the support they enjoy from the villagers, as well as, to a certain degree, the local government. The most typical criticism of the urban villages in Shenzhen, and the rest of China, is that they are "*Zang, Luan, Cha*," or "Dirty, Disorderly, and Inferior." Zhuang Shunfu and his leadership team worked hard to make Huanggang a clean and orderly neighborhood, superior not only to other urban villages, but also to most of the urban blocks in Shenzhen's city proper. Huanggang has a generous number of accessible public spaces, including the open plaza with its fountains and lush greeneries. These places, along with the vehicle-accessible streets and pedestrian alleyways, are impeccably maintained by the Village Company's own sanitation and landscape units. Like other urban villages, Huanggang has a mix of large supermarkets and hundreds of small street-front shops, restaurants, nightclubs, and massage parlors. However, the Village Company maintains a well-trained and well-equipped security team that preserves law and order in the city as well as the village.



**Figure 37** Beyond the Huanggang Village Ancestral Hall are high-rise residential towers self-developed by its own village corporation.



All of Huanggang's public space and facilities construction was funded by the village company, which had accumulated its wealth through the industrial zones and other village enterprises. By 2002, the fixed assets of Huanggang Holdings were valued at 450 million yuan, a quantum leap from the deficit of 10,000 yuan recorded in 1980 and even the 300,000 yuan recorded in 1984.<sup>37</sup> In 2000, the two industrial zones accommodated 38 enterprises and two publicly listed Hong Kong companies. Between them, they employed more than 20,000 workers, who generated an annual revenue of 40 million yuan.<sup>38</sup> The remarkable transformation of Huanggang Village did not escape unnoticed by the city's leadership. In 1998, Zhuang Shunfu was elected Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of Futian District People's Congress, an unexpected and extraordinary honor for a former village cowboy.

### **The CBD Comes to the Village**

The stratospheric rise of Zhuang Shunfu's political status, the maturation of Huanggang's village leadership team, and the considerable wealth of Huanggang Holdings paralleled Shenzhen's transition from an industrial zone to a comprehensive city. In the early 2000s, Huanggang Village found itself at the new spatial center of Shenzhen—the ambitious Central Business District (CBD), which moved the city's political and commercial center from Luohu District westward to the adjacent Futian District. Shenzhen's 1986 master plan had already designated the Futian area as the future Central Business District. In 1989, four planning and architecture offices were commissioned to provide conceptual design for the area: the China Urban Planning and Design Institute, Huayi Design Consulting Co. Ltd., the Shenzhen Branch Office of the Architectural Design Institute of Tongji University, and Singapore PACT International Planning Consultants. In 1991, based on the various 1989 schemes, a new master plan was prepared by the Architectural Design Institute of Tongji University in collaboration with the Shenzhen Urban Planning and Design Institute (SZUPDI). Land use and street pattern proposals were formally approved in 1992, this time prepared by the Shenzhen Branch of the China Urban Planning and Design Institute (CUPDI). In 1993, a "Detailed Urban Plan" was proposed collaboratively by the CUPDI, the Shenzhen Branch of Wuhan Steel and Iron Group Design Institute, and the Beijing Urban Infrastructure Design Institute. Based on the detailed plan, SZUPDI proposed the "Urban Design for Futian Central District" in 1994.

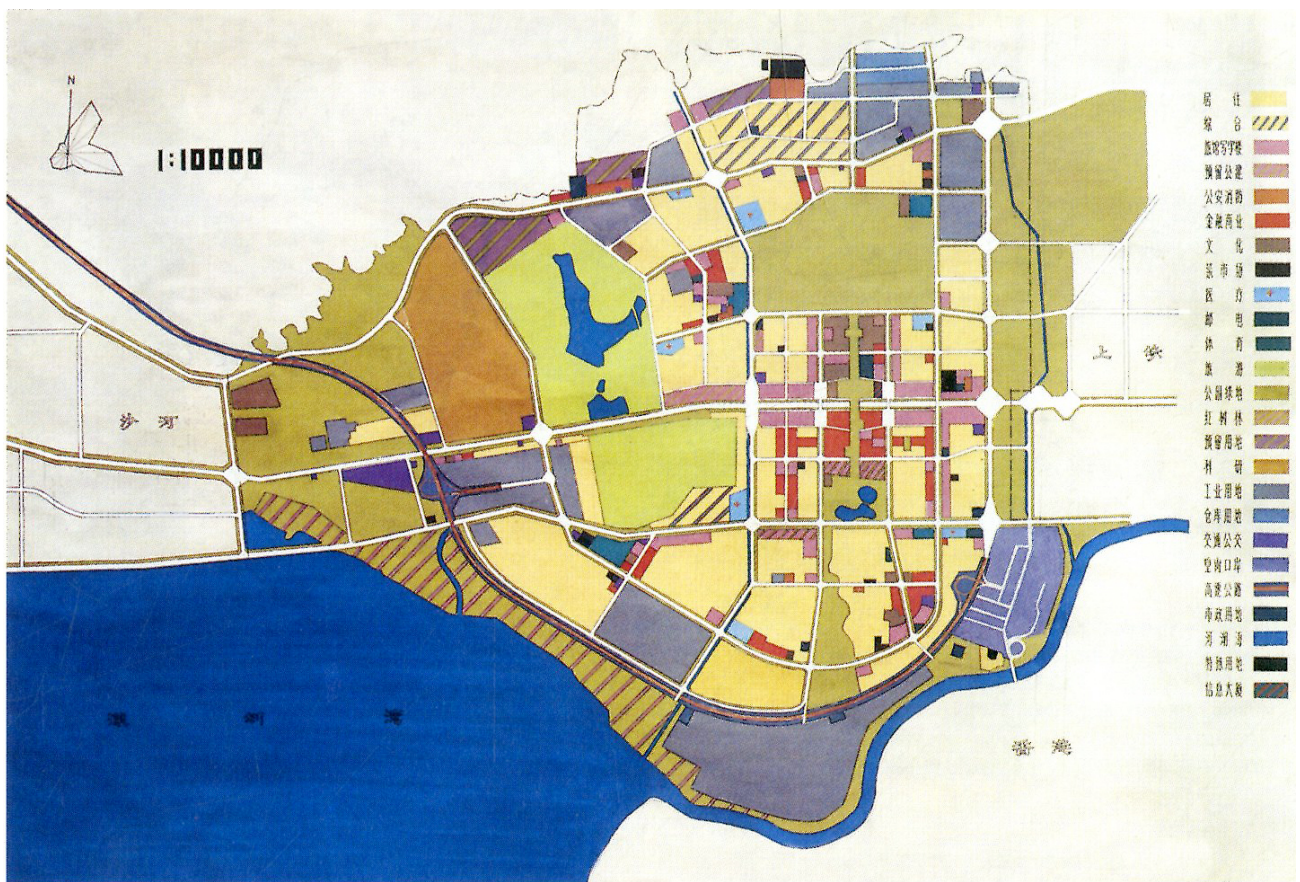
In 1997, Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa was appointed to design the CBD's public space system along the district's central axis, with an "Eco-media Axis" concept that would improve the green and public spaces of the area. The American architecture office of Skidmore Owings and Merrill (SOM) was commissioned in 1998 to create a master plan for the office building blocks flanking the central

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<sup>37</sup> Zhuang's Clan Association, *Huanggang Village Shenzhen China* (Shenzhen 2002). Dai and Yanzi, p. 231.

<sup>38</sup> Qingshan Huang and Keren He, "Sanshinian Sanda Zhuanxing (3 Major Changes in 30 Years)," *Shenzhen Economic Daily*, August 23, 2010.

green space, and to provide general guidelines on design implementation. By the end of 1998, six government projects had been started, marking the beginning of the construction phase of the CBD. In the same year, feasibility studies were conducted for the urban renewal of Gangxia Village, located in the CBD diagonally across the Shenzhen Boulevard from the city hall. In 1999, an international design consultation was conducted. Obermeyer Architecture proposed a sunken water system, which was a continuation of Kurokawa's Eco-media Axis scheme. A study was conducted to optimize the proposed urban design for implementation, resulting in the decision to relocate the proposed Shenzhen Convention and Exhibition Center to the plot on the CBD's central axis.

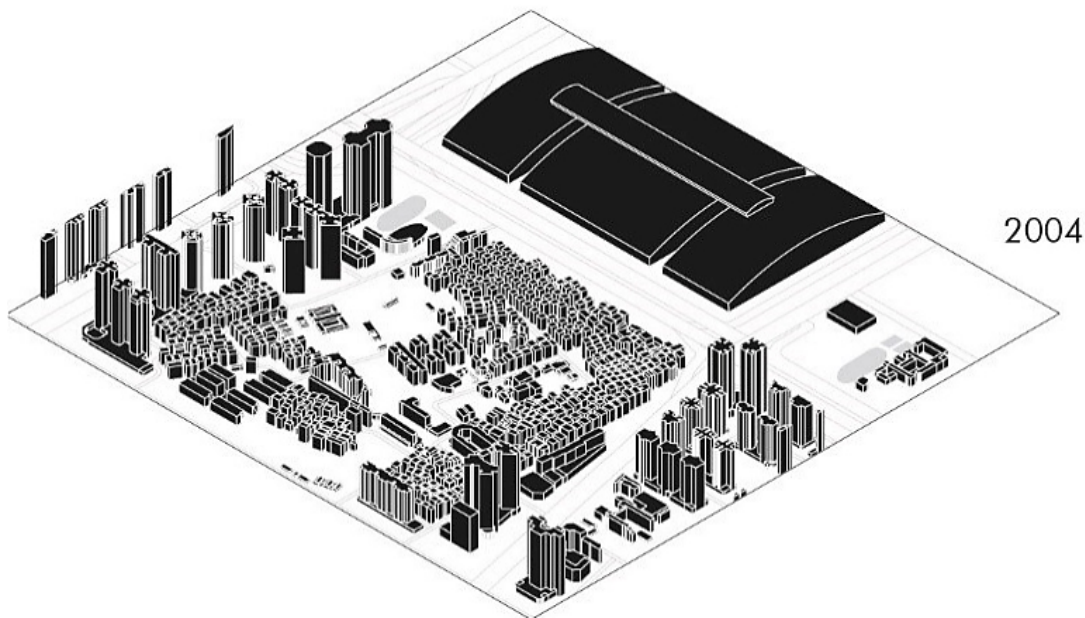


1988年福田分区规划

**Figure 38** 1998 Masterplan of Shenzhen's Central Business District in Futian

The master plan was based on a classically arranged north-south axis that originates, ceremonially, from the tallest point in Lotus Mountain Park to the northernmost spot in the CBD, occupied by the large bronze statue of the striding Deng Xiaoping. Adjacent to the southern edge of the park, symmetrical land parcels were laid out to accommodate civic buildings such as the Children's Palace, Book City, the Shenzhen Library (completed 1998) designed by Japanese architect Arata Isozaki, and the Shenzhen Modern Art Museum (completed 2017) by German architect Wolf Prix. Further south from these civic buildings and sitting directly on the central axis was Shenzhen Municipal City Hall; its

design was developed from a winning entry by an American practice, John M. Y. Lee/Michael Timchula Architects, in the 1996 international design competition. The Shenzhen municipal government moved from its 1981 location adjacent to Caiwuwei Village to the new Futian CBD in May 2004.



**Figure 39** Reconstructed historical transformations of Huanggang and surrounding circa 2004

The Shenzhen Convention and Exhibition Center was completed the same year, and it marks the southern end of the north-south central axis defined by the CBD master plan. Funded by the city and designed by the German architectural firm GMP, this enormous structure occupied the entire land parcel of the bustling Huanggang Yuandingtou Industrial Zone. The municipal government acquired the land from Huanggang in 2001, but rather than receiving financial compensation, Huanggang negotiated its sale in exchange for a similar-sized land plot adjacent to the convention center. With the accumulation of capital and rocketing land prices in the Futian area, Huanggang Village sought to engage actively in the city's real estate market.

In 2002, Zhuang Shunfu was elected a deputy to the People's Congress of Guangdong Province. The position carries the political powers to participate not only in decisions concerning the city of Shenzhen, but in higher circles of political leadership at the provincial and national levels. He led Huanggang into a brand-new era, transforming the village as well as the city of Shenzhen.





**Figure 40** Inside an alleyway of Huanggang Village, looking north at the adjacent Shenzhen Convention Center on land once occupied by the village industrial zone.

The village company completed another self-funded project in 2001—Huangxing Towers, a residential complex composed of three 20-story apartment towers. The company also embarked on Huanggang New Village Phase Two, which included 45 mid-rise apartment buildings, a new kindergarten, primary school, supermarket, wet market, and a community center.<sup>39</sup> Concurrently, Huanggang collaborated with other real estate developers and private investors to undertake projects such as the three 40-story apartment towers on a Hong Kong-style podium (known collectively as Huangting Caiyuan), the 32-story Huangtingju Tower, two 32-story Guohuang Towers, and two 38-story Huangdu Towers. By 2004, two more co-developed projects, both even larger in scale than the tower projects, had also been completed: the Huangda Oriental Garden, consisting of five 32-story towers, and Huangting Century Garden comprised of nine 32-story towers.<sup>40</sup> In addition to these predominantly residential towers, Huanggang co-developed Huizhan Shidai Center, a 50-story office tower, in 2004, and self-funded the 20-story-high Huangxuan Hotel tower in 2005. Between 1992 and 2007, each Huanggang villager accrued company shares valued at around 300,000 yuan.<sup>41</sup>

In 2007, Zhuang Shunfu turned over the directorship of Huanggang Holdings and his position as Huanggang's chief secretary of the Communist Party to his eldest son, Zhuang Chuangyu, who was 33 years old, educated in Canada and the UK, and holder of a double degree in business administration and finance.<sup>42</sup> Zhuang Chuangyu continued to forge Huanggang's way into the Shenzhen real estate market. One of the company's next major projects involved the compensated land parcel next to the Convention Center. Huanggang teamed up with one of the largest Shenzhen-based developers, the Excellence Group, which invested in the construction while Huanggang provided the land. American architect Leo A. Daly was hired to design the Excellence-Huanggang Century Center. Completed in 2009, the massive development consisted of four towers surrounding a central open courtyard, with a land area of 30,000 square meters and 400,000 square meters of total floor space. Encased by sleek glass curtain walls, the two tallest towers soar upwards to almost 300 meters in height and accommodate 60 and 57 stories of offices, hotels, serviced apartments, and luxury shopping malls. The development was a spectacular success. In the first two weeks of sales, 56,000 square meters of floor area in the two shorter towers were sold for more than 30,000 yuan per square meter, instantly generating a revenue of 1.7 billion yuan.<sup>43</sup> The neighborhood of Huanggang Village was recognized as a "Pioneering Unit in Landscape and Garden City Development" by the municipal government in 2001,<sup>44</sup> proclaimed to be a national model for "Pioneering in Civilized Community Creation" by the Central Commission for Guiding Cultural

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<sup>39</sup> "Gaizao Chengzhongcun- Huanggang Xinxincun Huocheng Yangban (Urban Village Redevelopment- Huanggang's New New Village Can Be a Sample)," *Hong Kong Commercial Daily*, July 19, 2001.

<sup>40</sup> Dai and Yanzi, p. 230.

<sup>41</sup> Li and Mei.

<sup>42</sup> "Zhuang Shaobo: Fubei Kaichuang Le Meihao De Jintian (Zhuang Shaobo: Fathers Have Created Our Great Present)," *Shenzhen Economic Daily*, June 29, 2008.

<sup>43</sup> Excellence Group, "Shenzhen Cbd Diyi Gaodu Dansheng (the Birth of Shenzhen Cbd's Greatest Height)".

<sup>44</sup> Zhuang's Clan Association.

and Ethical Progress in 2002,<sup>45</sup> and awarded the title of “Civilized Unit” 10 times by the provincial and municipal governments through 2003.<sup>46</sup>

### **Border Crossings and “Second Wives”**

In the year 2002 alone, Huanggang Holdings recorded total assets of 450 million yuan, and each villager of Huanggang received an annual dividend of 20,000 RMB.<sup>47</sup> In comparison, members of neighboring villages such as Futian, Gangxia, and Shuiwei were allocated, on average, 13,500 yuan per capita.<sup>48</sup> Villages located in outer districts a greater distance from the city center would have only been able to provide each of their members with a couple of thousand yuan annually. This large discrepancy could be attributed to the ability of Huanggang Village's industries and enterprises to adapt to the economic restructuring of Shenzhen. However, shares from the Village Company were only part of the income received by the original villagers; the majority of the villagers' income came from renting their individual “peasant buildings.” For the villagers of Huanggang, many of whom had more than one building each, the income generated from the apartment rentals was several times that of the already generous Village Company dividends. Rooms and apartments in the “peasant buildings” of Huanggang were in constant demand, and their average rent was among the highest in the city. In addition to the relatively high quality of buildings and public spaces, the village's location directly adjacent to one of the most important Hong Kong-Shenzhen border crossings gave its rental properties an even greater edge over those of its rivals.

The Huanggang Checkpoint first came into operation in December 1989, catering to vehicular traffic between the newly established Shenzhen Special Economic Zone and colonial Hong Kong.<sup>49</sup> The checkpoint is named for Huanggang Village, which is just to the north of the port of entry, and for to the old Huanggang river crossing. The bridge spanned the Shenzhen River just south of Huanggang Village, extending into Hong Kong's most northern suburban territories. In 1991, the border facilities were expanded to encompass pedestrian crossing operations. During Deng Xiaoping's legendary 1992 tour of Shenzhen, his stop-off at the foot of the Huanggang bridge crossing made headlines in both the local and Hong Kong press. Back then, no one imagined that this barren location surrounding the century-old ferry crossing would eventually become Asia's largest freight and pedestrian port of entry.

By the year 2000, 68% of all Shenzhen-Hong Kong cross border traffic (cars and lorries) passed through Huanggang Checkpoint, an average of 20,810 vehicles per day.<sup>50</sup> Individual passenger

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Futian District Redevelopment Bureau, "Zoujin Chengzhongcun - Xianzhuang Diaocha Baogao (Step in "Urban Village"- Existing Conditions Report)," in *Futian qu chengzhongcun gaizao yanjiu baogao (Reconstruction Research of "Urban Village" in Futian District)* (Shenzhen: Futian District Redevelopment Bureau, 2005).

<sup>49</sup> Richard Y.C. Wong and Y.S. Joseph Cheng, "Cross Border Traffic," in *The Other Hong Kong Report* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1990).

<sup>50</sup> Legislative Council Secretariat, "Background Brief on the Operation of Boundary Control Points," (2001).

crossings amounted to 11% of the city's total, equivalent to over 10 million for the year and 29,938 per day.<sup>51</sup> In December 2002, China's State Council formed a joint panel composed of members from eight ministries and commissions to conduct a study to validate the establishment of a 24-hour national border customs point between Shenzhen and Hong Kong.<sup>52</sup> This would be China's first 24-hour border crossing. It took little over a month for the panel to reach a decision and by midnight of January 27, 2003, the 24-hour Huanggang Checkpoint was in operation. The opening was timed just before the Chinese Lunar New Year, when travel between the Shenzhen-Hong Kong border reached peak levels. The decision to open the Huanggang Checkpoint round-the-clock, unlike the oldest Shenzhen-Hong Kong crossing at Luohu, aligned with Shenzhen's eastward urban development and the shift of the city's political and administrative center from the old city center of Luohu District to the new Central Business District of Futian District.

The real estate development boom in surrounding urban villages, such as Huanggang, was a consequence of this shift in the city's focal point, as well as of the border checkpoint's strategic location. In addition, businesses—including hotels, restaurants, night clubs, and massage parlors—mushroomed along the border areas to cater to cross-border activities, mainly targeting Hong Kong tradesmen. With thousands of factories and plants built in Shenzhen, the Huanggang Checkpoint became a primary node for the transportation of goods and services in and out of China. The freight transport and logistics sector grew rapidly and became a major business enterprise for many Hong Kong companies. Hong Kong truck drivers would drive empty trucks north across the border, spend a few days in Shenzhen, and return with a cargo full of goods for export through Hong Kong. Most of the drivers made multiple trips every week into Shenzhen.

The continued economic disparity between Hong Kong and Shenzhen throughout the 1990s was astronomical, as evidenced by a comparison of wages earned by Hong Kong freight lorry drivers and wages earned by the general working class in Shenzhen. Many lorry drivers figured out that their monthly expenses on hotel lodging and meals in Shenzhen came to more than the monthly rent of an apartment in the city together with a live-in girlfriend or, in most cases, mistress. As most of the drivers were married, the women paid for cleaning, cooking, and sexual services were colloquially referred to as “er-nai,” or second wife. Prior to China's abolition of polygamous marriage in 1950, this term described the first concubine married into the household following the “da-nai,” or First Wife. For most Hong Kong men and young Mainland women with this arrangement, the preferred rental apartment location was in the urban villages around the checkpoints of Luohu and Huanggang. A number of these urban villages became informally known as “Second Wife Village.”

The dark reality of the “second wife” phenomenon remained a taboo subject for many years in the news media of Shenzhen and China more broadly. This sensitive, and illegal, arrangement existed in

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Haibo Wei and Shuang Gao, "Xianchang Zhiji Tongguan (Live Broadcast on the Opening of the New Border Control)," *Sothern Metropolis Daily*, January 27, 2003.



many large Chinese cities such as Shanghai and Guangzhou. The men were usually wealthy businessmen from Hong Kong or Taiwan, and the women were mostly young migrants from China's rural countryside who had originally sought factory jobs in the big cities. The first extensive press coverage of this issue in Shenzhen was published by the *Hong Kong Commercial Daily* in April 2001 and titled "Record of the Life of 'Second Wives' – An Undercover Reporter's Peep into 'Hidden Mistresses in Golden Chambers.'"<sup>53</sup> The article was written by Tu Qiao, a Mainland Chinese journalist with a reputation for writing investigative reports into the plights of marginalized impoverished groups, such as China's rarely discussed AIDS patients. In January 2001, taking on the guise of a recently abandoned "second wife" looking for a new "husband," she rented a small apartment in "Village X on the banks of the Shenzhen River." In her reports, she listed the "second wife villages" near the Huanggang Checkpoint as "Yu-X Village, Huang-X Village, Huang-X New Village, and Shui-X Village."<sup>54</sup> Anxiously aware of her deception yet determined to shed light on this issue, she befriended many young women and gained insight into this peculiar yet painfully pragmatic arrangement between the "second wives" and their "Hong Kong husbands."

Tu Qiao's article generated considerable local attention, as it touched a raw nerve in Hong Kong and Shenzhen. In 2002 alone, 42,000 court cases involving Hong Kong men and their "second wives" were tried by the Higher People's Court of Guangdong Province, resulting in 47 convictions of bigamy.<sup>55</sup> However, Tu Qiao's 2001 report was not published in Mainland China until June 2004, in a Beijing literary magazine where it had the title "My 60 Days and Nights in Shenzhen's Second Wife Village."<sup>56</sup> This time, her report was picked up by numerous national and local Shenzhen news organizations and went viral through online media. In late 2004, Tu Qiao published a book titled *Bitter Marriages*, which offered a full account of her experiences in a bid to escalate public attention and intervention on the issue.

I have been to the homes of 'Ernai' (mistresses), underground horse races, and underground Majiong centers. I even had blind dates and accompanied hysterical women wanting to find their husbands. Through these experiences, I truly became part of their social circles so that they could expose their own wounds to me and truthfully told me their poignant stories. I won their trust and witnessed the real life of the Ernai. When I got to know them more, I could sense the helplessness and weakness of those marginalized women.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Qiao Tu, "'Ernai' Shenghuo Quan Jilu- Jizhe Wodi Kuishi 'Jinwu Cangjiao'" (Life Record of the "Second Wives" – Undercover Reporter Uncovering "Hidden Mistresses in Golden Homes)," *Hong Kong Commercial Daily* 2001 (07 April-04 May daily serial).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Xingsheng Lu, "Kuhun: Tanfang 'Ernaicun' (Bitter Marriages: Visiting 'Concubine Village')," *Tribune of Villages and Townships* 1 (2005).

<sup>56</sup> Qiao Tu, "Wozai Shenzhen Ernaicun De 60 Ge Riri Yeye (My 60 Days and Nights in Shenzhen's Second Wives Village)," *Beijing Literature*, no. 4 (2004).

<sup>57</sup> *Kuhun: "Wodi Nuxia" 60 Tian Yinxing Caifang Shilu (Bitter Marriages: Undercovered Heroine's 60 Days of Covert Coverage)* (Beijing: Writers Publishing House, 2004), p. 3.



The phenomenon was finally exposed in China's news media, yet neither the articles nor Tu Qiao's book make any mention of the name of the actual village where she spent those two months. Many other news features and reports also exercised similar restraint. One published report, which described the efforts of a group of "ex-second wives" in Shenzhen, who had established a small organization offering assistance to other "sisters" living in the same urban village, referred to this village as "Huang-X Village."<sup>58</sup> However, with increasing public and media attention from the late 2000s onwards, many villages in Shenzhen's Luohu and Futian areas were publicly named by the local press as "second wife villages." Huanggang Village, which usually appeared in the local media for its exemplary economic and community service achievements, was exposed in the regional and national press on account of assertions that over half of its tenant population were "second wives."<sup>59</sup> Huanggang Village was the principal location highlighted in a 2011 article by the Spanish newspaper *ABC*, titled "*La Ciudad de Las Segundas Esposas*," or "The City of the Second Wives."<sup>60</sup>

### **"An Era of Merging with the CBD"**

Zhuang "Cowboy" Shunfu and other village leaders never publicly addressed Huanggang's label as a "second wife village." When inquiries were made about the village's tenant demographics, they stated that all the original villagers had entrusted rental operations to second parties; therefore, they had little control over the subletting of the properties.<sup>61</sup> Huanggang's shadow population of "second wives" inevitably began to diminish with the onset of the Asian financial crisis after 1997. With the downturn of the Hong Kong market, the devaluation of the Hong Kong dollar against the Chinese yuan, industry restructuring and relocation to more rural locations, and less income disparity between Shenzhen and Hong Kong, Hong Kong's border-crossing population saw their purchasing power drastically decline. Hong Kong truck drivers discovered that their income could no longer stretch to pay for monthly apartment rentals and dedicated mistresses.<sup>62</sup> Soon after, Huanggang Village's tenants shifted: the falling numbers of "second wives" were replaced by workers from the newly constructed office towers, hotels, and luxury shopping centers surrounding the village. Despite the ups and downs of the financial market, apartments in Huanggang Village's "peasant buildings" continued to command the highest rents among all urban villages in Shenzhen.<sup>63</sup> Other non-village residential apartment blocks in the vicinity could not compete with Huanggang's high-quality facilities and public spaces. The open secret that

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<sup>58</sup> Jianfeng and Beifang, "Zouchu "Ernai Cun " (Getting out of the "Second Wife Villages")," *Woman's Life*, no. 6 (2008).

<sup>59</sup> "Shenzhen Huanggang Diqu Juju Shuqian Ming "Ernai " (a Few Thousand Second Wives Live in Shenzhen Huanggang Areas)," *Xinhua News Agency & China Review News*, June 22, 2011.

"Ernai Cun Xian Shenzhen Tequ (Second Wife Villages Were Found in Shenzhen Special Zone)," *Apple Daily*, September 27, 2009.

<sup>60</sup> M. Pablo Diez, "La Ciudad De Las Segundas Esposas (the City of the Second Wives)," *ABC*, June 19, 2011.

<sup>61</sup> Meetings and discussions between author and village leaders in 2007-2009.

<sup>62</sup> Qiao Tu, Hao Chen, and Lin Gu, "Bao Ernai Sandi Laogong Gehuai Guitai- Gangren Caikun Jian Qingkuang (Husbands of Second Wives Each with His Own Axe to Grind- Hong Kong Husbands Became Less Frivolous under Financial Pressure)," *Wenhui Po*, September 14, 2002.

<sup>63</sup> "Guannei Chengzhongcun Zufang Gonglue (Tips for Renting Rooms in Villages in Inner Shenzhen)," *Shenzhen News*, October 17, 2016.

Huanggang was one of the largest “second wife villages” did not tarnish its polished public and physical image. Any periodic reports in the local press of illegal activities, such as prostitution, drugs, and smuggling, were played down by the village leadership, who continued to pursue additional village urban redevelopment and design projects.<sup>64</sup>

Huanggang Village and Shenzhen City’s ambitions for urban development had followed parallel trajectories, but dramatically collided in 2007. As the city’s Central Business District reached maturity in terms of built development, the Shenzhen Mayor’s Office and the Urban Planning Bureau began deliberating a potential southward extension of the CBD’s central axis. The original Shenzhen CBD master plan’s site boundary was just north of Huanggang, marked by the mammoth 280,000 square meter Shenzhen Convention Center that formed the ceremonial central axis. By 2007, the central axis that stretched from City Hall in the north to the Convention Center was filled with grand plazas and vast ceremonial and green spaces. However, being bisected by four major highways, the central zones of the axis were not utilized or even easily accessible to pedestrians or vehicles. In 2008, a competition to resolve this issue was won by the Rotterdam-based Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) in collaboration with the Shenzhen-based architectural office Urbanus.<sup>65</sup> However, their proposal for an underground connection system named Crystal Island went unrealized. Instead, the city intended to continue the central axis by creating more grand open spaces south of the Convention Center, made up of several large urban blocks continuing all the way to the Shenzhen River at the border. These urban blocks all sat on land owned by Huanggang Village, and the proposed open spaces would require the demolition of a third of the village buildings. The Shenzhen Urban Planning Bureau, supported by the Mayor’s office, began to draft the 2007 “Shenzhen CBD Huanggang District Redevelopment Plan.” That same year, Huanggang was conveniently listed as one of the 45 villages officially designated for planned overall redevelopment. This was spelled out in the document “2007 Shenzhen Urban Villages (Old Villages) Redevelopment Annual Plan,” prepared by the Shenzhen municipal government.<sup>66</sup> The implication of “overall redevelopment” was that following reconstruction, the new units constructed on former urban village land would be released onto the open market, thereby further bridging the administrative gap between urban village land and municipal land.<sup>67</sup>

While the leaders of the Huanggang Village corporation welcomed the government’s proposal to redevelop the area, they opposed the plan to extend the axis by creating vast open spaces through the central zone of the village. Taking a proactive stance, Zhuang Shunfu once again commissioned the Shenzhen branch of the China Urban Planning Institute to design a new master plan for Huanggang’s

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<sup>64</sup> Qingshan Huang and Di Qiu, “Gaige Kaifang Zhujiu Huanggang Zhi Hun (Opening and Reformation Forged the Spirit of Huanggang),” *Shenzhen Commercial Daily*, January 12, 2009.

<sup>65</sup> “Shenzhen Shizhongxin Shuijingdao Sheji Fangan Guoji Jingsai Jiexiao (Shenzhen City Center Crystal Island Design Proposal International Competition Result Announced),” *Shenzhen News*, June 17, 2009.

<sup>66</sup> Shenzhen Municipal Government, “2007 Shenzhen Shi Chengzhongcun (Jiucun) Gaizao Niandu Jihua (2007 Shenzhen Urban Villages (Old Villages) Redevelopment Annual Plan),” (Shenzhen2007).

<sup>67</sup> Jie Tang, “Chengzhongcun Gaizao Yuanzhuimin Cong Dizhi Dao Zhichi (Urban Village Redevelopment- Indigenous Villagers Converted from Resistance to Support),” *Southern Metropolis Daily*, August 23, 2007.

future development, titling it “An Era of Merging with the CBD.”<sup>68</sup> Bolstered by the successful groundbreaking that marked the construction of the Excellence-Huanggang Century Center in 2007, the Huanggang leadership proposed that two interconnected 200-meter-tall towers should be built on the northernmost edge of the village, directly on the central axis. The twin towers possessed a striking similarity to the Petronas twin towers in Kuala Lumpur. With the exception of the village’s central plaza, public garden, and ancestral hall, all other buildings in the Huanggang master plan were earmarked to be demolished and replaced by commercial and residential skyscrapers. Huanggang objected to the plan not because it would urbanize the village, but rather because the planned development did not maximize new construction to make the village sufficiently urban. Huanggang leaders were no longer content to give land to the city and merely adjacent to its center—they wanted Huanggang to become the city center.

The Shenzhen Planning Bureau found Huanggang’s counter-proposal unsatisfactory. The two parties disagreed on how to extend the city’s central axis, and faced the challenge of negotiating control of the city’s most precious commodity—land—in the most expensive central areas of Shenzhen. To address this challenge, the Shenzhen Planning Bureau launched an international design consultation competition for the Shenzhen CBD Huanggang Area Redevelopment Project, which encompassed 50 hectares, 23 of which were owned and managed by the Huanggang Village Collective. The Hong Kong-based architecture office IDU won the competition with a proposal to extend the ceremonial central axis at ground level on a larger spatial scale, thus enabling the contested ground space of Huanggang Village to remain active with mid-rise buildings and bustling commercial activities. Between 2007 and 2009, IDU further developed the proposal into a master plan in close collaboration with both the Urban Design Department of the Planning Bureau and Huanggang Village leaders.<sup>69</sup> Huanggang Village leaders were satisfied with a few key features of the master plan, which incorporated their requested FAR (Floor Area Ratio) for new construction, as well as a phased demolition and construction program that would allow the Village Corporation to finance the construction with minimal support from outside developers. However, Huanggang Village leaders objected to other features in the IDU proposal, including its provision for transitional affordable housing, the mixed mid-rise clusters along with high-rise towers, and the absence of the “Petronas” twin towers. This process made it clear that while Huanggang Village valued the economic potential of the future development, it was also self-conscious of its own perceived image. The village’s century-old history could be retained in the form of the preserved ancestral halls and proposed village museum, but its 20-year history as an “urban village” was regarded by the leadership as a stain on its record, which had to be completely removed and replaced by shiny new skyscrapers.

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<sup>68</sup> "Futian 15ge Chengzhongcun Dongshizhang Tan Zhuanxing Mou Fazhan (Zhaiyao) (15 Chairpersons of Futian Urban Villages Talked About Restructuring for Development (Excerpt))," *Shenzhen Commercial Daily* (2010).

<sup>69</sup> The Author is the founding principal of IDU and lead design on the Huanggang Project.

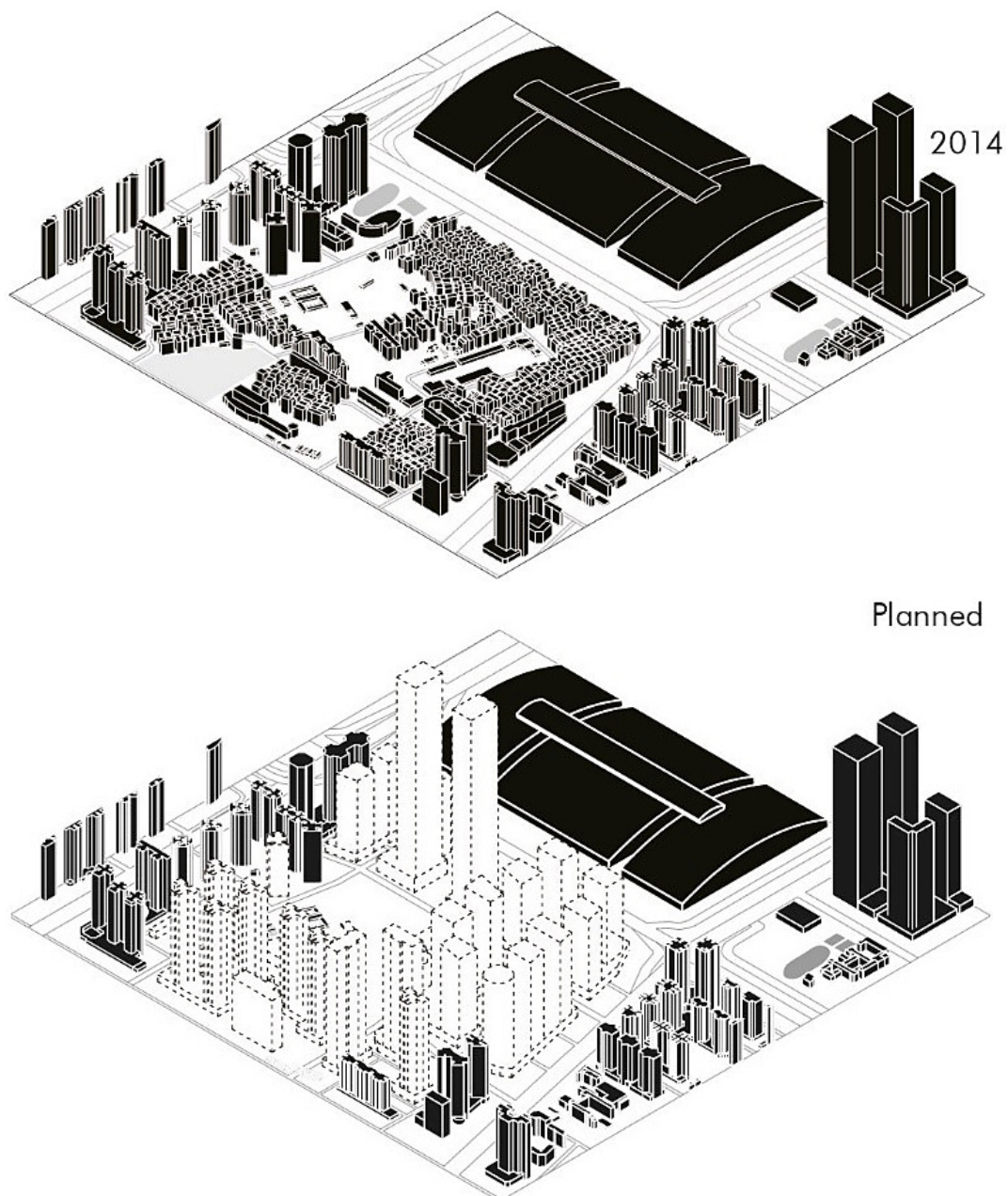


**Figure 41** Staged Urban Planning for Huanggang’s Future Development by IDU\_architecture

With continuous negotiations and adjustments, the master plan passed through the Planning Bureau and the Vice-Mayor’s Office for Urban Development, reaching Shenzhen Mayor’s Office in early 2009. Finally, in March, the “Shenzhen CBD Huanggang District Redevelopment Plan” was to be presented to Mayor Xu Zongheng in the largest presentation room in the Planning Bureau. The Huanggang plan was just one of several projects to be presented to the Mayor, and the presentation itself was supposed to be a matter of procedure. The scheduled five-minute presentation was delivered

by a designated official, while the designers responsible for the proposal were relegated to the back of the room and only permitted to observe. However, the official had barely begun the presentation when several Huanggang Village leaders, led by Zhuang Shunfu, entered the room. When they saw Zhuang, Shenzhen city's top leaders—Directors, Deputy-Mayors and Mayor Xu—stood up as a gesture of acknowledgement and greeting. Zhuang Shunfu and Huanggang Village, although in certain ways exceptional among urban villages, contradict the perception that China's governance structure is uniformly top-down, particularly in the case of Shenzhen. Although urban village leaders often occupied influential positions locally, all of Shenzhen's official government workers and leaders were "parachuted" into the city. These leaders tried to establish good working relationships with those who held local power and influence, such as real estate tycoons, corporate heads, and village leaders. Zhuang Shufu was all three, and more. The "Shenzhen CBD Huanggang District Redevelopment Plan" was later cast aside for years as a consequence of changing city leadership. Compared with the rather short-lived political careers of city leaders such as Shenzhen's successive mayors, political positions of the local village leaders are often more secure.





**Figure 42** Reconstructed historical transformations of Huanggang and surrounding. Most of the high-rises are either sole or jointly-developed by the Huanggang Village Corporation. Huanggang has been lobbying to self-develop land currently occupied by the remaining low and mid-rise village buildings.

### The Model Village in the Model City

Despite the occasional whiff of political scandal and the periodic media exposure of illicit activities, Huanggang Village’s image as a successful and exemplary urban village continues. Huanggang’s accolades include being named Shenzhen’s “Model Civilized Community” in 2004<sup>70</sup> and Guangdong

<sup>70</sup> Shenzhen Municipal Government, “Zhonggong Shenzhen Shiwei, Shenzhenshi Renmin Zhengfu Guanyu Biaozhang Jingshen Wenming Jianshe Xianjin Jiti He Xianjin Geren De Jueding (Decisions of Shenzhen Municipal Committee of the Cpc and

Province's "Six-Excellence' Safe and Harmonious Community" in 2006.<sup>71</sup> By 2007, Huanggang had received more than five national awards espousing its virtues as an exemplary demonstration community.<sup>72</sup> Honors like this are unusual for an urban village not only in Shenzhen, but anywhere in China. However, Huanggang's highest achievement in terms of national recognition was perhaps Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Shenzhen for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding in August 2010. Wen's visit to Shenzhen and appearance in Huanggang was reminiscent of Deng's Southern Tour and his stopover in Fishermen's Village in 1992. The well-orchestrated visit was extensively covered and publicized by local, regional, and national news outlets:

Since the establishment of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone 30 years ago, people's living quality has risen to a new level. In the early morning on August 21st, Wen Jiabao came to the Huanggang community in the district next to Hong Kong. This community, which 30 years ago was only a fishing village, has now been built with lots of high-rise buildings and a big population. When you enter the community, you can see fountain water dancing with music and residents playing Tai Chi and soft ball in the square; you will be impressed by this harmonious image. . . . Then Wen Jiabao went into the home of a local resident, Zhuang Zhizhong, and chatted with his family, asking about the population, income, and other domestic issues. Zhuang Zhizhong told the Premier that his ancestors were all Huanggang villagers and since the Reform and Open policy, life has been better and better.<sup>73</sup>

In addition, there was much news coverage featuring the exchange of words between Premier Wen and former village secretary Zhuang Shunfu. The *People's Daily* reported the following:

Then the former village secretary Zhuang Shunfu, sitting next to the Premier, said, over 30 years ago many Huanggang villagers illegally emigrated to Hong Kong. But the Reform and Open policy and the establishment of the Special Economic Zone have brought about earth-shaking changes to the village. He said, "During the 30 years in the Special Economic Zone, we have also experienced a trilogy of development." "What trilogy?" Wen asked with great interest. "First it was the change from a rural village to part of a city in 1992. Second, we have moved from processing trade to service industry. And lastly, the construction of a modern international community means that we can completely change our destiny and rebuild a new age of passion."<sup>74</sup>

The *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily* further recounted the conversation between Zhuang and Wen Jiabao:

Zhuang: "We are no longer young now and we need the youth to take charge. There are already two overseas returnees among the five forming the board of directors of the joint-stock company;

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Shenzhen Municipal Government Regarding Recognition to Pioneering Civilized Unit and Pioneering Personnel)," (Shenzhen2004).

<sup>71</sup> "Guangdong Sheng Chuangjian "Liu hao" Pingan Hexie Shequ Wenjian Ziliao Huibian (Compiled Information of Guangdong Province's Creation of "Six Goods" Safe and Harmonious Communities)," ed. Guangdong sheng shequ jianshe gongzuo lingdao xiaozu bangongshi (Guangdong Province Community Building Leading Group Office) (Guangzhou2006).

<sup>72</sup> Li and Mei.

<sup>73</sup> Bin Li, "Kaichuang Jingji Tequ De Meihao Mingtian— Wen Jiabao Zongli Zai Shenzhen Kaocha Jishi (Creating a Bright Future for the Sez- a Record of Premier Wen Jiabao's Visit in Shenzhen)," *People's Daily*, August 22, 2010.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

one of them returned from the United Kingdom and is the chairman, and the other returned from the United States and serves as the general manager. These young people are better educated with stronger capabilities than us.”

Wen: “As well-educated as they are, nevertheless it was you the older generation who laid the foundations. The fact that 40% of the directors are overseas returnees means we can already say you are moving toward internationalization, which is the third stage in the trilogy.”

What Premier Wen said made everyone laugh.<sup>75</sup>

It is perhaps worth noting that the “Chairman from the UK” is Zhuang Chuangyu and the “General Manager from the USA” is his brother Zhuang Chuangjian, the two sons of Zhuang “Cowboy” Shunfu. As with many organizations in China, the seemingly international and modernized management team is still very much an extension of the traditional, even feudal, practices of China’s past.

However, Huanggang’s colorful “past” shows signs of selective memory. In 2013, the village devised a new five-year master plan titled “The Years of Service Industry Development.” The aim of the plan was to make service industries the village’s development priority and to upgrade those that already existed. Business consultants were commissioned to gradually eliminate low value-added industries within the village, and to propose a strategic plan for business development.<sup>76</sup> The Jilong Qiongli Old Village House, the oldest tiled single-story house in Huanggang Village (which was renovated as a result of this plan) went on to become the “First Village Museum in China.”<sup>77</sup>

This planning phase did not escape some controversy; in this case, it was not over the re-emergence of the Petronas-like twin towers, but over the proposed demolition of the original Zhuang Clan Ancestral Hall. The Qianlong Period Qing Dynasty complex, with its series of three halls and three courtyards, had not been used by Huanggang Village since the construction of the grand new Ancestral Hall in 1995. The old complex, adjacent to a recently established trash dump and recycling facility, was neglected and poorly maintained. However, some historians and conservationists criticized the plan to demolish it and replace it with a cluster of commercial towers. The response by Zhuang Shunfu, on behalf of Huanggang Village, defended the new development plans. He insisted that the old ancestral hall no longer had any value since the new ancestral hall had replaced it in both function and importance. He argued that those who called for preservation of the old hall were using this as an excuse, and really just did not want to see the continued urban integration and economic development of Huanggang Village.<sup>78</sup> In light of Shenzhen’s decade-long, city-wide campaign of urban village demolition and redevelopment, Huanggang Village was hailed as a shining example by local government officials, who wished that all urban villages were as progressive.

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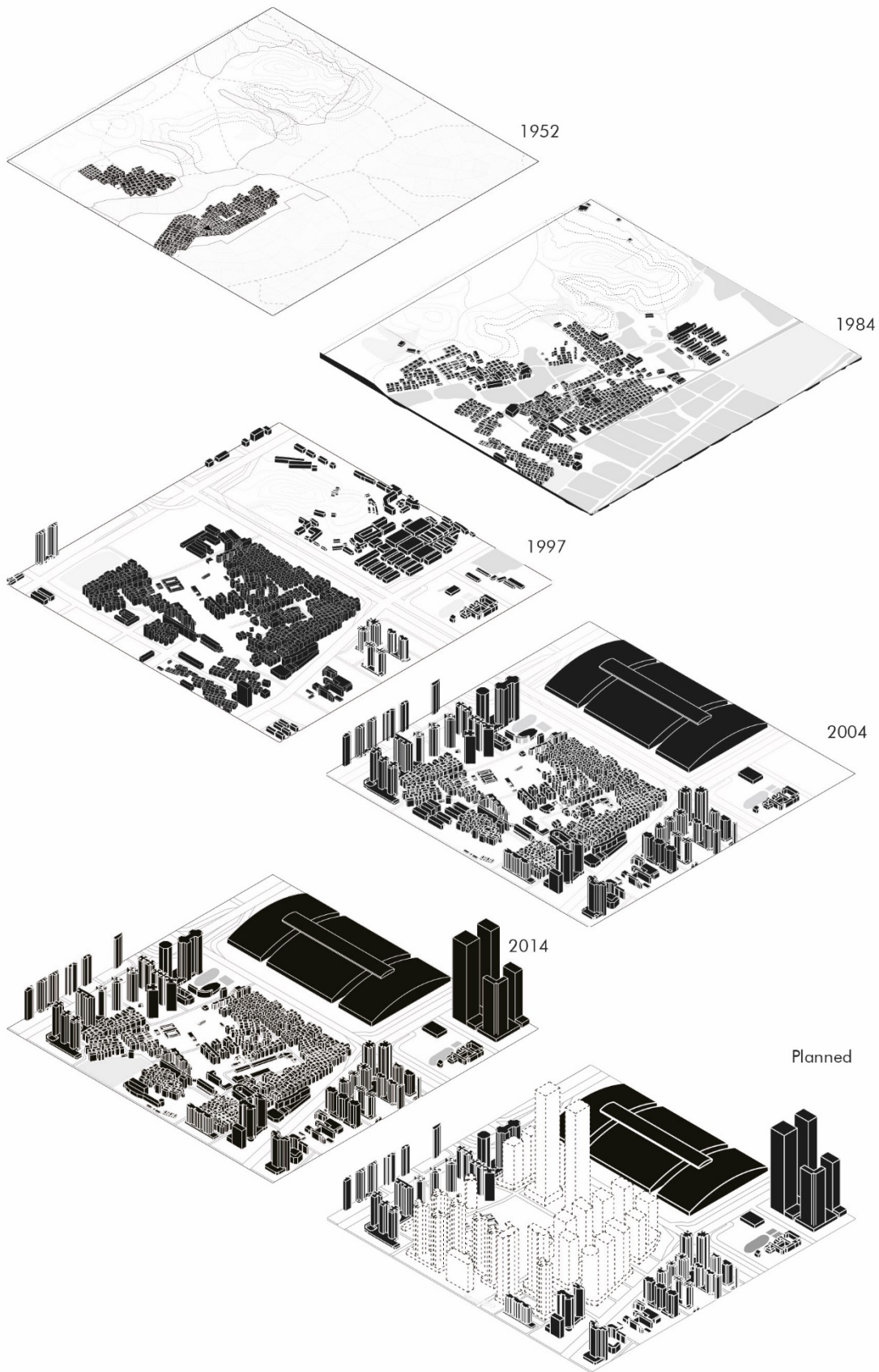
<sup>75</sup> Xiaobin Ye, “Zhanzai Xin De Lishi Qidian Shang— Wen Jiabao Zongli Kaocha Shenzhen Jishi (Standing on a New Historical Starting Point- a Record of Premier Wen Jiabao’s Visit in Shenzhen),” *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, August 23, 2010.

<sup>76</sup> Tong.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Liangjun Zhu, “Huanggang Zhuangshi Jiu Zongci Quliu Liangnan (Dilemma to Keep or Demolish Zhuang’s Clan’s Ancestral Hall in Huanggang),” *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, April 24, 2011.

The urban village featured in the next chapter, Nanshan District's Baishizhou Village, has a very different history and reputation from Huanggang Village. Amongst all urban villages located in the central districts of Luohu, Futian, and Nanshan, the Administrative Urban Village of Baishizhou Village is the largest in terms of resident population, the densest in terms of building density, and yet the poorest in terms of the village corporation company's economic capacity. An administrative village could hold one or more "natural villages," normally referring to the smaller units of each historically clan-based villages. In Shenzhen, there are around 300 administrative urban villages, but these could be further demarcated into nearly 2000 natural villages. Baishizhou usually refers to the administrative village that is composed of 5 "natural" villages, altogether holding a population of 150,000 people. Baishizhou is the name of the village organization, which, unlike its counterpart in Huanggang, was not able to facilitate the indigenous villagers reap the benefits of land rentals to industries during the first phase of Shenzhen's industrialization. Restricted due to complications over its urban/rural designations, Baishizhou Village also could not participate in the later phase of real estate development. The stark contrast between Huanggang and Baishizhou demonstrates the nuance and complexity with which the Shenzhen SEZ policies unfolded at the local level. Each urban village in Shenzhen has a unique story to tell. Baishizhou's saga is perhaps the most complex and layered of them all.



**Figure 43** Past and Future Transformations of Huanggang





## 7. Baishizhou: “Slum” Village in the High-Tech Town

**Figure 44** Next Page: Survey Map (1950s) compared with satellite image (2010) in Nanshan District. With two newer migrated villages to join the three indicated on the 1950s map, the five villages are collectively referred to as Baishizhou. The dense urban village fabric contrasts with the adjacent Overseas Chinese Town developments of luxury villages and theme parks.

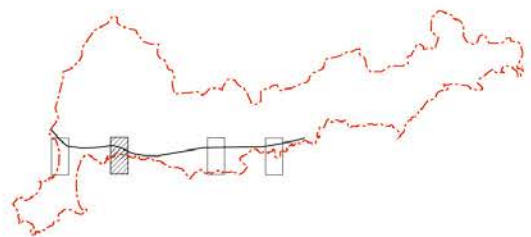


1952



2014

Boundaries		Scrubs	
Railways		Orchards	
Roads		Marsh or Swamp	
1 <sup>st</sup> Class		Mangrove	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Class		Irrigated Land	
Cart Track		Sand	
Footpath		Ditches or Trenches	
Villages		Salt pans	
Isolated Houses			
Woods			



## “Mega-slum” in the Garden City

While Shenzhen’s urban villages hold economic power and political status unparalleled elsewhere in China, there are many differences amongst the 318 urban villages that remain in Shenzhen.<sup>1</sup> While Huanggang is on one end of the spectrum of power, on the other end is an urban village cluster known as Baishizhou, Village of the White Rock Isle.

Baishizhou is commonly known in Shenzhen as the city’s poorest, dirtiest, and biggest urban village. It also has the most inhabitants, as well as the highest building and population density, of any urban village in Shenzhen. Roughly 200,000 people are crammed into a neighborhood of 2,477 walkup peasant houses, lined mostly with dark, damp, and refuse-scattered alleyways. Due to land ownership contestations, the villagers of Baishizhou have not been able to profit from selling property to developers in the way that members of other villages have done. For 72-year-old Chi Guanyou, as for many Baishizhou villagers, collecting rent from his building has been his only source of income to both raise a family and plan for old age. The village company has not been able to generate any collective income for the villagers or the maintenance of public spaces, infrastructure, and general law and order in Baishizhou. Unlike Huanggang, which receives far more positive press coverage than negative, Baishizhou is the subject of frequent local news reports featuring robberies, gangs, assaults, and sensational stories—such as a story about Hong Kong mob bosses hiding out in the village’s maze-like shadowy structures. As a result, Baishizhou has the lowest rent of all 72 urban villages in the central districts within the original boundaries of the SEZ.<sup>2</sup> Yet astonishingly, Baishizhou is located in the heart of Nanshan District, an area known for education and technology.

Shenzhen’s ambitious public- and private-sector investment in R&D has impressed global observers in recent years. *Bloomberg* reported that in 2015, three billion USD were invested in the city’s R&D from state and private capital, almost 6% of the city’s GDP.<sup>3</sup> *The Guardian* estimated that Shenzhen productions took up 25% of the global mobile phone shipment market, and called Shenzhen a “technological nirvana” for hackers and entrepreneurs.<sup>4</sup> A 2017 *New York Times* article on China’s growth in technology highlighted two globally competitive companies: “The technology world’s \$400 billion-and-up club—long a group of exclusively American names like Apple, Google, Facebook, Microsoft and Amazon—needs to make room for two Chinese members. The Alibaba Group and Tencent Holdings, Chinese companies that dominate their home market, have rocketed this year to become

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<sup>1</sup> John Zacharias and Yuanzhou Tang, “Restructuring and Repositioning Shenzhen, China’s New Mega City.” *Progress in Planning*, 73, no. 4 (2010): 209-249.

<sup>2</sup> Shenzhen Academy of Social Sciences, “Shenzhen Chengzhongcun De Xianzhan Wenti Yu Duice Yanjiu (Research on the Existing Conditions, Problems and Solutions to the Vics in Shenzhen),” *Southern Forum*, September 3, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Balding, “One Chinese City Has Figured out the Future,” *Bloomberg LP*, June 13, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Tom Whitwell, “Inside Shenzhen: China’s Silicon Valley,” *The Guardian*, June 13, 2014.

global investor darlings. They are now among the world's most highly valued public companies, each of them twice as valuable as tech stalwarts such as Intel, Cisco and IBM.”<sup>5</sup>

The article did not mention that both Alibaba's International Operation Headquarters and Tencent's home base are located in Shenzhen, and specifically in the Nanshan District. Tencent Holdings Ltd, “the only company other than Facebook to have a social network with more than one billion users,” had its humble beginnings not far from Baishizhou in the Shenzhen Science and Industry Park. First established in 1985 by the fledgling SEZ government under Mayor Liang Xiang, the industrial zone was renamed the Shenzhen Science and Technology Industrial Park in 1996 and expanded to its current size of 11.5 square kilometers. By 1999, the industries inside the Shenzhen Science and Technology Industrial Park was producing products with a value of 25 billion yuan, 85% of Shenzhen's total digital and electronic industries. In addition to local companies, the Park also attracted national enterprises such as Huawei, ZTE, and Lenovo, as well as international companies including IBM, Philips, and Compaq.<sup>6</sup> By 2015, the Technology Park hosted 7,675 registered industrial and commercial enterprises and achieved a gross industrial output value of 515.3 billion yuan, 9.6% of the city's total GDP. Numerous new hardware technology enterprises from this area also went global, such as the Royole Corporation, which produced ultra-thin full-color flexible displays of 0.01mm and was named the best exhibitor by Reuters in the 2016 Consumer Electronic Show. In the same year, *San Francisco Business Times* named Royole the winner of its Tech and Innovation competition, the only entry from the global hardware industry.<sup>7</sup> The technology enterprise DJI, which invented the Phantom Series consumer drones, was also a global success. DJI's annual revenue reached 6 billion yuan within 10 years and took up 70% of the global market.<sup>8</sup>

The Technology Park is located adjacent to Shenzhen University, the oldest and largest university in the city, first established in 1983 by Mayor Liang Xiang, with half of the SEZ's governmental budget.<sup>9</sup> The university became well known for its computer sciences programs, with the most famous alumnus to date being Ma Huateng. After graduating in 1993, Ma founded Tencent in 1998 with four others, three of whom were his classmates from the university. The Technology Park just south of the university was a natural choice for these young scientists and entrepreneurs.

Shenzhen University and the Technology Park are located just to the west of Baishizhou Village, connected by Shennan Boulevard and separated by Shahe, or Sandy River, which runs into the Shenzhen Bay. To the east of Baishizhou, is the lushly landscaped Overseas Chinese Town (OCT). Filled with theme parks and luxury residential developments, OCT is another source of pride for Shenzhen.

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<sup>5</sup> Paul Mozur, "The World's Biggest Tech Companies Are No Longer Just American," *New York Times*, August 17, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> State Council, *Zhonghua Renmin Gonghe Guo Guowuyuan Xinwen Bangongshi Xinwen Fabu Huiji (a Compilation of Press Releases from the News Bureau of the State Council, Prc)* (Beijing: China International Communication Center, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Hui Shen and Yangteng Yang, "Shenzhen Gaoxinqu: "Chuntian Gushi" Li De Chuangxin Yinji (Shenzhen Science and Technology Industrial Park: Innovation in the "Story of Spring")," *Economic Daily*, July 25, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Guochuan Ma, "Luo Zhengqi: Daxue Li Buneng Meiyou Gushi (Luo Zhengqi: There Is No University without a Story)," *The Economic Observer*, August 7, 2012.



Theme parks in the OCT—with such names as “Splendid China,” “Window of the World,” and “Chinese Folk Culture Village”—have been Shenzhen’s largest tourist attractions. Visitors from across the country come to see the miniature versions of the Potala Palace and Eiffel Tower, hear Yunnan folk songs and drums, and stay at OCT luxury hotels, all linked by a raised rail system, the first of its kind in China. The well-planned tourist path ensures efficient transportation and carefully avoids Baishizhou, which is in most places separated from the OCT’s gated compounds by a tall, well-guarded wall and blocked from view with landscaping. One portion of the separation wall that lines the Window of the World theme park is disguised by a landscaped hillside, on top of which stands a 5-meter-tall statue of Christ the Redeemer with open arms, in imitation of the iconic 30-meter-tall Christ the Redeemer atop the Corcovado Mountain in Brazil’s Rio de Janeiro. The Shenzhen statue’s arms open towards the theme park, while his back is turned to the masses of Baishizhou. The OCT’s northern section also features a luxury gated community, Portofino, modeled after the idyllic seaside township on the Italian Riviera. The pastel-colored villas, high-end restaurants and bars, cobbled piazza, and medieval bell tower are all scattered around a natural spring-fed lagoon named Swan Lake. It is perhaps not surprising that the villas in Portofino are the most expensive residential property in Shenzhen. Portofino is separated from Baishizhou by a tall concrete wall topped with barbed wire, but even this physical division is not as sharp as the economic divide between the two communities.

The economic polarization of Nanshan District, and of Shenzhen, is vividly reflected in the density differentiation at this location. In the well-landscaped 4.8 square kilometers of the OCT resides a population of 35,000, with a total building floor space of approximately 2 million square meters. The 7.4 square kilometers of Baishizhou feature 2,477 individual “peasant houses,” mostly self-built, totaling close to 2.1 million square meters.<sup>10</sup> Yet the staggering number of renters—over 150,000 individuals—renders Baishizhou’s population density more than 40 times that of the OCT, and 56 times the average population density in Shenzhen overall.<sup>11</sup> These are relatively conservative estimates; some estimates of Baishizhou’s rental population are well above 200,000, accounting for many unregistered and undocumented residents. This would make Baishizhou more populous than the largest favela in Brazil, Rio de Janeiro’s Rocinha, where the estimated population is 180,000, more than double of the governmental census.<sup>12</sup>

Due to cheap rent and large supply, rooms in Baishizhou peasant houses are often a starting point for new migrants to Shenzhen. There is even a well-cited localism asserting that every individual who lives in Shenzhen has at one time or another lived in Baishizhou.<sup>13</sup> Certainly it is one of the most

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<sup>10</sup> Kezhen Wang, “Shahe Jiedao Hexie Jianshe Yuchu Jiucun Gaizao Jingyan (Shahe Jiedao Harmoniously Nurtured Old Village Redevelopment Experience),” *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily* 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Eli MacKinnon, “The Twilight of Shenzhen’s Great Urban Village,” *Foreign Policy* (2016).

<sup>12</sup> Julia Carneiro, “Favela Life: Rio’s City within a City,” *BBC News*, June 9, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Shen Zhen wan shi tong 0755, “Baishizhou, Zuihou De Chengzhongcun, Ceng Anfang Le Wushu Shenzhen Ren De Qingchun (Baishizhou, the Last Urban Village, Accommodated the Youth of Numerous Shenzheners),” *KK news*, July 9, 2017. Jingjiao Ceng, “Shizhi 2500yi De Shenzhen Chengzhongcun Yao Chai Le, Duoshao Fuweng Jiang Dansheng? (a 250 Billion Worth Urban Village in Shenzhen Is Going to Be Demolished, How Many Billionaires Will It Make?),” *Caijing Wang (Finance Online)*, June 23, 2017.

often-discussed urban villages in blogs and online comments. One comment posted by “Hu Ping” summarized the social and psychological separation between Baishizhou and the rest of the city: “When I first arrived in Shenzhen, I lived in Baishizhou for 3 months. It stirs my memory, every time I go past the village, of those days that I was fresh to the city and struggled without thinking too much. For those who live outside Baishizhou, looking at the village is a kind of satisfaction, but for those who live inside Baishizhou, looking out is a goal.”<sup>14</sup>

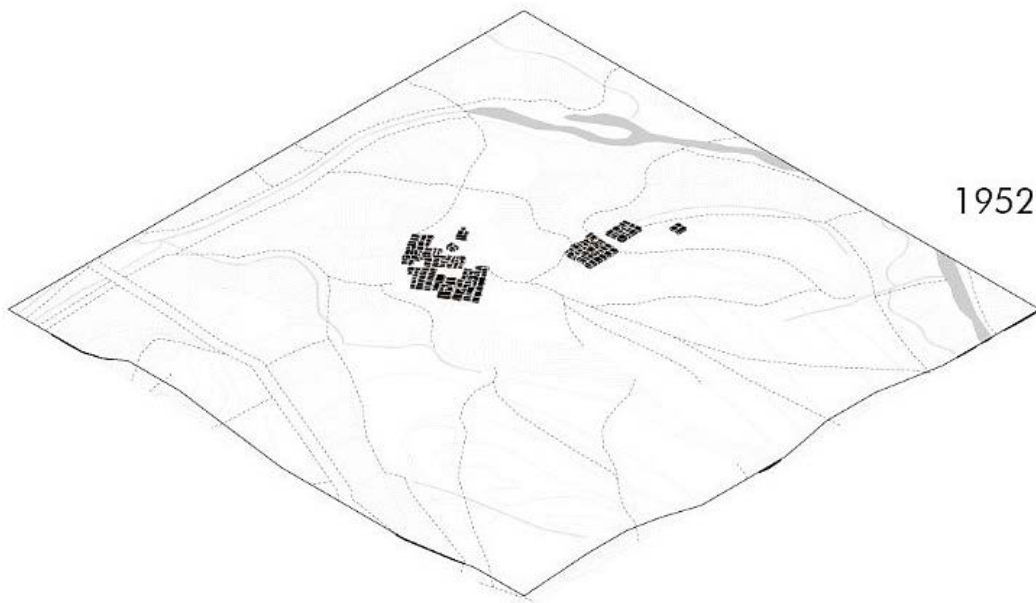
### **Voluntary Exodus to the Shahe Farm**

Before the post-1979 mass migration to the Shenzhen SEZ, Baishizhou had been a destination of immigrants and refugees for centuries. Baishizhou Village was originally right on the coast, although shorelines have been pushed farther south due to several rounds of land reclamations into Shenzhen Bay since 1979. Modern narratives of the village’s origins often date the earliest settlement at Baishizhou to a Qing Dynasty habitat named Village of the Ten Thousand Families. Historical records and maps on the ancient salt production of Xin’an County reference a settlement camp at the White Rock Port in the Ming Dynasty. Named after a large white rock on the hillside facing the sea, the White Rock Port was one of the few sites set up in Xin’an County for the imperial salt trade, and the one nearest to the regional capital of Nantou Fort.

The village settlement’s unusual name “Ten Thousand Families” indicates that, unlike traditional agrarian villages, it was not occupied by a single-family clan. This name, and the presence of many different family groups, might be explained by the village’s military and commercial origins. Records show that during the Qing Dynasty, this village protested the imperial court’s policies and was wiped out by the military. The site was later resettled by a migrant Wu family, who named it Baishi Village and allowed other migrant families of both Canton and Hakka origins to set up village settlements nearby. The Canton clan of Zheng set up Huatang Village (later named Xingtang); the Hakka clans of Chen, Zhong, and Zheng started the Shangbaishi Village; and additional Hakka clans of Chen, Zheng, and Zhang set up the Xiabaishi Village. Since the Qing Dynasty, these migrant settlers have farmed, fished, and cultivated oysters together in this coastal region.

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<sup>14</sup> Ping Hu, May 29, <http://home.51.com/dengdeyon/diary/item/10052514.html>.

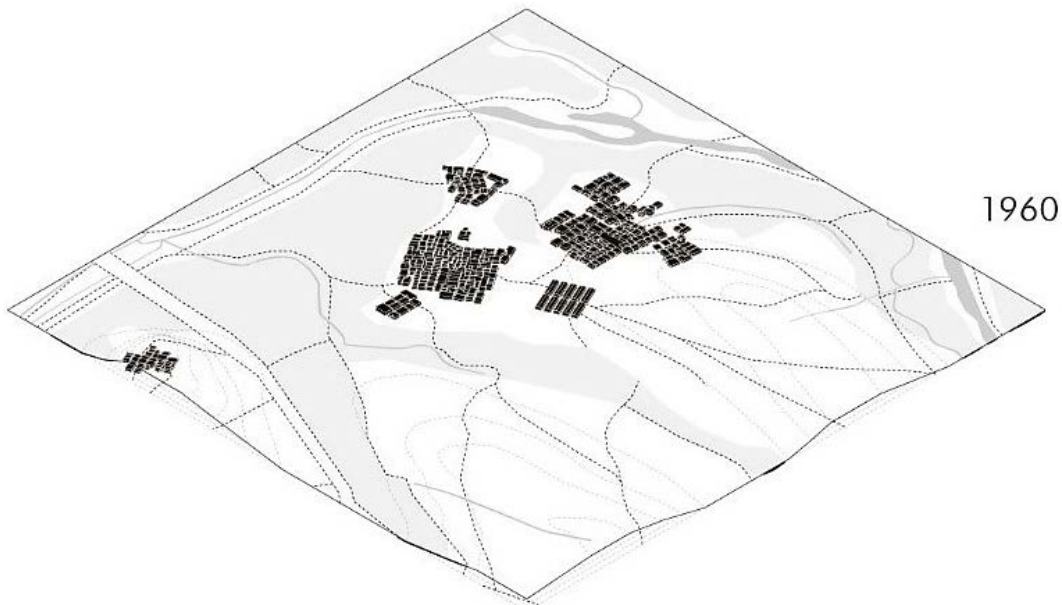


**Figure 45** Reconstructed historical transformations of Baishizhou and surrounding circa 1952

In 1957, the Guangdong provincial government received an order from the State Council to develop non-staple food crop production in the region.<sup>15</sup> In 1959, Guangdong established the Shahe Farm, to be managed by the Foshan Bureau of Agriculture and Reclamation, on a rural area spanning 12 square kilometers in Bao'an County, including all of the Baishizhou villages. As the villages became a state-owned farm, the villagers were converted from rural peasant status to workers in a state-owned enterprise in 1960. During this year, the villagers of Tangtou Village migrated to this area from northern Bao'an County, thus becoming the last migrant village to join Baishizhou. From this time forward, Baishizhou came to refer to all five villages in this location: the original Baishizhou, and the later Shangbaishi, Xiabaishi, Xingtang, and Tangtou.

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<sup>15</sup> Hong Chen, *Shenzhen Yuanzhumin Jiapu Baishizhou De Chuntian (Shang)* (*Genealogy of Shenzhen's Aboriginals, the Spring of Baishizhou (1)*) (Shenzhen: Shenzhen baoye chubanshe, 2011).



**Figure 46** Reconstructed historical transformations of Baishizhou and surrounding circa 1960

That year, fifteen-year-old Chi Guanyou moved to Baishizhou along with nearly 500 Tangtou Villagers, all extended family members of the Chi Clan.<sup>16</sup> A year later in 1959, two government workers started to frequently visit the original Tangtou Village, a centuries-old Hakka village at the foothills of Yangtai Mountain, the tallest peak in northern Bao’an County. Chi Guanyou came from a modest village home, and school was a luxury his family could not afford. However, he was unhappy working as a shepherd herding the village’s livestock and receiving reprimands from his work team leader. He often argued with his stepfather about his desire to attend school. He wanted to attend the First Lower Level Secondary School of Bao’an County (today’s Nantou Secondary School), in Nantou Fort, the county seat of Bao’an at the time. His family finally relented when Guanyou promised that he would pay the school fees by lumbering firewood in the hills surrounding the village. Chi went into the hills to gather firewood each weekend, cutting and carrying as much as he could on his back. On Mondays, he walked the 20 kilometers of mountainous roads to Nantou Fort to sell the wood in the market; he used the money to pay for one week’s school and boarding fees.

During a visit home from school, Guanyou glimpsed the two government workers in the village. He was surprised to see strangers there on a weekend. But he was even more astonished when the government workers came to his home to tell his parents that his family would have to move. The 500-year-old Tangtou Village would soon be flooded and submerged under the newly planned Tiegang Water Reservoir. This occurred during the height of the national “Learning from Dazhai” movement, which encouraged large infrastructure projects throughout the country with the goal of dramatically increasing agricultural production. In Bao’an, the government decided that the Tiegang Water Reservoir would be a

<sup>16</sup> The majority of information related to Chi Guanyou and Tangtou Village history prior to 1980 was gathered through in-depth interviews by the author from the years of 2006 to 2016.

good demonstration project, as its construction would ensure irrigation supply for the important farming areas of Xixiang and Shajing. Some farmlands and villages, including Tangtou, would have to be sacrificed for the greater good and submerged within the dammed area. The Tangtou villagers were devastated, for they had lived in the Shiyan area of Bao'an for generations. They were proud of their village, their farmland, the beautiful mountains, and the celebrated hot springs hidden in the mountain lakes, which constituted one of the original "Eight Scenes of Xin'an," famous since the Qing Dynasty.<sup>17</sup> Being Hakka families, they also had deep cultural and psychological connections to the mountains. But to stay was not an option. The villagers were given a choice, however, of where to build their next homeland: Caiwuwei Village, where they would grow flowers and raise goldfish to sell across the adjacent border to Hong Kong, or the newly established state-owned Shahe Farm, where they could continue farming.

Chi Guanyou, along with other village youths, wanted to go to Caiwuwei. It was not necessarily because they would rather grow goldfish than farming; it was the prospect of Hong Kong itself. Located right next to the Luohu border crossing, Caiwuwei was thought to be the easiest place to smuggle across the border into Hong Kong. However, the village elders held the opposite view. If they went to Shahe Farm and labored in the rice fields, they would become state workers receiving monthly wages. This was an opportunity to escape the hardship of peasantry, which their ancestors had lived for centuries. Rather than praying for a decent harvest to feed their families each season, they would receive 15 RMB a month. While not exorbitant, the Farm's wage was many times that of their Shiyan Commune. To confirm their thinking, the village elders sent a few scouts to the Shahe Farm to investigate. Their report back was enthusiastic. The farm was vast, at nearly 13 square kilometers. Even though there were already four other villages, each Tangtou family was promised plenty of land to farm.

With the collective decision made, the Tangtou villagers learned that not everyone could go to Shahe Farm. Those interested had to apply and be approved after a rigorous background check. Former land owners, "Rich Peasants," counter-revolutionaries, "Bad Elements," and "Rightists," commonly known as the "Black Five Categories" could not go.<sup>18</sup> In addition, as Shahe Farm is located just across Shenzhen Bay from Hong Kong, those who had attempted to smuggle across the border were also blacklisted from relocating to the Farm. By 1960, 486 men, women, and children of 68 families were approved for relocation to Shahe Farm. Nearly half of the village had to stay behind and be settled in another location in the Yangtai Mountains. Chi Guanyou's mother and stepfather were cleared to go. However, the fourteen-year-old Chi Guanyou was asked whether he would go or stay behind with the family of his biological father, who had passed away when Chi was a toddler. Chi's mother remarried when he was still very young, so he had always lived with his mother and stepfather. But both families lived in the same village, and he saw his biological grandparents and family members every day. Moving

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<sup>17</sup> Li, "Bajing Shi (Poems on the Eight Landscapes)."

<sup>18</sup> Defu Li, *Jiusi Bu Hui : Yige Heiwulei De Huiyilu (Unregretful after 9 Times of Death- a Memoir of a Black Five Group)* (Taipei: Showwe Information Co., 2012).



from the ancestral land of Tangtou to the new land of Shahe Farm marked a formal and final rupture with the past. Chi Guanyou decided to leave Tangtou.

In 1960, Chi Guanyou and his family arrived at Shahe Farm, where they encountered a newly leveled muddy field that was to become the new Tangtou Village. Due to extreme shortage of building materials during the Great Leap Forward, the promised new housing on the 10,000 square meters of land designated for the resettlement was not yet built. The villagers were dispersed among the other four villages of Baishizhou, to be hosted by various homes or to settle in any available vacant building. Chi Guanyou's family moved into an empty field house next to a piece of farmland. Disappointed but not able to return home due to the imminent flooding of the old Tangtou, the villagers took matters into their own hands. They dismantled their old village homes, transported the salvaged building material to Shahe Farm, and built their village housing in a manner and layout similar to that of their old village. The new village complex was constructed with thick rammed earth walls and layered tile roofs, and consisted of ten rows of single-story buildings divided by a central pathway.



**Figure 47** Standing on the roof terrace of his own building, a Baishizhou villager look out at the older tiled village row houses and high-rises of the OCT in the distance.

Facing national instability due to the Great Famine (1959–1961) and tensions with neighboring countries, China took measures to strengthen border regions, including increased naval defense. In 1962, the Guangzhou Military Area Command took over the management of coastal Bao'an County, including Shahe Farm.<sup>19</sup> That same year, Chi Guanyou and his family moved into one of the 92 units of the row-house complex. After all the families were settled, the extra units were devoted to collective use, including storage. The hastily built sewage pits and drains located in the communal open areas would occasionally clog with heavy rain, so collective repair efforts were frequently needed. However, just as in their old village compound, the open spaces in between the rows became shared spaces for vegetable drying, potted plants, children's play, and adults' relaxation after meals. There was a large open space reserved in front of all the row houses. This space was used to dry seasonal harvests and hold village gatherings. Wells were dug and each shared with two to three neighboring households, while a larger circular well adjacent to the open space provided the community with a public water supply. Over time, the Tangtou villagers became accustomed to the row houses and their new village. For occasional ancestral worshipping they might still visit what was left of their old village, but for the most part, this was now their home. The Tangtou Village complex is an exceptional sight in this southern coastal region of the SEZ. While sometimes mistakenly generalized years later as "socialist housing blocks," the spatial layout and architectural structures of Tangtou Village's row houses resemble the traditional village plan found commonly in the northern mountainous areas of Shenzhen.

Being one of the few Tangtou villagers with some secondary education, Chi Guanyou was given work as the village bookkeeper. Of course, he still had to do farm work in the field alongside others from the various villages of Baishizhou. That is where Chi Guanyou met a girl from another Hakka clan of the adjacent Xiabaishi Village. They were soon married and lived together with Chi's family at the Tangtou Village compound. Life was difficult, but like other villagers, Guanyou's family raised some pigs to supplement their food supply and meager income. This was allowed under the national policies of "Three Self's and One Contract" (1960–1963), namely self-retained land, self-run markets, self-responsibility for profits and losses, and contract farming practices that fixed output quotas on a household basis. These measures were prohibited during the initial establishment of the People's Communes, but Liu Shaoqi and his lieutenant at the time—Deng Xiaoping—championed them in response to the widespread famine in China's rural areas. However, by 1963, Mao Zedong had denounced these policies on the grounds that they promoted capitalism and threatened the socialist rural collective economy. The socialist "Four Cleanups Movement" was launched to educate the rural masses of China's countryside to "cleanse" political, economic, organizational, and ideological corruption. Rural villages, factories, mines, and other enterprises were ordered to investigate and punish anti-socialist corruptors. The movement led to widespread mob violence in China's rural areas, including thousands of executions and suicides of those

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<sup>19</sup> Chen.

accused.<sup>20</sup> By 1964, the movement had reached Bao'an County's Shahe Farm. The Tangtou Village bookkeeper Chi Guanyou was singled out for embezzlement, charged with giving the Farm's corn feed to his own "self-retained livestock," the family pigs. With his characteristic stubbornness, Guanyou adamantly refused to admit to the charges even after being locked away in the county jail. Fortunately for him, he was released just after one month, along with others who were also arrested in the same movement. Chi Guanyou was determined to avoid future financial or political complications. He refused to go back to his job as bookkeeper, insisting that it was not worth the trouble of being accused of embezzlement. The village leaders caved in and offered him a job teaching at the local Shahe Elementary School. Around this time, Mao announced that the "Four Cleanups Movement" under the direct leadership of Liu Shaoqi was not effective, as it relied on a task force rather than on the masses of the people. In a January 1965 talk on the Four Cleanups Movement, Mao criticized Liu Shaoqi without naming him: "I think if we make revolution this way, the revolution will take 100 years. Some professors were in the task force, and they weren't as good as their assistants, while some of the assistants weren't as good as the students. The more books one reads, the more stupid one becomes, knowing almost nothing. That is all. You won't annihilate the enemy if you fight the battle of annihilation this way. It behooves you to rely on the masses and to mobilize them."<sup>21</sup>

In 1966, the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution was launched. It would cripple the country for 10 years, during which time Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping were persecuted. They were accused of being "capitalist-roaders," given their support for the "Three Self's and One Contract" policies and their disagreement with Mao's thoughts on the Four Cleanups Movement. 1966 was also the year that the Guangzhou Military Area Command demilitarized the Shahe Farm. However, it did not return ownership and governance to the local Commune or the villages. The land was given to the Guangdong Overseas Chinese Administration Bureau. As a result, Shahe Farm—which had formerly been owned collectively by the villages—became state-owned. The transfer of land entitlement was further complicated after Shahe Farm became incorporated as the Shahe Branch of the Guangming Overseas Chinese Livestock Farm. These convoluted land transfers later proved to be the beginning of a series of decades-long complications, known as Baishizhou's "historically leftover" problems, a term often used in China for complicated issues that are related to past sensitive political events.

The Shahe Farm jurisdiction changes were also reflected in the governance changes of the Shahe Elementary School, which had been established by the Guangzhou Military Area Command in 1959 for the children of military personnel in the area. When Chi Guanyou started teaching there in 1965, the school was given to the Baishizhou villages on Shahe Farm. Soon after in 1967, the Guangming Overseas Chinese Livestock Farm took over management of the school; it was returned to

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<sup>20</sup> Yantai Zhang, "Siqing Yundong Yanjiu Zongshu (a Summary of Studies of "the Four Clean-Ups" Movement," *Social Sciences Perspectives in Higher Education*, no. 3 (2009).

<sup>21</sup> Zedong Mao, "Talk on the Four Clean-Ups Movement," in *Mao Zedong Sixiang Wansui (Long Live Mao Tse-Tung Thought)* (Beijing: Red Guard Publication, 1965).

Shahe Farm in 1978, just prior to the establishment of the SEZ.<sup>22</sup> Chi Guanyou continued to teach there through the early years of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone. Having taught at the school for nearly 20 years, he was referred to by all the young villagers of Baishizhou as “Mister Teacher.” Throughout this time, Chi lived with his family in the Tangtou row-house complex. The home witnessed the birth of his brother and sister, his marriage, the passing away of his mother and father, and the arrival of his own children.

### **Industrialization of the State Farm**

The year 1978 brought major changes to the Baishizhou villages, now formally administered by the Guangming Overseas Chinese Livestock Farm. The Farm introduced modern equipment and procedures to their livestock and dairy farming, in order to meet Hong Kong and British standards. Chengguang Dairy Co. Ltd. was launched to export fresh cow’s milk and other dairy products to Hong Kong. Guangming Overseas Chinese Livestock Farm would become China’s largest dairy product exporter. Success of the project prompted the later adoption of its dairy production procedure as the Chinese national standard.<sup>23</sup> The Farm also benefited from the construction of China’s first mechanized pork and poultry production facilities, along with other forms of modernization and industrialization.<sup>24</sup> Increased production and rigorous standards allowed the dairy and meat products from Guangming Farm to become nationally recognizable brands valued for decades in China and neighboring Asian countries. By 2005, fresh milk produced from Chengguang Dairy Co. Ltd. took up 90% of the market share in Shenzhen and 70% in Hong Kong.<sup>25</sup> These recognitions built upon, and added to, Bao’an County’s historic reputation for prized aquaculture and agricultural yields such as oysters and lychees.

In addition to industrializing livestock production, Guangming Farm also experimented with other industries such as electronics. In 1978, the administrative office of the Farm initiated an experimental collaboration with a Hong Kong electronics company. The products were successfully retailed through the international distribution network of the Hong Kong partner, with the first year’s revenue reaching 830,000 yuan.<sup>26</sup> The success of the experiment attracted other investors.

In 1978, China was also approaching the breaking point in political relationship with the Soviet Union and Vietnam. By the time that the Sino-Vietnamese War broke out in 1979, China had resettled 224,000 Chinese-Vietnamese refugees in 43 state-operated industries around the country.<sup>27</sup> Guangming Farm started to receive refugees from Vietnam in 1978, and would eventually accept 4,300

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<sup>22</sup> Shahe Primary School, *Shahe Xiaoxue Fazhan Nianjian (Annual of the Development of Shahe Primary School)* (Shenzhen).

<sup>23</sup> Guanghan Peng et al., "Xianxingzhe (Pioneer)," *Qiaowu gongzuo yanjiu (Study on Overseas Chinese Affairs)*, no. 3 (2005).

<sup>24</sup> Chen.

<sup>25</sup> Xiaowo Liu and Shi Tang, "Chengguang Ruye- Zuida Xiannai Chukou Qiye De Jingying Zhidao (Chengguang Dairy- the Way of Operation of the Largest Fresh Milk Exporter)," *China Economic Daily*, no. 328 (2005).

<sup>26</sup> Xiaomin Li and Yihuai Chen, "Zhuzai Shenzhen De Yuenan Guiqiao: Mianmu Mohu De Qunti (Vietnam Returnees in Shenzhen: A Group with Unclear Identity)," *Southern Metropolis Daily*, May 4, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



refugees by 1979. The large-scale operation was facilitated by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNRA) with a subsidy of 800,000 US dollars.<sup>28</sup> Some of the refugees with factory experience were placed in newly established factories in Shahe. Fifty refugees with experience at Saigon's electronics factories were amongst the first assembly line workers at Guangming's newly established cassette-recorder factory.<sup>29</sup>

In the spring of 1979, the Beijing-based State Council Overseas Chinese Affairs Office formally gave permission to the Guangming Overseas Chinese Livestock Farm to set up Sino-foreign joint venture enterprises, although, at that time, only with overseas Chinese investors. In April 1979, the State Council Overseas Chinese Affairs Office formally announced the establishment of the Shahe Overseas Chinese Industrial Zone, to be located on the 12 square kilometer Shahe Farm. The land of the Baishizhou villages became an Industrial Zone even before the establishment of the Shenzhen SEZ.<sup>30</sup>

By December 1979, Guangming Overseas Chinese Electronics Factory was established as China's first Sino-foreign joint venture enterprise.<sup>31</sup> The factory would later become Konka Group Co. Ltd, one of the leading consumer electronics enterprises in China. Guangming Overseas Chinese Livestock Farm utilized the unique permission from the State Council to quickly establish other joint ventures such as the Shenzhen Overseas Chinese Furniture Factory, a joint venture between Taiwan and China, as well as the Guangming Automobile Repair and Assembly Plant through the transnational network of the China diaspora.<sup>32</sup> Chi Guanyou's younger sister would become a worker in one of the electronics factories.

More than a year after the establishment of Shahe Overseas Chinese Industrial Zone, on August 26, 1980, the State Council passed "The Guangdong Province Special Economic Zone Regulations." In 1981, the Guangming Overseas Chinese Livestock Farm was formally released by the Guangdong Overseas Chinese Administration Bureau and became a state-owned enterprise, renamed the Guangdong Province Shahe Overseas Chinese Enterprise Company. Due to this latest administrative change, the Overseas Chinese Enterprise Company assumed management of the Shahe Elementary School in 1981. The company set out to modernize the curriculum and teaching staff. No longer within the social networks of Shahe's Baishizhou villages, 38-year-old Chi Guanyou was let go by the school in the following year. This marked the beginning of the split between the Shahe Farm administrative team, mostly composed of Baishizhou villagers, who would continue the agricultural livelihood of the original villagers, and the Overseas Chinese Enterprise Company, which would take over all managing responsibilities for industrial developments.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Guanghan Peng, Zhenhui Luo, Yazhu Pu and Bing Wang. "Xianxingzhe (Pioneer)." *Qiaowu Gongzuo Yanjiu (Study on Overseas Chinese Affairs)*, no. 3(2005).

<sup>30</sup> August 26, 1980 is regarded as the birthday of the Shenzhen SEZ. On this day, the Regulation on Special Economic Zones in Guangdong Province was passed by the National People's Congress.

<sup>31</sup> Peng et al.

<sup>32</sup> Hsing You-tien's empirical study on the social and political linkages of Taiwan businesses in Southern China provides further insights.

See You-tien Hsing, *Making Capitalism in China: The Taiwan Connection* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998).

By 1983, the Shahe Overseas Chinese Industrial Zone had developed 110 subsidiary enterprises in 30 different trades and industries. The Sino-overseas Chinese partnership of Shahe was deemed a success and used as a model elsewhere in China. More than 10 overseas Chinese corporations were set up in the cities of Shanghai and Guangzhou, as well as in the provinces including Fujian, Guangxi, Yunnan, Sichuan, and Shandong. While the village-operated, transnational “*San Lai Yi Bu*” industries were the precursor to the massive development of the Town and Village Enterprises, the Shahe Industrial Zone was one of the first precedents for Chinese state-owned industries to import capital, technology, equipment, and management skills through the transnational networks of the Chinese diaspora, a vital aspect of nationwide reform-era industrialization.

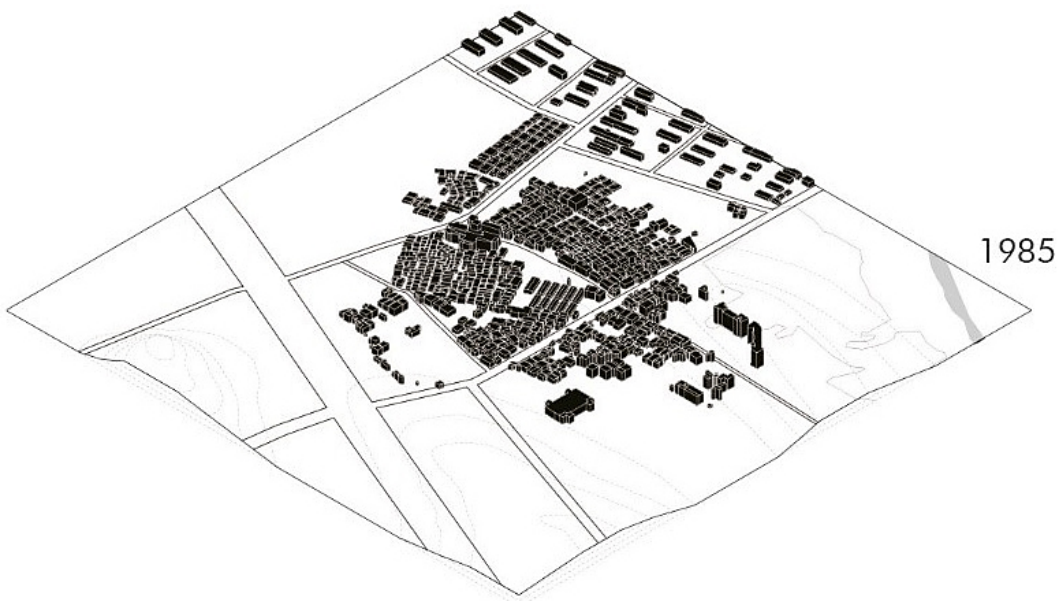
### **Zone within the Zone: Overseas Chinese Town**

In September 1983, with Shahe Industrial Zone as a successful model for nationwide practice, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office submitted to the State Council a “Proposal to Revert the Shenzhen Shahe Overseas Chinese Industrial Zone and to Place It under the Direct Leadership and Management of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council.” Consequently, Shahe Industrial Zone would be under the direct administration of Beijing’s State Council—and thus outside the jurisdiction of the Guangdong provincial government and the new Shenzhen municipality. In its “Report on the Discussion of Shenzhen Shahe’s Organizational Structure,” submitted to the State Council on December 31, 1984, the Office proposed that a land parcel of 4.8 square kilometers be carved out of the Shahe Industrial Zone and developed into an independent Overseas Chinese Town Economic Development District. The District was later renamed simply Overseas Chinese Town (OCT). In August 1985, the State Council formally approved the establishment of Shenzhen Special Zone OCT, with Shekou Industrial Zone as a model, to be administered by the Hong Kong-based China Travel Service (CTS).

In November 1985, the State Council appointed Ma Zhimin, Vice General Manager of the Hong Kong-based CTS, to lead the construction of Overseas Chinese Town. Like Yuan Geng of the Shekou Industrial Zone, the other site in Shenzhen with similar jurisdiction, Ma was a seasoned communist leader with Chinese PLA military experience. Born in Guangdong, Ma arrived in Bao’an in 1949. A liaison for the Chinese People’s Liberation Army, Ma took over the management of Kowloon Customs, which later became Shenzhen Customs. He was sent to Hong Kong to assist the management of CTS in 1979, after serving as Army Commander of Bao’an County and the Shenzhen Old Town Communist Party Secretary, among other leadership roles. From 1959 to 1961, he led the construction of the Shenzhen Water Reservoir, a state-funded project specifically designed to solve the dire water shortage in Hong Kong. Directing OCT from 1985 to 1995, Ma was first ridiculed and later celebrated for his two guiding principles: the first was to establish tourism as a main industry of OCT, and the second was to insist on development led by comprehensive spatial planning.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> "Huaqiaocheng Guihua Yu Shishi (1986-1995)", *Guihuashi (Planner)*.



**Figure 48** Reconstructed historical transformations of Baishizhou and surrounding circa 1985

Building on his five years of work at the China Travel Services, Ma Zhimin wanted to make OCT a premier destination for domestic and international tourists by creating a scenic landscaped garden district. Given the large-scale infrastructure and industrial developments of the SEZ's first five years, Ma's vision seemed counterintuitive to many. The first OCT enterprise he established after taking charge in 1985 was not a factory, but a landscape and gardening company. In the same year, Ma hired Meng Daqiang, an "overseas Chinese" architect and planner who worked for the Singaporean government. More commonly known in China as a Singaporean, Meng was born in Beijing and educated in Taiwan's Cheng Kung University. He later attended Germany's Technische Universität Darmstadt in the 1950s. His graduation coincided with Europe's post-WWII reconstructions, and Meng gained extensive experience in city planning and construction, especially in the Netherlands. Meng brought to OCT his international experience and an ecological sensitivity that was further sharpened in Singapore, where natural resources were a precious commodity due to the island's political and cultural isolation within a predominantly Muslim region. On an initial site visit to OCT, Meng saw builders engaged in the standard site preparation process of leveling a hilled slope and removing the trees. He requested that Ma Zhimin stop all such work in OCT as a condition of his taking the job. According to Meng's later recollection, Ma Zhimin immediately agreed and "morning of the following day, all bulldozers left."<sup>34</sup>

In sharp contrast to surrounding constructions at "Shenzhen Speed," the first physical construction in OCT under the new plan was the replanting of the trees already removed. Some mocked

Yongtao Li, "1986 Huaqiaocheng: Shenzhen Yuansheng Dimao Yichan (1986 Oct: The Heritage of Shenzhen's Aboriginal Landscape)," in *Dadao 30: Shennan Dadao Shang De Guojia Jiyi (30 Years of the Boulevard: National Memories on Shennan Boulevard)* (Shenzhen: Shenzhen Press Group Publishing House, 2010).

<sup>34</sup> Yongtao Li, "1986 Huaqiaocheng: Shenzhen Yuansheng Dimao Yichan (1986 Oct: The Heritage of Shenzhen's Aboriginal Landscape)."

the sluggish speed of construction, noting that “after six months of construction in the OCT, just some grass was planted.”<sup>35</sup> Ma defended Meng’s work, and the yearly salary of 110,000 US dollars that OCT offered to pay him for two days in Shenzhen each month.<sup>36</sup> This was a stunning salary for the Chinese market in 1985.

Ma Zhimin’s support allowed Meng to develop with confidence the 1985 OCT Comprehensive Planning, a series of spatial planning and design guidelines anchored by three principles.<sup>37</sup> The first principle was “mobility.” OCT was to be a walkable neighborhood, featuring a system of meandering tree-lined pedestrian pathways; the vehicular roadways would be a secondary network, supported by railways, trams, and underground transport. This was 20 years ahead of the actual city-wide planning and construction of the Shenzhen metro system. The second principle was “scale.” The plan favored low- and mid-rise building complexes, with industrial factories and commercial activities in the northern region away from the main transportation arteries surrounding the residential and leisure sites. Tall buildings were discouraged near major pathways and important public spaces, with a specific prohibition of tall buildings along the Shennan Boulevard. The third principle was “evolution.” All spatial planning was based on the site’s topography and geography, so that the buildings and infrastructure could grow along with the natural environment. Of all urban districts within the original Shenzhen SEZ areas, OCT is most strikingly similar to the landscapes in maps of pre-1979 agricultural and environmental features. Meng’s three principles run counter to the mentalities and tendencies that characterized city planning in the early years of the SEZs, which defined a modern city as car-oriented, with tall buildings and grand open spaces. Luxuriously green and picturesque, OCT under Meng’s planning principles developed striking physical distinctions from the rest of the city.

Meng Daqiang’s planning worked well with Ma Zhimin’s vision to develop OCT into an attractive tourist site with natural beauty. In 1985, Ma Zhimin visited the Netherlands’ Madurodam, a theme park of miniature Dutch landmarks, and was inspired to build a similar theme park in China with miniatures of all the country’s well-known sights. He initially thought that this theme park would be a good way for foreigners to understand China’s cities and culture, while also providing domestic visitors and local OCT residents with a place to unwind in the bustling Shenzhen. Construction of Shenzhen Splendid China began in May 1987, and the park opened in November 1989. Although such a large-scale entertainment facility was unusual for China in the 1980s, three million tourists visited during the first year. The number of visitors was so unexpected that the first Splendid China television advertisement was to plead for Shenzhen residents to stay at home due to traffic congestion.<sup>38</sup> Investments in the theme park’s construction were recovered within 9 months of its opening. Encouraged by the success, Ma Zhimin exported Splendid China to Orlando, Florida. Surrounded by Disney World, Epcot Center, Sea World, and

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<sup>35</sup> “Yige Ren He Yizuo Cheng- Jinjuli Jiechu Ma Zhimin (a Person and a City- in Touch with Ma Zhimin),” *Nanshan Daily*.

<sup>36</sup> Jinxiu, “Zhongguo Xiandai Zhuti Gongyuan Zhifu” Ma Zhimin (the Father of China’s Modern Theme Parks- Ma Zhimin),” *Golden Age*, no. 6 (2011).

<sup>37</sup> Jun Chen, “Jujue “Laotaolu ”De Huaqiaocheng (Oct Rejects Old Tricks),” *Chongqing Daily*, April 24, 2017.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

Universal Studios, Florida Splendid China opened in the hot summer of 1993, fulfilling Ma's vision of introducing the wonders of China to the world through miniaturized models of the Great Wall, Forbidden City, and Chinese heritage landscapes such as Three Gorges Dam, Mount Taishan, and Guilin Stone Forest. While Ma was denounced by the Communist Party in the mid-1980s for bringing capitalistic consumption to China, the Splendid China in Florida was criticized in the US for importing communist propaganda.

Meanwhile, OCT continued constructing theme parks that only increased in popularity—the China Folk Culture Village in 1991, Window of the World in 1994, and Happy Valley in 1998. In 1999, OCT invested 90 million yuan to build the first monorail in China to link an all-encompassing entertainment district with the four sprawling theme parks, three luxury hotels, and an “eco-tourism” site at the coastal mangrove areas on the banks of the Shenzhen Bay.<sup>39</sup> While most of the parks and associated shopping malls are obscured with carefully designed landscape, Window of the World—the most popular and flamboyant of the four theme parks—stands out clearly. Within the 4.8 square kilometer OCT, the 108-meter-tall Eiffel Tower and the nearby grand Saint Peter's Piazza at Window of the World are the only monuments clearly visible from the main Shennan Boulevard. Window of the World gathered famous pieces of architecture and landscape from prehistoric to contemporary times, and featured everything from ancient Egyptian pyramids to Manhattan skyscrapers. Millions of visitors each year walked through the eight sections of the park: the World Square, Asia, Oceania, Europe, Africa, America, the Sculpture Park, and the International Street. While the cultural sites were decontextualized, formalized, appropriated, and packaged to create spectacles, the theme park offered a “Window of the World” that was then still forbidden for most Chinese. For the first two decades of the SEZ, the theme parks of Ma Zhimin gave Shenzhen a cultural identity of leisure, commerce, consumption, and global fantasy. The success of OCT's theme parks inspired thousands of theme park constructions all over China, and Ma Zhimin came to be affectionately known as the “Father of Chinese Theme Parks.” For outside observers, Shenzhen's theme parks were also a window into China's reforms. American urban historian Thomas J. Campanella wrote the following about Splendid China in 1995: “Like Shenzhen itself, Splendid China is expressive of the renewed spirit of optimism and outlook (as well as a new emphasis on materialism and consumption) that become a leitmotif of post-Mao China. Shenzhen is the maiden city of China's opening up to the world, and Splendid China is its cultural ambassador. The park is not a glance through a rosy lens but, rather, an act of outreach and annexation; not shelter against change, but one of its agents, a device adopted for distributing a revamped cultural identity to the four corners of the globe.”<sup>40</sup>

While the theme parks leveraged tourism into an economically strong industry, OCT also kept up with industrial production and developed a real estate industry. In keeping with Meng's planning

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<sup>39</sup> Ling Lei, “Shahe: Chengfeng Polang Hongse Laoqu Zouxian Xin Yuezhang (Shahe: A Communist Old District Is Playing New Songs),” *Shekou News*, August 26, 2010.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas J. Campanella, “China's Gardens of Time and Space,” *Places* 10, no. 1 (1995).

Campanella revisited this topic more than a decade later in “Theme Parks and the Landscape of Consumption,” in *The Concrete Dragon: China's Urban Revolution and What It Means for the World* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008).



principles, OCT developed low-density residential projects including the 1987 Oriental Garden, the 1988 East and West Clusters, and the 1989 Fanghua Court. These represented Ma and Meng's idealized neighborhood clusters, hidden with carefully manicured nature. However, with Hong Kong investors and buyers emerging as the largest market force in Shenzhen during the 1990s, OCT's new leadership set aside the height restrictions and developed a series of high-rise "Hong Kong-Style" apartment towers, including the 1990 Seaview Garden and the 1996 Jinxiu Garden. The commercial success of these developments inspired the creation of high-rise residential towers throughout Shenzhen. Soon OCT's identity and brand were threatened, and the company started to develop another approach to design that capitalized on the theme parks' fantasy-making power. In 2001, the company introduced the so-called "tourism and real estate" model, featuring high-end themed residential developments such as the medieval-Italy inspired "Portofino Riviera." The second phase of development for the Portofino properties began in 2002, and was centered around two natural lakes—the 40,000 square meter Swan Lake and the 70,000 square meter Swallow Lake. The two lakes had a combined shoreline of 4 kilometers, and the project achieved an exceptionally low building and population density within an already highly urbanized district at the center of the SEZ. The rental rate for a bungalow on the Portofino Riviera was the highest among all real estate properties in Shenzhen.<sup>41</sup> To ensure a transformative experience and to protect the properties, a landscaped and well-guarded perimeter wall, two to three meters in height, was erected around Portofino.<sup>42</sup> On the western side of the wall was the *other* world—Tangtou Village of Baishizhou.

In 2002, the same year in which the OCT Portofino Phase II began, 569 Baishizhou villagers were dismissed from their jobs. Employed by various subsidiary companies under the Shahe Industrial Group Ltd., they were given modest settlement fees and told that Shahe Group would no longer hire directly from the villages. This brought years of escalating confusion to a breaking point, and led to a series of protests, demonstrations, and at times, violent confrontations. The source of the confusion and confrontation was the ambiguity of land rights for the originally collectively owned rural land of the Baishizhou villages, and later of the Shahe Farm. While Shahe Farm had experienced a convoluted series of ownership transfers and administration changes, its status seemed conclusively decided in July 1992. That year, Shenzhen's policy on urban villages had converted all land inside the SEZ to urban status—thus making it state-owned.<sup>43</sup> The first clause of the written policy, entitled "Temporary Provisions on the Urbanization of Rural Villages in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone," stated its purpose: "Since the establishment of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, for the agrarian villages inside the Special Zone, economic development, urbanizing constructions, and living conditions have undergone significant changes. In order to adapt to these changes and to further economic development, enhance living

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<sup>41</sup> Shenzhen Rental Housing Management Office, "Shenzhen Shi 2007 Nian Fangwu Zulin Zhidao Zujin (Shenzhen City 2007 Rental Housing Guiding Rent Levels)," (Shenzhen 2007).

<sup>42</sup> Joshua Bolchover and John Lin, "Urban Village- Enclave Urbanism," in *Rural Urban Framework- Transforming the Chinese Countryside* (Basel: Birkhauser, 2014).

<sup>43</sup> Shenzhen Government, "Guanyu Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Nongcun Chengshihua De Zanzing Guiding (Interim Regulations of Village Urbanization in Shenzhen Sez)." (1992).

standards of the people, accelerate socialist modernization in the Special Zone, and achieve the strategic goal of building Shenzhen into an export-oriented, multi-functional international city, these provisions are stipulated.”<sup>44</sup>

The second clause stated the scope of the policy, and specifically mentioned Shahe Farm: “Applicable rural villages and peasants under the provisions refer to the 68 village committees in the Special Zone, the Shahe Overseas Chinese Farm, and all the Farm-affiliated peasants, fishermen, and oyster breeders who hold permanent rural *hukou* and reside inside the Special Zone.”<sup>45</sup> Subsuming 68 administrative villages, 173 natural villages, and the 5 “special cases villages” of Shahe Farm, the policy would impact the lives of 46,000 villagers.<sup>46</sup> The centuries-old village organizations were formally dismantled, and the villagers legally became urbanites, overnight. If there was ever a moment when the stroke of a policy “instantly” urbanized Shenzhen, it was in the summer of 1992.

For most villagers, such as Cai Zhuxiang and Zhang Lianhao of Caiwuwei Village, this conversion meant very little.<sup>47</sup> Leaders of village collectives, such as Zhuang Shunfu of Huanggang, were aware that their villages were losing ownership of lands that had belonged to their ancestors for centuries,<sup>48</sup> land that their future generations would no longer possess. The villages were allowed to maintain land use and management rights, and they were requested to set up shareholding companies. While land ownership no longer belonged to each village collective, the village corporation would still maintain control over the village-operated factories, hotels, and real estate developments. The government intended for the village corporation to maintain the economic operations of the new “Neighborhood Unit,” and expected the new “Neighborhood Unit Office” to be staffed with government-appointed managers who would take over the administrative management of the village, just as in other urban districts of Chinese cities. However, the split between economic and political governance did not really happen as planned. For most villages, such as Huanggang, the village corporation led by the former village leaders remained the primary decision maker for all resolutions. In addition to collective interest, each villager was assured of his or her property right to the self-built “peasant house,” even though the original homestead was then owned by the state.

The five Baishizhou villages were originally included in this 1992 policy, as they were located inside the SEZ. However, in August 1992, the Guangdong provincial government transferred the administrative power of Shahe Farm and the Shahe Overseas Chinese Enterprise Group to the Shenzhen municipal government. The overlapping of the two major operations—urbanization of rural *hukou* and the bureaucratic restructuring of administrative power from the provincial level to the city level—together with the already complicated land occupation history, kept Baishizhou from establishing a collective shareholding company.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Zhang.

<sup>47</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>48</sup> See Chapter 6.

Unlike the original land expropriation process for villages during the first years of the SEZ, which allowed villages such as Caiwuwei and Huanggang to utilize the compensation to start up their village enterprises, this process did not provide Baishizhou villages with compensation for their land, as it was already within the state-owned Shahe Farm prior to the establishment of the SEZ. While other villagers received homesteads, designated plots of land on which to build their own family houses, the villagers of Baishizhou were never formally allocated such land. When migrant workers flocked to the factories in the Shahe Industrial Zone starting in the early 1980s, the villagers of Baishizhou emulated villagers elsewhere and started to construct similar two- to four-story-tall buildings. As the land was not formally distributed in the form of homesteads, each of the five Baishizhou villages adopted a different process of casual allocations, usually involving individual negotiations with families and neighbors while the Shahe Farm leadership turned a blind eye. This resulted in an unusually high density of self-built “peasant buildings.” The size of individual plots was less uniform, there was at times hardly any space in between buildings, and some alleyways leading to the buildings were nearly un-navigable to outsiders.

The Shahe Elementary School promised to provide *danwei*, or work unit, housing to the teaching staff, including Chi Guanyou. A large plot of land next to the school was leveled, but no housing was realized for several years. By 1982, tired of waiting, Chi Guanyou built a two-story house on this empty dirt lot and moved out of the collective Tangtou Village compound. When other villagers at Baishizhou started to demolish their two-story houses to build taller ones, he followed suit in 1988 and built an eight-story “house.” However, like many villagers of Tangtou, he did not have the necessary funding to construct the “peasant house.” So Guanyou, like many others, funded the construction of his own building by giving permission for a non-villager to build on the land next to his. This is how a migrant merchant from a rural village in Zhejiang Province came to be Guanyou’s neighbor. While the land plot occupied by the “guest-villager” was certainly not Chi Guanyou’s to give away, neither was the land plot for his own building. Both buildings were eight stories tall, with three separate apartment units on each floor, built by a construction team of migrant workers from Sichuan Province. Guanyou was aware that the land technically belonged to the “country,” the term commonly used in China to denote public or government ownership. However, the illegality of the matter was lost in the face of the growing necessity to provide for his own family. In addition, Chi Guanyou’s logic was that he was “originally a migrant into this land, so why not allow other migrants to build a home here as well?”<sup>49</sup>

Soon, the land next to the school was filled in by other similarly financed “peasant houses.” Among them was one by Chi Guanyou’s brother, who had already established residency in Hong Kong since his illegal crossing over in 1979. Due to the danger of arrest if he was found, Guanyou helped his brother to supervise the construction, collect the rent, and manage the tenants. This was common in Baishizhou, as most of Chi Guanyou’s generation had smuggled into Hong Kong prior to the establishment of the SEZ. The majority of the tenants living in Baishizhou’s buildings, therefore, had never met their actual owners. Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, self-built “peasant houses”

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<sup>49</sup> Statement by Chi Guanyou during interview with author.

grew exponentially in number around the historical village settlements, thoroughfares, and factories. Land use, building rights, and ownership inside the Baishizhou villages came to be more complex and inscrutable than those of any other urban village in Shenzhen. This made the enforcement of the 1992 policy problematic for Baishizhou villagers. In addition, they did not have the mechanism or resources to form a collective shareholding company or receive compensation for relocation, as technically they were no longer villagers in a collectively owned village. Their land was already urban. Suddenly, it became apparent that according to Chinese land laws, the Baishizhou villagers were equivalent to rural migrants *squatting* on urban land.

In February 1993, Shenzhen Municipal Government issued a document to “disband the organization of Shahe Overseas Chinese Farm and establish the Shenzhen Shahe Enterprise Co. Ltd.” However, since the buildings’ ownerships and land-use rights were so complex, the Shahe Group was reluctant to push the plan forward. Thus in 1994, this first attempt to establish a collective shareholding company failed.<sup>50</sup>

Members of the five Baishizhou villages of the Shahe Farm faced an uncertain future. Meanwhile, the number of self-built “peasant houses” rapidly continued to increase. They became taller and bigger, crowding the already narrow spaces between them. A policy-triggered rush to build more illegal constructions occurred in 1989, when Shenzhen released a decree to curb illegal construction on village land and halt the trend of raising the height of “peasant houses” on the homesteads. In a race with the government, villagers living in two- or four-story “legal” buildings who had been saving up for further construction now rushed to borrow money from local or Hong Kong relatives to build more floors. Urban villages throughout the SEZ, especially those located in the more urbanized districts of Luohu and Futian, hastened to build larger and taller buildings before they were caught and stopped. Thus, the policy intended to absolve the urban villages while ending rampant building activities actually again triggered one of the biggest waves of illegal construction in Shenzhen in 1992. There were reports of most villages being lit up all through the night, as construction teams rushed to build as fast as possible.<sup>51</sup> The local government departments took notice and sent workers, in some cases the police, into the villages to stop construction, but these interventions were largely unsuccessful due to strong insistence of the villagers. Physical altercations were common, but a 1998 confrontation in Baishizhou led to tragic fatality. During the forced demolition of an illegal building under construction, two Baishizhou villagers were wounded and a law enforcement worker was killed by gunfire.<sup>52</sup> As gun ownership was illegal and exceedingly rare in China, the incident further contributed to the sinister public image of Baishizhou.

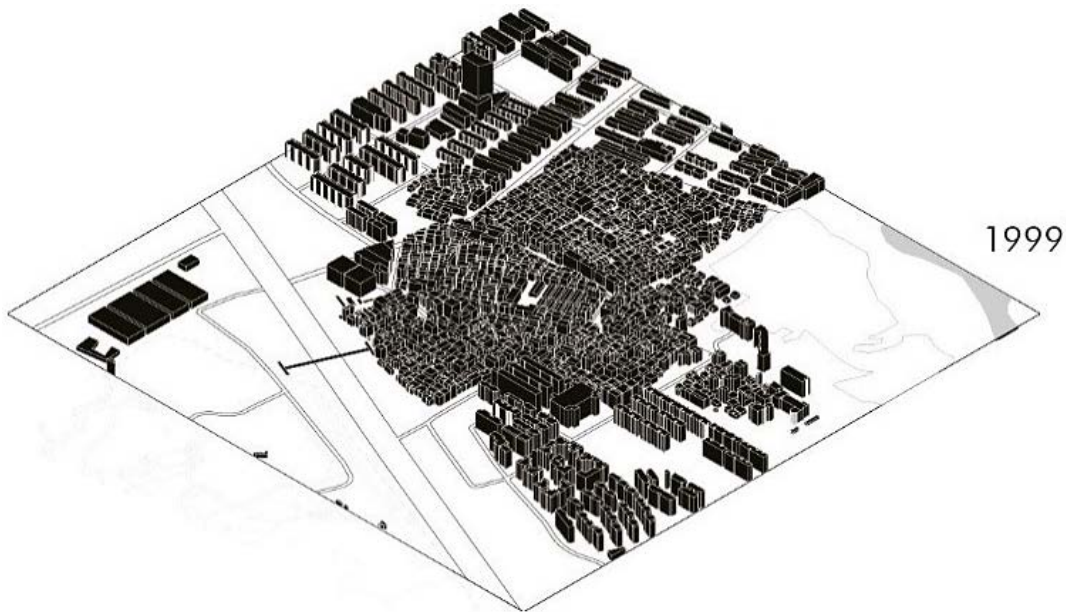
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<sup>50</sup> Chen.

Hongtai Chen, "Tigong Liangge Ge'an, Kan Nengfou Jiejue Wukan Cun Wenti (Providing 2 Cases to See If These Can Resolve the Wukan Problems)," *Zhongguo zhengzhi fazhan* 2011.

<sup>51</sup> An'na Du, "Shenzhen Xian Qiangjian Weifa Jianzhu Rechao Zuikuai Yiye Jian Yidonglou (a Wave of Illegal Construction Emerged in Shenzhen, a Tower Can Be Built as Fast as in a Night)," *Guangzhou Daily*, November 24, 2009.

<sup>52</sup> Chen.



**Figure 49** Reconstructed historical transformations of Baishizhou and surrounding circa 1999

### The Last of Shenzhen's Villages

The Shenzhen government issued two more decrees consecutively in 1999 and 2002, stipulating higher fines and more severe punishments for illegal building.<sup>53</sup> However, these decrees did little to curb the construction activities because the villagers were willing to risk fines in exchange for the lucrative rental income. Each time, the government directive triggered new waves of illegal construction farther out from the city center. The construction wave was most fierce during the 2000s in Nanshan District, and also in Longgang and Bao'an, two large and relatively underdeveloped districts to the north of the city center. While rental demands by tenants were considerably less in the suburban districts, the villagers there put up unwired empty structures just to stake a claim to the land. Between 1999 and 2011, an estimated 100,000 illegal self-built "peasant house" buildings were constructed in Shenzhen.<sup>54</sup>

In 2003, the Shenzhen government released "Instructions Regarding the Expedition of Urbanization Processes in the Two Districts of Bao'an and Longgang,"<sup>55</sup> which extended the 1992 rural to urban *hukou* conversion and village land urbanization to the entire city. By 2004, Shenzhen's remaining 218 villages and 270,000 rural-*hukou* villagers were converted to urban status.<sup>56</sup> The stated purpose of this legislation was to promote more efficient comprehensive urban planning for future

<sup>53</sup> Shenzhen Municipal Government, "Guanyu Jianjue Chachu Weifa Jianzhu De Jueding (Decisions Regarding the Strengthening of Law Enforcement on Illegal Buildings)," (Shenzhen1999).

"Shenzhen Jingji Tequ Chuli Lishi Yiliu Weifa Sifang Ruogan Guiding (Provisions for the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone Regarding Historically Illegal Peasant Houses)," (2001).

<sup>54</sup> Wending Chen, *Weilai Meiyou Chengzhongcun (There Will Be No Villages in the City)* (Guangzhou: Southern Metropolis Daily, 2015).

<sup>55</sup> Shenzhen Municipal Government, "Guanyu Jiakuai Baoan Longgang Liangqu Chengshihua Jincheng De Yijian (Opinions Regarding the Expedition of Urbanization Processes in the Two Districts of Baoan and Longgang)," (Shenzhen2003).

<sup>56</sup> Zhang.



development, by fully integrating all land within Shenzhen's municipality. *People's Daily* triumphantly declared that "Shenzhen will become the first city in China with no villages and no peasants."<sup>57</sup> Hong Kong-based Chinese language newspaper *Wenhui Po* soon followed with the article "Peasants in Shenzhen will become history—Shenzhen will be the first city without a village in China by the end of the year."<sup>58</sup>

By 2004, all former rural villages had been officially designated Urban Neighborhoods, except for the five villages of Baishizhou. With the dismissal of all villagers from Shahe subsidiaries, Chi Guanyou was "retired" from his last employer—the Shahe Commerce Trading Company. The landless and now jobless Baishizhou villagers could no longer wait for the Nanshan District and Shenzhen municipal government to reach a solution. Leaders from the five villagers started to self-organize to fight for their rights.

The 2003 "Instructions Regarding the Expedition of Urbanization Processes in the Two Districts of Bao'an and Longgang" did not even mention Shahe Farm, as the disputes over land rights between the state and the villages were nowhere to be resolved. The root of the problem was in the conflicting statuses of the Shahe Group and the Baishizhou villagers. The Shahe Group, as it was formed to manage the state-owned-and-operated Shahe Farm, was a state-owned enterprise with an urban status. Therefore, land under the management of the Shahe Group was owned by the state. But the villagers of the five Baishizhou villages argued that the land should be regarded as urbanized rural land; therefore, their rights to use the land for economic development had to be recognized, and land for the village collectives as well as homesteads for the villagers had to be allocated.

Between the years of 2003 and 2005, village leaders made eight petitions to both the Guangdong Provincial Communist Party Committee and the highest level of authority a civilian can reach—the Central Bureau for Letters and Calls, located in Beijing. Throughout these years, the villagers staged several large-scale demonstrations. The most notable was in June 2005, when two thousand Baishizhou villagers surrounded the Shahe Group office building. The Central Bureau ordered the Shenzhen Bureau for Letters and Calls to investigate as the situation in Baishizhou worsened.

While a Shahe Neighborhood Unit Office was established in 2004 to replace the former Shahe Farm's role in community administration, the government-appointed administrators could not resolve the conflicts. With the jurisdictional power of the former village community organization no longer formally recognized, public order, hygiene, and services all deteriorated even further. Crime and gang activities were frequently reported. The criminal activities posed such security threats, not only to Baishizhou but also to the city itself, that the Shenzhen government had to request assistance from the Ministry of Public Security.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> "Shenzhen Jiang Chengwei Quanguo Shouge Wu Nongcun Wu Nongmin Chengshi (Shenzhen Will Become the First City in China with No Villages and No Peasants)," *Earth Biweekly*, *People's Daily*, no. 13 (2004).

<sup>58</sup> Mingshan Yu, "Shenzhen Nongmin Jiang Chengwei Lishi (Peasants in Shenzhen Will Become History)," *Wenhui Po*, January 10, 2004.

<sup>59</sup> Chen.

While Baishizhou's resolution was at a stand-still, the Shenzhen government released its first city-wide program of action on urban village redevelopment: "Master Planning Outline for the Redevelopment of Urban Villages (Old Villages) in Shenzhen (2005–2010)." The document declared that "illegal buildings and the problem of urban villages have become the most prominent, complicated, and concentrated conflicts and troubles in the economic and social development of the entire city."<sup>60</sup> The five-year redevelopment plan called for the demolition and reconstruction of 20% of the existing volume of urban villages inside the SEZ and 5% in the outer districts, which totaled to 11,500,000 square meters of floor areas that occupied land areas of 900,000 square meters.<sup>61</sup> The plan also expanded on the nature of the "conflicts and troubles" associated with the urban villages:

In addition to the difficulty of improving the in-village environment and continuously enhancing the residents' quality of life, as well as the presence of serious potential safety hazards in many villages, the problems of urban villages lie also in the fact that they have hindered the progress of urban restructuring and the enhancement of land use efficiency, corroded the land value of surrounding areas, and sabotaged the city's equitable development environment and legal management order with their illegal operation measures. The urban villages with all these problems are a far cry from the mandate of building a harmonious society.<sup>62</sup>

Given its prime location and its status as the largest, most populous, and worst-reputed urban village, Baishizhou was easily marked as a major target for redevelopment under this particular policy. Government agencies at both the city and Nanshan District levels began researching implementation procedures for the redevelopment plan. In the first year of 2006 alone, the government planned to "completely demolish and reconstruct" 40 villages and "partially demolish and renovate" 73 villages, with an additional 76 villages to implement redevelopment procedures.<sup>63</sup>

In August 2006, the Shahe Neighborhood Unit Office delivered its "Report on Resolving the Historical Problems Concerning the Five Shahe Villages"<sup>64</sup> to the District Party Committee and District Government of Nanshan, Shenzhen. The report requested government approval for the establishment of a shareholding company to administrate the economic interests of the five Baishizhou villages. It was a bold move to propose rupturing the fraught relationship between the villages and the Shahe Group, which had begun with the Shahe Farm in 1959. The government approved the proposal and the Baishizhou Investment and Development Enterprise Co. Ltd. was finally established in December 2006. This mechanism granted urban status to both the land of Baishizhou and the villagers. Shenzhen, from a land use and legal organization perspective, finally became China's first city without villages.

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<sup>60</sup> Shenzhen Municipal Government, "Shenzhen Shi Chengzhongcun (Jiucun) Gaizao Zongti Guihua Gangyao (2005–2010) (Planning Outline for the Redevelopment of Urban Villages (Old Villages) in Shenzhen (2005-2010))," (Shenzhen 2005).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> "2006 Shenzhen Shi Chengzhongcun (Jiucun) Gaizao Niandu Jihua (2006 Annual Plan for the Redevelopment of Urban Villages (Old Villages) in Shenzhen)," (2006).

Dawei Fu and Qiujin Luo, "Shenzhen 2006 Nian Jihua Quanmian Gaizao 40 Ge Chengzhongcun (40 Urban Villages Are to Be Completely Redeveloped in Shenzhen's 2006 Plan)," *Shenzhen News*, July 4, 2006.

<sup>64</sup> Shahe Neighborhood Unit Office, "Guanyu Jiejue Shahe Wucun Lishi Wenti De Baogao (a Report Regarding Solutions to the Historic Problem in the Shahe 5 Villages)," (2006).

However, negotiations on land rights still lasted for another three years. Shahe Group, as a state-owned enterprise with many subsidiary factories and commercial establishments, still claimed rights to the land. Without much financial and political power, the newly established Baishizhou Enterprise was yet a shell of a company. The villagers' economic situation did not improve. Village Head Wu, from the oldest original Baishizhou natural village on site, pleaded to the government for assistance. Speaking of the Baishizhou Enterprise, which had no land or property, Wu said, "Our company has always been a tree without roots." He added that everybody in the city thought that native villagers in Shenzhen were landlords, with a lot of money; however, Baishizhou was the poorest urban village in Shenzhen. Wu reported that Baishizhou's young and middle-aged villagers also faced employment challenges. Most of these villagers had no marketable skills; the only way they knew to make a living was to collect rents. Few young villagers performed well in school, with only around 10 studying in colleges. In Wu's own words: "A large number of youngsters have nothing to do, whom the shareholding company feels obligated to absorb but cannot, for our company doesn't have many jobs to offer, nor is there sufficient funding. So what can we do? We do the so-called enclosure management, or simply put, collecting parking fees."<sup>65</sup>

Finally, in December 2009, the Shenzhen municipal government made the following decisions: 440,000 square meters of village residential land and 81,600 square meters of industrial-use land would be under redevelopment, to be directly administered by the Nanshan District Government. The Shahe Group would retain 210,000 square meters of industrial land for its continued development.<sup>66</sup>

In 2011, various stakeholders began meeting to plan the urban redevelopment of Baishizhou: the Nanshan District Office, Urban Planning, Shenzhen Land and Resources Commission, the Baishizhou Enterprise, Shahe Group, and the OCT Group met and negotiated redevelopment proposals. In 2012, the district government established the Baishizhou Urban Redevelopment Office. With a land area of nearly 600,000 square meters and 2.4 million square meters of existing floor areas, this is the largest urban redevelopment project in Shenzhen's history.<sup>67</sup> Various major development companies in Shenzhen came to actively court the Redevelopment Office and the Baishizhou villages, including OCT Group. Chi Guanyou, by then a respected village elder, assisted the younger Tangtou Village leaders in the negotiation process. The villagers, due to long-held resentments over past conflicts, chose not to work with OCT as the developer for the project and ultimately decided to hire the developer LVGEM.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Shuxiong Zhuang, "Baishizhou Maizang Duoshao Dagong Chuanqi (Hidden Legends of the Working Class in Baishizhou)," *Southern Metropolis Daily*, November 11, 2009.

<sup>66</sup> Kezhen Wang, "Shahe Jiedao Hexie Jianshe Yuchu Jiucun Gaizao Jingyan (Shahe Jiedao Harmoniously Nurtured Old Village Redevelopment Experience)." *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, A08, January 11, 2013.

<sup>67</sup> LVGEM, *Baishizhou Shahe Wucun Jiugai Zhuanxiang Guihua (Planning for the Redevelopment of Baishizhou Shahe Five Villages)* (2012).

<sup>68</sup> Statement by Chi Guanyou during interview with author.

LVGEM is a Shenzhen-grown development company founded by Huang Kangjing in 1995.<sup>69</sup> By 2012, LVGEM was recognized as one of the top eight real estate enterprises in the city.<sup>70</sup> Coincidentally, like Chen Hua, the CEO of the Kingkey Group that redeveloped Caiwuwei Village, Huang Kangjing led his first startup construction project in 1983: the redevelopment of Meilin Village in Shenzhen's Futian District.<sup>71</sup> Over the years, LVGEM came to specialize in urban village redevelopment projects in Shenzhen. The personal and corporate experience of LVGEM in dealing with village collectives and negotiating with individuals was vital to winning the trust of the Baishizhou villagers. The redevelopment, already complicated due to the complexities surrounding land entitlement, was made even more complicated by the fact that prior to the redevelopment project, no formal survey was done and no boundary was drawn between the 416,000 square meters of Baishizhou and the 82,000 square meters of Shahe Group. In addition, the density of the existing buildings to be demolished was already high, at an FAR (Floor Area Ratio) of 4. The planned new construction had to be unusually dense and tall to recoup economic investment.

A number of top architecture offices, from US-based SOM to Shenzhen-based Urbanus and CAUPD, were contracted to work with Baishizhou and LVGEM to create a satisfactory urban planning and design. In the various schemes, the majority of Baishizhou's 2,477 buildings were to be demolished and replaced with a series of luxury residential and commercial towers, the highlight of which would be a cluster of "Super-Talls," i.e., towers taller than 600 meters.<sup>72</sup> The proposed three-phase redevelopment scheme was projected to ultimately finish in 2022. The first phase would be conducted in 2014–2017, including prime office space facing Shennan Boulevard to the south and resettlement apartments further north. The super-tall tower to be built fronting the Boulevard was to be completely owned by the village collectives, for the provision of sustained income and corporate business opportunities for the villagers. The second phase would be conducted in 2015–2019, including commercial, cultural, and public amenities. The third phase, to be completed in 2017–2022, would be primarily residential, and would focus on the land parcel of the existing Baishizhou Village to the south of the Boulevard. Finally, a light rail system was proposed to connect the buildings from all three phases. The project's ambition was to outshine not only the neighboring Overseas Chinese Town, but also the Central Business District.

Baishizhou villagers such as Chi Guanyou saw this as their ultimate wish coming true. Each villager would be compensated in the new development with real estate in a 1:1 ratio for their current property. Even those non-Baishizhou villagers who did not hold Shenzhen *hukou* status would be compensated in a 1:0.8 ratio. It appeared that after decades of struggle, an amicable resolution had been reached for all—all, except the nearly 200,000 other residents of Baishizhou who called it home.

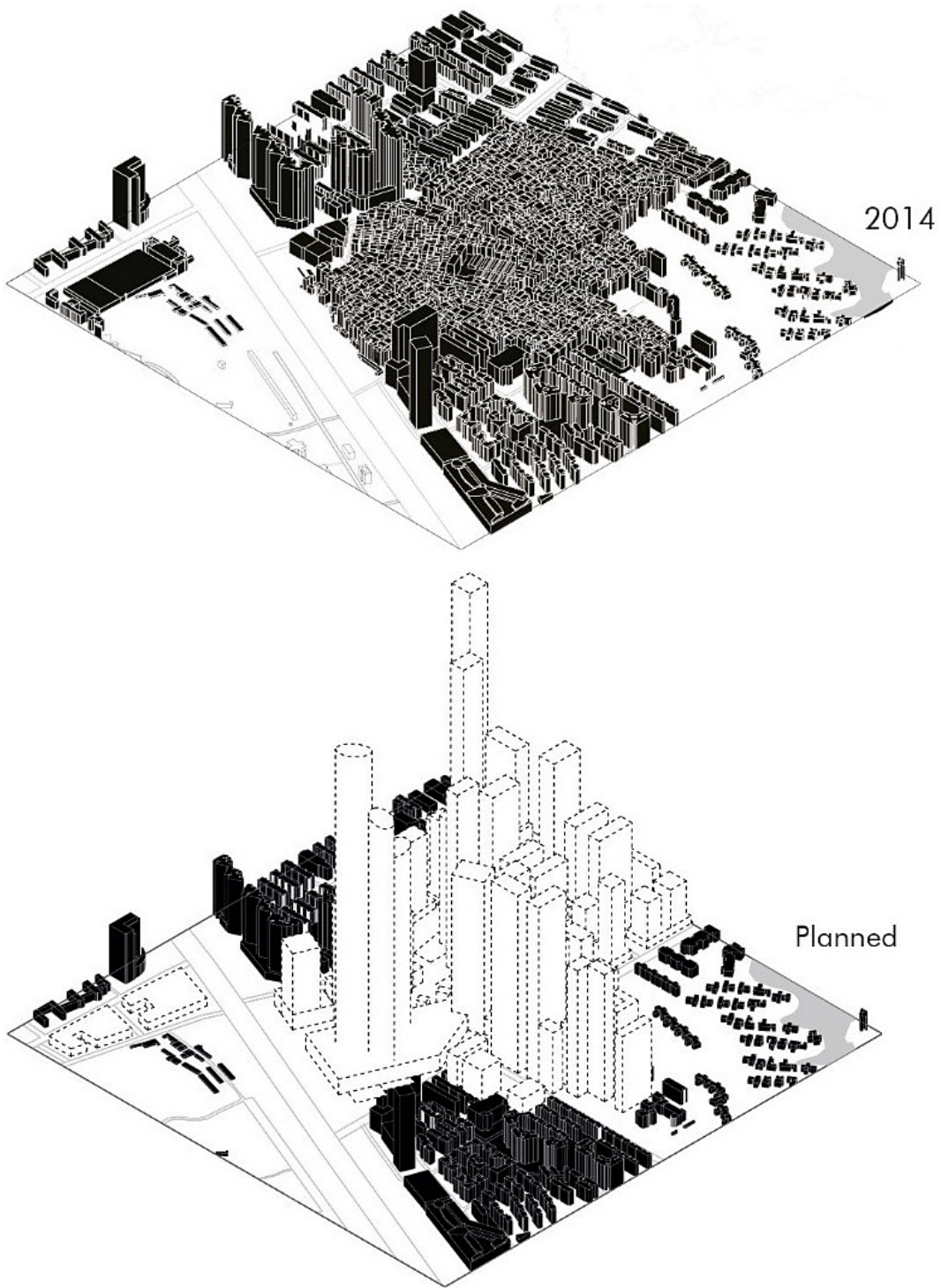
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<sup>69</sup> LVGEM, "Corporate Profile".

<sup>70</sup> "Gaibian Chengshi : Sanshi Nian De Lingchuang, Sanshi Ren De Fengyun. "Wei Chengshi Jianshe He Renju Shengji Gongxian De Sanshi Da Jianshizhe" Rong Yu Bang (Changing the City: 30 Years of Vanguard, 30 Years of Influence "30 Practitioners Contributing to the City's Development and Habitats Upgrade" - a Honor Roll," *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, May 25, 2012.

<sup>71</sup> Yongtao Li, *Dadao 30: Shennan Dadao Shang De Guojia Jiyi (30 Years of the Boulevard: National Memories on Shennan Boulevard)*, vol. 1 (Shenzhen: Shenzhen Press Group Publishing House, 2010), pp. 184–188.

<sup>72</sup> "Baishizhou Wangzha! (Great Explosion in Baishizhou!)," *Shenzhen First Real Estate*, October 11, 2016.



**Figure 50** Reconstructed historical transformations of Baishizhou and surrounding. Currently the largest urban village in Shenzhen housing 150,000 residents, Baishizhou is planned for demolition and redevelopment into the next generation CBD.



## Home Away from Home

While the Nanshan government's survey of the renting population inside Baishizhou obtained a total count of 110,000, other estimates placed the number closer to 150,000.<sup>73</sup> Much like data on the population of Shenzhen in general, data on exactly how many people lived in Baishizhou varied with every information source. Even statistics on those with registered Shenzhen *hukou* fluctuated from 20,000 to 40,000.<sup>74</sup> By the most conservative estimate, Baishizhou is the most densely populated neighborhood in Shenzhen. From poorly educated migrant workers in the nearby factories to new PhD graduates starting up in the neighboring technology parks, diverse groups of migrants from all over China were drawn to Baishizhou thanks to its central location and cheaper rent.

In the 2013 version of the "Baishizhou Redevelopment Master Plan" prepared for LVGEM by the Shanghai Office of the American architecture firm SOM, 1 million square meters of the future 5.5 million square meters of new construction would be compensation housing to replace the existing "peasant houses."<sup>75</sup> Even that seemed not enough, for by the time the self-built housing boom finally slowed down in 2004, nearly 3,000 "peasant houses" stood inside Baishizhou.<sup>76</sup> With an average height of eight stories, the elevator-less buildings were of varying degrees of quality in construction, but were similar in appearance and each held over 10 apartment units. The total number of units was estimated to be 35,000, totaling over 2 million square meters of building area.<sup>77</sup> The villages of Baishizhou had morphed into a complex urban district with Shenzhen's highest building density.

For a new arrival in Shenzhen, Baishizhou was an easy place to start. There were beds, rooms, units with shared toilets and kitchens, or entire floors to be rented for years or just for a few hours. Colorful signage advertising rooms for rent filled every surface of the buildings fronting the streets. Most of the phone numbers led to an agent, or middleman, who would usually take a cut of the rental fee. The tasks of renting and managing the hundreds of thousands of renters in Baishizhou created jobs for thousands of middlemen. Like the buildings themselves, units for rental inside Baishizhou varied from cramped rooms with poor natural lighting and stifling air, to spacious newly renovated apartments with satellite TV and ping-pong tables. While those with resources and good prospects saw the village housing as a starting point or transitional arrangement, the low-income working population relied on this housing for survival in the city.

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<sup>73</sup> Chen.

Wang.

<sup>74</sup> Maurice Veeken, "Decisions of Migrants in Their Choice of Residence- a Case Study in Baishizhou Village in Shenzhen" (University of Amsterdam, 2013).

<sup>75</sup> LVGEM, *Baishizhou Shahe Wucun Jiugai Zhuanxiang Guihua (Planning for the Redevelopment of Baishizhou Shahe Five Villages)*.

<sup>76</sup>Wang.

<sup>77</sup> Veeken.

Oeeee, "Summary: Baishizhou District".

Wang.

As poor as some of the rental facilities might be, the quality of life far exceeded the repressive workers' dormitories in Shenzhen's factory housing compounds. The difference was not so much in the physical features; rather, it was in the experience of social living. In the factory compounds, not only were the workers monitored during the work hours, but they were also constantly monitored by managers and dormitory guards when they slept, ate, and gathered for social nights in an enclosed compound.<sup>78</sup> In addition, the choice to quit and seek other jobs was rendered difficult because the quitter would not even have a place to live. As the workers were totally dependent on the employers for not only work but housing, most had no choice but to accept the minimal wage, long working hours, and lack of company welfare. Children were strictly prohibited in the factory compound, and married workers could not even live together as most dormitories were divided by gender. The limitations to personal freedom and the extreme social control created toxic conditions that continue today. The shocking series of workers' suicides reported to have taken place in Foxconn, just kilometers north of Baishizhou, was more due to their isolated living quarters than to their working conditions. According to 2004 statistics on Shenzhen's migrant working population, only 15% of the workers lived in factory dormitories while 50% chose to live in the urban villages throughout the city.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Chris Smith and Ngai Pun, "The Dormitory Labour Regime in China as a Site for Control and Resistance," *The international journal of human resource management* 17 (2006).

<sup>79</sup> Urban Planning Land and Resources Commission of Shenzhen Municipality, "Shenzhen Zanzhu Renyuan Zhufang Wenti Yanjiu (Housing Issues Research on Shenzhen's Temporary Residents)," in *Shenzhen Lanpi Shu, Zhongguo Shenzhen Fazhan Baogao (Blue Book of Shenzhen, Development Report of Shenzhen, China)* (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press (China), 2005).



**Figure 51** Cheap housing in the urban village are often the first point of arrival for migrants into Shenzhen. Rental information is mostly found posted on hand-written posters such as this scene in Baishizhou.

With such a large migrant population living in Baishizhou, tens of thousands of small businesses sprung up to feed, service, and entertain the residents. These businesses were run by other migrants, who brought their regional specialties to Shenzhen. Food found in the alleyways of Baishizhou—spicy Sichuan hotpots, steaming Shandong dumplings, smoky Mongolian barbecues, and sweet Guangdong dessert soups—represents the great diversity of China in a manner far exceeding the curated scenes of OCT's Splendid China. Migrants from every locale in China can find something to satisfy their cravings and find someone who speaks in their local dialect to subdue bouts of homesickness. The diverse cuisines and lower prices attracted people not only from within Baishizhou, but also from elsewhere in the city. Many residents living in the high-rise apartment towers bordering Baishizhou would visit for an easy and cheap night out. Like other urban villages in Shenzhen's city center, Baishizhou also attracted visitors seeking other types of services from iPhone shops to KTVs. However, Baishizhou hosted the most vibrant street culture and night life in OCT.

With an increasingly larger population and deteriorating conditions, Shahe Neighborhood Unit experimented with giving incentives to building owners to self-upgrade their rental properties. In May 2012, it initiated a "Quality Rental Housing" licensing system in Baishizhou Village, where eligible properties could receive a partial—up to 20%—discount on the typical management fees owners paid to the Neighborhood Unit.<sup>80</sup> Baishizhou was the first in Shenzhen and Guangdong Province to implement such a system to encourage self-upgrade within the urban villages. By December 2012, 522 village houses were enrolled in the program. Inspections deemed 504 of those houses to have reached the standard, and they were awarded the "Quality Rental Housing" recognition. In addition, 5,000 fire extinguishers, 3,600 emergency lights, 66 fire hoses, 1,683 emergency windows, and 96 rooftop escape passes were installed. Of these buildings, 80% were monitored by electronic security systems, and CCTV network covered the whole Baishizhou Village. According to the village officers, after the implementation of the scheme, the crime rate in Baishizhou was reduced by 29%, and industrial accidents decreased by 50%. Tenant occupancy rose from 89% to 98% and rentals increased by 25%.<sup>81</sup> The growing economy and the physical improvements since 2012 allowed the neighborhood to attract a more diverse population.

Organic coffee shops, artist galleries, and vegetarian gourmet foods—the types of establishments usually found in the adjacent OCT—also migrated into Baishizhou. In addition to the occupied street-fronted ground floors of the "peasant houses," the former factory blocks of the Shahe Industrial Zone to the north of Tangtou Village also were adapted for commercial uses. Large space and cheaper rent, with more space and air between the buildings, allowed new restaurants and bars to turn the former factory

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<sup>80</sup> "Chengshi Huike Shi Di13qi "Yiju Chuzuwu' Chengzhongcun Xinchulu ? "(City Meeting Room No.13 Livable Rental Flats, a New Way out for Urban Villages?)," *Southern Metropolis Daily*, October 25, 2012.

<sup>81</sup> Guangning Qu, "Shenzhen Nanshan Shidian "Yiju Chuzuwu" Nongminfang Bianshen Chengshi Gongyu (Shenzhen Nanshan Tests "Livable Rental Flats, Peasant Houses Become Urban Hostels)," *ibid.*

zone into a bustling dining and entertaining area. As the restaurant businesses usually took the ground floor of the factory buildings, light industrial production still occupied the upper floors.

In 2014, Joe Finkenbinder came to Baishizhou Shahe Industrial Zone's Eastern District, rented a space, and opened the Bionic Brewery, with a bar and restaurant, selling over 10 varieties of craft beer. His reason for choosing the location was simple: "I showed up in Baishizhou, just like they did. I didn't know anybody here, I hadn't been here before, I just showed up with my stuff and was like 'I'll just start in Baishizhou. That's where everyone starts. . . . Rents in this city are just so high it's going to kill growth. Nobody can open anything. I came to Baishizhou because it's cheap."<sup>82</sup> As Finkenbinder was the first foreigner to open a business in the Industrial Zone, the brewery became popular with locals and expats living in Shenzhen. Other entrepreneurial minds in Shenzhen took notice. Soon a pizzeria opened next door, and an Italian wine bar opened across the alleyway from Bionic Brewery, both run by non-Chinese nationals. On the grounds of factories that produced Walkman cassettes just 20 years ago, one can now have a glass of Prosecco with Parma ham, and go a few doors down for steamed Hainan Chicken.

### **Displacement and Contested Redevelopment**

The Baishizhou Shahe Industrial Zone is split into an Eastern District and Western District, separated by Baishizhou's main north-south thoroughfare, Shahe Street. The Industrial Zone is on the land managed by the Shahe Group, and in October 2012, land rights to the Western District were transferred to the Hong Kong-registered development company Shum Yip Century for the development of a new residential area. In December 2015, the Shenzhen-based architecture firm CAPOL International and Melbourne-based Denton Coker won the international competition for best design of the overall scheme of Shum Yip Century Valley, with a proposal that included ten high-rise towers with luxury shopping malls.<sup>83</sup> It was around this time that business owners in the Western District of the Industrial Zone started to hear about the redevelopment plans. While a brick wall had been built in August 2015 to separate the shop fronts from the main street, the business owners actually received a notice to vacate the buildings in March 2016. These small business owners, who mostly rented the spaces from middlemen agents, did not have any legal rights to stay or demand compensation. As in most cases in the urban villages, the leases were not formalized and most renters allowed their lease documents to lapse without renewal for years.

Soon the plight of this group received attention from community groups such as the Baishizhou Team. Composed of architects, artists, and playwrights, the Baishizhou Team had been conducting a series of projects in the area to call attention to the importance of Shenzhen's urban villages. They had been inviting residents of Baishizhou to take photos with a sign marked "Do not Demolish Baishizhou"

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<sup>82</sup> Interview by Van Het Wout Ricki-Lee Martina with Joe Finkenbinder, December 20, 2016.

<sup>83</sup> Shum Yip Shahe Group, "Nanshan Qu Shahe Jiedao Shenye Shiji Shangu Chengshi Gengxin Danyuan Zhengti Fangan Ji Yiqi Gongcheng Jishu Sheji Zhaobiao Pingshen Jieguo Gonggao (Announcement of the Result of Tendering for the Overall Scheme for Sham Yip Century Valley and Phase 1 Technical Design in Nanshan Shahe Jiedao)," news release, December 29, 2015.



since May 2016. Most of the residents approached by the activists refused to take the photos. Some feared retribution if they resisted a government-supported redevelopment effort, but most residents simply felt that the redevelopment of all urban villages in Shenzhen was an inevitable outcome as the city continued to modernize. As Chinese laws on eviction and displacement are not currently developed, most tenant occupants of the buildings did not feel they were entitled to participate in the decision-making process. However, through the Baishizhou Team's efforts, dozens of residents did agree to be photographed with the "Do Not Demolish Baishizhou" sign. Ultimately, the team planned to send the residents' photos and accompanying comments to the Nanshan District government.

In September 2016, the Baishizhou Team actively tried to assist the tenants of the area in resisting relocation. Most tenants initially refused to move; however, when electricity and water supply were cut and demolition teams built additional barriers, nearly all settled except one. On September 11, this business owner held up the anti-demolition sign and accepted assistance from the Baishizhou Team. He was the owner of a Lanzhou Noodle shop, the ubiquitous small restaurant type that can be found everywhere in China.<sup>84</sup> Originally established by Ma Zilu during the late Qing period in Gansu Province's capital city of Lanzhou, this humble dish featuring a beef stock soup could be found in every city in China. According to a 2016 *Confucius Institute Journal* article, there are over 50,000 Lanzhou Noodle shops in China and 40 in other locations around the world.<sup>85</sup> Like MacDonald's, Lanzhou Noodle can be found in nearly every district in large and small urban areas of China alike. Unlike MacDonald's, Lanzhou Noodle shops are not franchise operators of the same chain. Yet there is a key similarity between the Lanzhou Noodle restaurant in Baishizhou and nearly all the others found elsewhere in Shenzhen, China, and Chinatowns in the world. While the Confucius Institute's article does not mention this, the majority of Lanzhou Noodle shop operators are Chinese Muslims, and their shared cultural and religious practice on food and hygiene has resulted in similar qualities and atmosphere across most of the shops. The Baishizhou shop was operated by Chef Ma, a Muslim migrant from Gansu Province. Gansu has the second-largest Chinese Muslim population of all the provinces in China, and the name "Ma" is the Chinese stand-in for Mohammad among Chinese Muslims. Chef Ma bought the shop from a previous owner in May 2013 and paid a transfer fee of 26,500 yuan for all the equipment. This was the main reason that Chef Ma agreed to participate in the "anti-demolition" action.

Throughout a few tense weeks, the Baishizhou Team encouraged the media to report on the case and set up crowdfunding to help Chef Ma. The effort paid off: local media covered Chef Ma's story and activists stayed with his family, including his wife and school-age son, through the light-less nights. By September 19, Chef Ma was offered 30,000 yuan of relocation compensation; the crowdfunding

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<sup>84</sup> Peng Duan and Baishizhou Group, November 1, 2016.

<sup>85</sup> "Lanzhou Niurou Mian: Lanzhou De Yizhang Mingpian (Lanzhou Beef Noodles: A Name Card for Lanzhou)," *Confucius Institute Journal (Chinese Japanese Bilingual Version)* 3 (2016).

Ruilong Qi, "40 Duo Jia Lanzhou Niurou Lamiandian Luohu Shijie Gedi (More Than 40 Lanzhou Ramen Shops Are around the World)," *Western Economic Daily*, July 5, 2017.

generated a similar amount.<sup>86</sup> Chef Ma decided to accept the compensation and moved out. A few hours later, the entire building was demolished. Through the Baishizhou Team, Chef Ma stated that he “is not opposed to urban renewal, but he should not be the collateral damage.”<sup>87</sup> While the effort of resisting displacement led to a predictable result, the actions mobilized others in Shenzhen to advocate for careful consideration of future redevelopment of the Baishizhou area in general.

On June 16, 2017, as per Shenzhen’s regulations, the Nanshan District government posted on the official website of Shenzhen Planning and Land Bureau the document “Public Presentation of Urban Renewal Planning for the Five Shahe Villages in Shahe Neighborhood Unit, Nanshan District.”<sup>88</sup> The two-page information sheet contained two site plans for the Baishizhou area, indicating the redevelopment boundary and revealing that the existing buildings on 459,500 square meters of land were set to be demolished. New buildings would be developed at a plot ratio of 7.2 with a series of high-rise towers to contain 1 million square meters of commercial space, along with 1.25 million square meters of housing and 1.12 million square meters of serviced apartments. The top of the information sheet featured a slogan in bold letters: “Enthusiastically Participate in Planning, and Create Wonderful Homes Together.”<sup>89</sup> The slogan was coupled with the following obligatory lines in fine print: “If you have any opinion or suggestion on the draft plan during the public presentation period, please submit it to the Bureau in writing. The submission deadline is set on July 15, 2017. Late submissions will be regarded as no objection. (For mailed submissions we will use the postmark date. You may also drop your written opinion directly into the opinion box).”<sup>90</sup>

In late July, the Baishizhou Team reported on their website that a team member’s mail delivered to the stated address via a local carrier service was rejected. While the address and recipient conformed to the public notice’s instructions, the carrier service was told no such addressee was at the office. The Team posted the content of the letter, which listed six reasons for the group’s opposition to the Baishizhou Redevelopment Proposal. The sixth and final point stated: “We support urban renewal, and we understand the city’s pursuit of becoming newer and better. However, this kind of space-led urban redevelopment plan is not smart from an accounting perspective. It is not progressive in terms of future development. We suggest that the Bureau should first change its method and mindset for renewal.”<sup>91</sup>

The typical period for “public presentation” of development projects by the Shenzhen government is one month. For reasons unannounced by the Shenzhen Planning and Land Bureau, or the Nanshan District Government, Baishizhou’s “public presentation” post did not close on July 16, indicating an unusual extension of the public presentation period. The delay caused tremendous anxiety

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<sup>86</sup> Pangniao, “Xuran Mianguan Beichai Dan Haozai Yuguo Tianqing (Although the Noodle Shop Was Demolished, Nonetheless Everything Is Fine).”

<sup>87</sup> Duan and Baishizhou Group Title of Weblog.

<sup>88</sup> Shenzhen Urban Planning Bureau (SUPB), “Guanyu Nanshan Qu Shahe Jiedao Shahe Wucun Chengshi Gengxin Danyuan Guihua (Caoan) De Gongshi (Public Presentation on Urban Renewal Planning for the Shahe Five Villages in Shae Jiedao, Nanshan District),” (Shenzhen2017).

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Lengjing and Baishizhou Group, “Shixiao De Baishizhou Chengshi Gengxin Gongshi Shuilai Fuze (Who Is Responsible for the Disfunctioning Baishizhou Urban Renewal Public Review?),” Weixin.

in both the developers at LVGEM and the villagers of Baishizhou. Requested by the younger village leaders to assist in the negotiation with the developers and the government, Chi Guanyou made a trip to the Tangtou Village Office and stayed there for a few hours each afternoon. The office was located on the second floor of a non-descript urban village building adjacent to the Old Tangtou Village compound. The office not only paled in comparison to the Huanggang Company's office in the penthouse of the 22-story Huanggang Tower, but also appeared to be more tattered than most of the offices in Guangdong's still-rural villages. Chi Guanyou, however, maintained a steady countenance and an equally steady perspective on the outcome. He knew the redevelopment would happen and believed that the clamor of opposition had been stirred up by those jealous to see Baishizhou villagers finally get their pay day.

Others in Baishizhou agreed with him that the demolition would happen very soon. In October 2017, the SZDIY Hacker Space moved out of the Eastern District of the Baishizhou Shahe Industrial Zone. SZDIY, or Shenzhen Do It Yourself, is a group of young engineers and programmers that had worked out of the third floor of the Industrial Zone's Building #41 since 2014.<sup>92</sup> The large space and cheap rent allowed them to experiment and exchange ideas, and to offer a low membership fee to anyone who wanted to join. The space was open every Thursday to other makers or anyone interested in their work. SZDIY was featured in a 2015 CNN article titled "Shenzhen: China's start-up city defies skeptics," where the group was described as "a member's association that meets in an old industrial building and builds everything from vehicles to games. The workshop is a study of contrasts: at once dusty and hi-tech."<sup>93</sup> The article did not mention the Baishizhou villages, or Overseas Chinese Town. To outside observers, such specifics seem insignificant in a city built from scratch, a little over three decades ago.

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<sup>92</sup> SZDIY, "Introduction".

<sup>93</sup> Joseph Chaney, "Shenzhen: China's Start-up City Defies Skeptics," *CNN*, June 24, 2015.

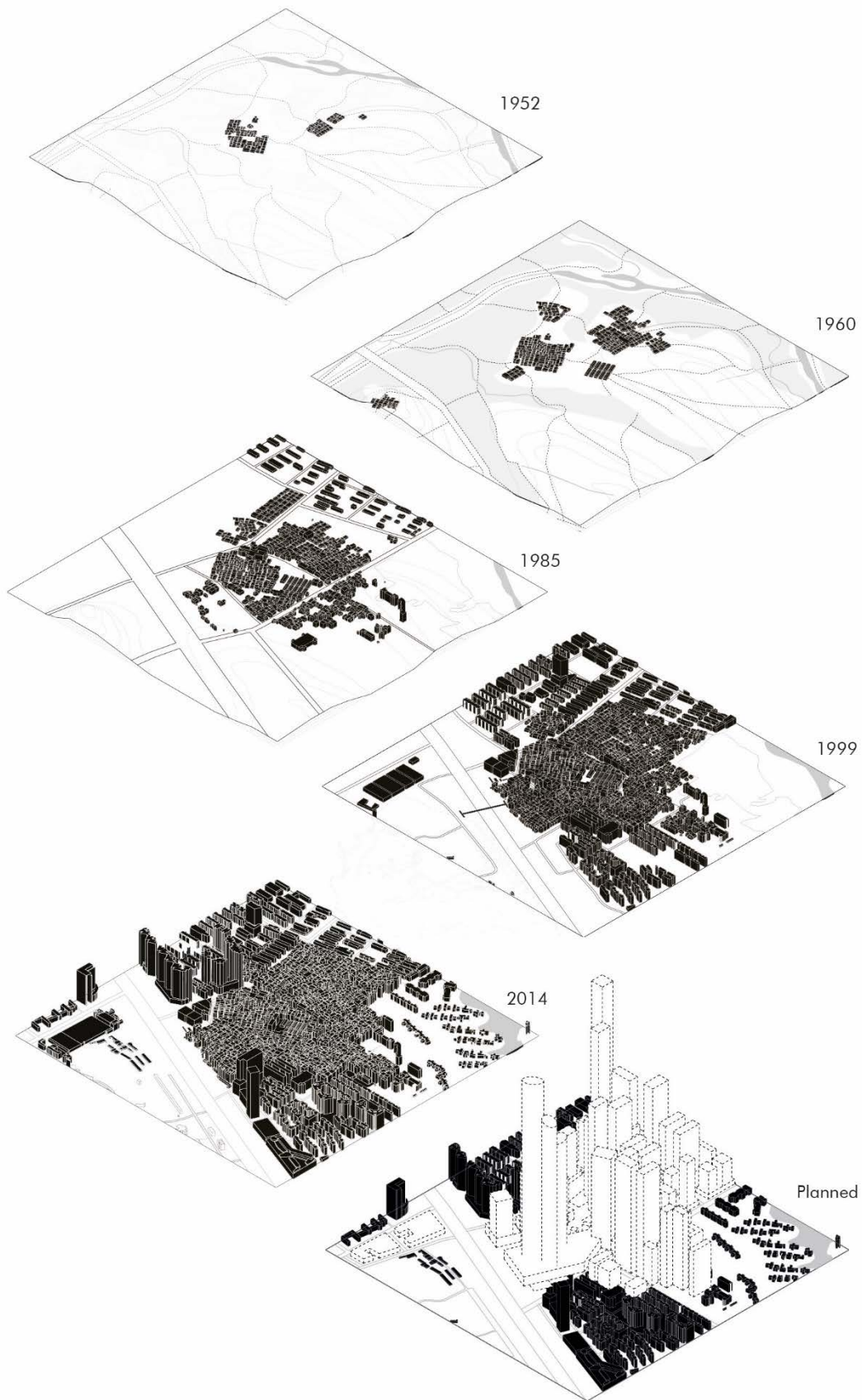


Figure 52 Past and Future Transformations of Baishizhou





## 8. CONCLUSION

### Proliferations of the SEZ

In May 2017, the state-owned China Central Television (CCTV) announced the government's plan for a new satellite urban center located 100 kilometers from Beijing in a news special titled: "The Plan of a Millennium and an Affair of National Significance—A Documentary Report of the Decision on the Planning and Construction of Xiong'an New Area in Hebei Province by the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at Its Core." The presenter confidently predicted the future success of the ambitious project: "Look to Shenzhen in the 1980s, look to Pudong in the 1990s, and look to Xiong'an in the 21st Century!"<sup>94</sup> The broadcast rounded off a month of media frenzy, initiated by an article on April 2, 2017 in the state-owned *People's Daily*. This article had announced the Xiong'an New Area proposal, which aimed to "explore new models of prioritized development for population and economic intensive areas, adjust and optimize the urban layout and spatial structure of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei area, and cultivate new development engines through innovation."<sup>95</sup> It was followed by a *People's Daily* article two days later, with an eye-catching headline: "Writing the 'Story of Spring' of Regionally Balanced Development." This article enthusiastically responded to the government's announcement, exclaiming, "It is very exciting to learn that decisions were made by the State Council to set up the Xiong'an New Area. This is another 'Story of Spring.'"<sup>96</sup> Within two weeks, regional and national media had excitedly published yet more articles explicitly connecting Xiong'an with Shenzhen, adopting titles such as: "In a Spring over 30 years ago, the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone rose from the earth, yet in another Spring 30-something years later, Xiong'an New Area blazes across the sky."<sup>97</sup> The reference to Shenzhen was not merely media hype. Although the Xiong'an plan was technically called a "New Area" rather than a "Special Economic Zone," Shenzhen was clearly stated as a precedent in the subsequently released official planning documents. The land designated as the "New Area" is a large territory of 2,000 square kilometers, currently occupied by agricultural villages and rural townships.<sup>98</sup> Multiple local government leaders who had been involved in Shenzhen's planning and development were transferred to the new government team heading up the Xiong'an project.

The desire to transpose the successful "Story of Spring" to a new national strategic project is not surprising. Throughout the past two decades, "The Story of Spring" has become a catchphrase for instant

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<sup>94</sup> CCTV News, "Jiaodian Fangtan" Qiannian Daji Guojia Dashi— Yi Xi Jinping Tongzhi Wei Hexin De Dang Zhongyang Juece Hebei Xiongan Xinqu Guihua Jianshe Jishi (Millennium Plan and State Affairs - the Documentary of Planning and Construction of Xiong'an New Area in Hebei Province with General Secretary Xi Jinping as the Core). (Beijing: CCTV, 2017).

<sup>95</sup> "Banhao Jianshe Xiongan Xinqu Zhejian Dashi (to Complete the Important Project of Constructing Xiongan New District with High Quality)," *People's Daily*, 2 April 2017.

<sup>96</sup> "Puxie Quyu Xiediao Fazhan "Chuntian De Gushi " (Writing the Story of Spring of Regionally Balanced Development)," *People's Daily*, 4 April 2017.

<sup>97</sup> Shujuan Bi, "Xiong'an Youwang Chengwei Lingyige Shenzhen (Xiong'an Could Be Another Shenzhen)," *China United Business News*, 17 April 2017.

<sup>98</sup> The People's Government of Hebei Province, "Hebei Xiongan Xinqu Guihua Gangyao (Principles of Xiongan New Area Planning)," (Hebei: The People's Government of Hebei Province, 2018).

success, a shorthand for China's post-1979 reforms and opening up. Regularly appearing in newspapers, books, television, and films, the phrase evokes an instant association with market reforms, economic growth, urbanization, and the Shenzhen SEZ. So, will Xiong'an become another "Story of Spring," matching, or surpassing, Shenzhen?<sup>99</sup> To begin to answer this question, it is worth reflecting upon the last 40 years of China's zone-based developments.

While the success of the Shenzhen SEZ has encouraged the Chinese central government to institute zonal strategies in cities across China, only a handful of those zones have been designated specifically as SEZs. Following the establishment of the first three SEZs of Shenzhen, Zhuhai, and Xiamen in 1980, China established SEZs in 14 coastal cities in 1984, and on the southern island Hainan Province in 1988. Since that first decade of reforms, China has only designated one additional Special Economic Zone: in 2010, the Kashgar Special Economic Zone was established in China's Xinjiang Autonomous Region. However, the Shenzhen zonal strategy was also institutionalized and replicated across China under other names, as part of a national push for expedited urban development. Various types of development zones emerged, designated by a variety of acronyms, including the EPZ (export processing zone), FTZ (free trade zone), HIDZ (high-tech industrial development zone), and BECZ (Border Economic Cooperation Zone). While these names suggest that each development zone type had a different purpose, in each case land expropriation and development—transforming thousands of acres of farmland into land for industrial and real-estate use—emerged as the quickest method to attract investment and generate revenue. The number of development zones in China peaked in 2003, with over 6,866 covering a total area of over 38,600 square kilometers; this exceeded the total area of all China's cities combined.<sup>100</sup> This phenomenon was appropriately described "Zone Fever" by a number of international observers, as well as by academics in China.<sup>101</sup> The resultant rapid decrease in agricultural land has since alarmed the central government, and impelled its leaders to be more cautious when authorizing exceptionalist zones.

Of all the various types of zones, the SEZ—with Shenzhen at the forefront—remains the most prominent. However, the central government has since shown more caution and deliberation with the design of SEZs than with the other acronyms in its catalogue—as evidenced by the fact that Kashgar is home to the only new SEZ established in China since the 1980s. While the previous SEZs were located in the more developed regions along China's eastern seacoast, the city of Kashgar is located in the Uygur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang at China's western border, next to other Asian countries such as Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, India, Mongolia, and Russia. Use of the "SEZ" nomenclature in this culturally diverse and politically sensitive region was deliberate, intended to connote economic goodwill

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<sup>99</sup> While this is perhaps an obvious question asked by many, I hold the opinion that with so much direct state-involvement in Xiong'an, in contrast to Shenzhen, the comparison is perhaps not very useful in terms of policy.

<sup>100</sup> Junfu Zhang, "Interjurisdictional Competition for FDI: The Case of China's "Development Zone Fever", " *Regional Science and Urban Economics* 41 (2011).

<sup>101</sup> Carolyn Cartier, "Zone Fever, the Arable Land Debate, and Real Estate Speculation: China's Evolving Land Use Regime and Its Geographical Contradictions," *Journal of Contemporary China* 10, no. 28 (2001).

and prosperity through its relationship to the success story of Shenzhen. During the initial days of the KKSEZ in 2010, China's state media agency Xinhua reported on the announcement enthusiastically: "The city [Kashgar] has never concealed its intention to emulate the success of Shenzhen, courtesy of a pairing assistance program, which saw the Shenzhen government take a leading role in steering Kashgar's development. In 2010, the slogan 'Shenzhen in the east, Kashgar in the west' became emblematic of the city's new status as an SEZ."<sup>102</sup> However, the Kashgar SEZ has not come close to meeting anticipated growth expectations based on the growth of Shenzhen.<sup>103</sup> It is not alone. Neither the other Special Economic Zones nor the variety of other "zone" developments in the country has reached Shenzhen's level of success. These results should cast some doubt on the idea that other zone developments could replicate the "Story of Spring."

Caution should be applied to the vast number of zone-based developments established around the world on the model of China's Special Economic Zones. When other countries seek to replicate China's SEZs, they are mostly referencing Shenzhen—not so much the other SEZs in China. Shenzhen has become the "poster child" for the Special Economic Zone strategy, and the rapid economic development experienced under Shenzhen's specific conditions has become inextricably associated with the concept of SEZs more generally. In economic, political, and public discourse, "Shenzhen" and "Special Economic Zone" have become one and the same. Shenzhen is used as a shorthand for "Special Economic Zone," when in fact the two are not interchangeable. The Shenzhen experiment, as a singular successful case, has overshadowed the numerous examples of zone-based urbanization and developments which have *not* flourished in the same way—despite investments in new town developments with transportation infrastructure, innovative housing, attractive museums, and lush parks. SEZ policy initiated the Shenzhen experiment, but the success of Shenzhen has depended on many other crucial factors beyond centralized policies, infrastructure construction, and foreign investments.

China's most recent central government policies plan to continue the country's path of economic growth through urbanization and new town creation. Over the next five years, 100 million rural residents will be urbanized. Hundreds of new cities are planned and under construction. Of the 156 major cities in China, 145 cities currently have governmental plans to extend and build new towns. The planned population of these new cities will double the country's current urban population. If Shenzhen is not a formalized and easily replicable top-down model, but a complex and shifting set of bottom-up and informal negotiations, as this thesis has argued, the path to successfully modernizing and urbanizing these new cities may not be so straightforward. The same goes for the many governments across the

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<sup>102</sup> "Across China: Kashgar's Silk Road Ambitions- from Backwater to Bridgehead," *Xinhua News*, August 1 2015.

<sup>103</sup> Bill Chou and Xuejie Ding, "A Comparative Analysis of Shenzhen and Kashgar in Development as Special Economic Zones," *East Asia* 32, no. 2 (2015).

world that are currently seeking to transform their own cities and economies based on the Shenzhen model.

Most of the new megacities in Asia and the global South are struggling with complex socioeconomic problems associated with rapid industrialization and urbanization. The most visible signs of these struggles are the prevalence of variations of informal settlements referred to as favelas, barrios, and slums. With rural migrants flocking to developing regional economic centers, the municipal governments are unable to keep up with the escalating demands of affordable housing and other public amenities. According to UN-Habitat, more than thirty percent of the urban population of developing countries live in slums, and the numbers are growing exponentially. The launch of China's state-backed One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative in 2017 has paved the way for the expansion of China's zonal development model through large-scale industrial and infrastructure projects. The ambitious initiative is set to reach over 60 countries and to impact billions of people around the world. As China promotes, invests, and constructs "Chinese Special Economic Zones" world-wide, it is worth reframing the questions we ask about Shenzhen. Rather than asking how quickly we can replicate Shenzhen, we should ask what previously overlooked lessons we can draw from its complex evolution.

### **Lessons and Policy Implications**

The historic and humanistic perspective is often missing from discussions of China's recent urbanization and economic development. Shenzhen may be a "one-generation city," but the success of the past 40 years must be considered with a long historical perspective. Any city that attempts to apply its lessons must carefully consider its own cultural history and social communities. The lesson of Shenzhen is not an easy "recipe" or "model" for an instant city, but rather a set of guidelines and questions to carry into the future. Moving forward, city-makers should seek to learn from the mechanisms of the local and the informal, combining bottom-up responsiveness with more controlled and directed top-down conditions. We must ask ourselves how we can begin to combine conventional ways of planning and space-making with other methods that are more flexible and adaptable, and how we can make room for the inevitable local differences, uncertainties, and temporalities that inform the processes of modernization and urbanization.

What lessons, then, can we take away from the stories of Shenzhen? First and foremost, we must recognize the complex dynamic between top-down and bottom-up processes that shaped the city's developmental history. Under the pre-1979 communist ideology, the centralization of political power was absolute. The SEZ policies gave unprecedented law-making and law-breaking powers to the Guangdong provincial government. The fact that the central government delegated political power in order to permit local trial and error, at the risk of undermining central control, is both a testament to the strength of Deng Xiaoping and a reflection of the urgency for change during that specific historical moment. Just as Shenzhen city planners learned to adjust master plans by accepting unplanned developments in the

physical environment, Shenzhen policy makers adjusted regulations to adapt to unanticipated bottom-up transformations in the city's economic and social operations. The central government's granting of "Special Policy, Flexible Implementation" allowed Shenzhen to create its own rules and regulations. Part of the implementation of the SEZ policy was *decentralization* of power, which, in practice, meant that many of the innovations that made Shenzhen successful were not pre-formulated by the central government as part of a top-down plan. These innovations were instead formulated at the local level, in real time, as the experiment unfolded. This reform process in Shenzhen, especially during the first decade, was marked by constant oscillation, contradiction, debate, and uncertainty. Even after six years, Deng Xiaoping himself was not so sure of Shenzhen's future. In his 1985 talk with an Algerian delegation, Deng candidly stated: "The Shenzhen Special Economic Zone is an experiment. It will be some time before we know whether we are doing the right thing there. It is something new under socialism. We hope to make it a success, but if it fails, we can learn from the experience."<sup>104</sup>

However, Shenzhen was more than an attempt to try "something new under socialism." Shenzhen was a critical experiment. The city was trying something different from and, in many ways, contradictory to what China had stood for since the 1949 establishment of the People's Republic of China and its policies initiating a planned economy. The "Special Economic Zone" policy was a critical experiment in reversing the status quo, and its establishment served as an admission by the central government that what was happening outside the "zone" needed to change. Policy reforms and innovations took place at the local level, enabled by the decentralization of power but also driven by the necessity of survival and the insights of local leaders and citizens. This experimentation included radical changes to the foundational operations of China's governance, such as *hukou* reforms and the decentralization of administrative powers, which reversed the pre-1979 Mao policy of restricting and blocking rural migration to cities. Control of population flow and movement, through the *hukou* system of rural and urban designations tied to specific locations, was the most fundamental governing structure of a planned socialist economy. Shenzhen eroded that rigid control structure in order to attract people, bringing a wealth of new talents—some from the most unexpected places and individuals—to bear on the future of the city as millions migrated to the SEZ.

The success of Shenzhen has, in turn, resulted in the central government's incorporation of such locally developed strategies into a national zonal development strategy. When SEZ policies were applied elsewhere, the increased competition for talent gave Shenzhen the motivation to continue *hukou* policy innovations designed to attract and retain such talent. The nationwide *hukou* reforms currently underway in China are testament to the reverberations of Shenzhen's experimentations on population flow and urban citizenship. Such dynamics of top-down and bottom-up governance—at the central (Beijing), local

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<sup>104</sup> Xiaoping Deng, "Gaige Kaifang Shi Henda De Shiyan (Reform and Opening to the Outside World Are a Great Experiment)," in *Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan (Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping)*, ed. Zhonggong Zhongyang Wenxian Yanjiushi (CCCPC Party Literature Research Office) (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1996 (first published 1985)).



(Shenzhen), municipal (mayor), and individual (citizen) level—warrant further excavation and examination.

Policy makers seeking to replicate Shenzhen's success must begin to recognize the pivotal role of the local and the plural in its development. Shenzhen—like every city—is not a singular transferable model but a plurality, informed by local conditions and local communities. City-makers must consider the specific characteristics of *time* and *place*, including local geography and local resources. They must recognize that “instant cities” do not spring up from a blank slate, and consider a long view of the past in addition to projecting the future. They must consider *people*, recognizing that local entrepreneurs, leaders, and most importantly residents—like the many individuals featured in this thesis—have a vital role to play in the development of any city. Shenzhen's earliest industry and economy were the result of local efforts during a highly specific time, in a very unique geography. Much of Shenzhen's industry and infrastructure was due to the informal responsive efforts of its formerly rural population. While the city would eventually attract millions from various socioeconomic backgrounds, during its initial decade Shenzhen had to recruit talent. And when a large migrant population did arrive, planning and construction could not keep pace with demand. Shenzhen's projected population has always underestimated its actual population, and as a result its planned housing provisions and infrastructure have only ever been able to accommodate a fraction of its people. It was the pre-existing rural population who took the opportunity to establish housing and meet other basic needs for most of the new migrants. Shenzhen's invisible and “unplanned” populations are key to understanding the complex nature of urban construction, land expropriation, property rights, and housing affordability.

In addition, there were few foreign investments in Shenzhen without local connections during the city's earliest years. While one of the main economic strategies vested in the Shenzhen SEZ involved attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), far more investment came from domestic than from foreign sources during its first, and arguably most crucial, decade. Moreover, the vast majority of FDI bestowed on Shenzhen came from Hong Kong. This development might seem obvious due to the two cities' geographic proximity, but it depended on the historic specificity of Hong Kong's relationship to the Pearl River Delta region through clan and village kinship ties. Hong Kong entrepreneurs were not primarily investing in large industrial parks or joint ventures with state enterprises, but rather were mostly working with the tens of thousands of small local enterprises in Shenzhen. Most of these investments were rooted in partnerships with local rural populations and village collectives. While the Shenzhen SEZ was sharply criticized for relying so heavily on domestic and Hong Kong investment, this unique circumstance had the advantage of not only diversifying funding sources, types, and industries in the Shenzhen SEZ, but also allowing for the transfer of basic knowledge and technologies from Hong Kong investors and managers to the local population.

## Global Impact

The contemporary proliferation of urban developments labelled as various zones around the world has generated much interest and discussion.<sup>105</sup> The zone is re-imagined, as speculated by Keller Easterling (2008), as the new strategies to build new cities under the increasingly neo-liberalized world economy. According to Easterling, “The zone is now the new urban paradigm,” and “the zone launders identity.”<sup>106</sup> The zone is perceived as a historical non-place, a corporate or state enclave that erases the past history and former social structure in order to rebuild a brand new urban network for global capitalism in the legal lacunae and political quarantine provided by the all-powerful state. Special Economic Zones (SEZs), according to Aihwa Ong (2006), are the outcomes of “distinctive re-territorialization of the national space to develop sites of capitalist growth”.<sup>107</sup> These zones of “neoliberal exceptions” challenge criteria of citizenship, morality of economic activities and definition of space under the market mechanism.

Since 1960s, developing countries such as Brazil, India, Kenya, Malaysia created Export Processing Zones to create jobs and promote international trades.<sup>108</sup> Encouraged by the radical applications of the concept of zones in Shenzhen and other areas, zonal strategies became popular worldwide. In 2006, there were 3,500 special zones of various types in 130 countries, approximately 44 times the number in 1975.<sup>109</sup> China’s neighboring countries are setting up jointly operating special zones, expecting to learn the success of Shenzhen. North Korea is setting up an area at Rason City with flexible policies to build a modern port to develop international logistics, trade, tourism, and high-end manufacturing. The North Korea authority believes it will become the country’s Shenzhen.<sup>110</sup> Burma passed a new special economic zone law and its port city of Tavoy in the South is looking towards the Shenzhen model. Even in Latin America, a “new” model of city building, the *Charter City* plan in Honduras is openly citing Shenzhen as its source of inspiration.

China had started promoting the SEZ model worldwide, most recently and visibly by its substantial investments in ‘economic cooperation zones’ in countries in Africa and other developing

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<sup>105</sup> Carolyn Cartier. “‘Zone Fever’, the Arable Land Debate, and Real Estate Speculation: China’s Evolving Land Use Regime and Its Geographical Contradictions.” *Journal of Contemporary China*, 10, no.28 (2001b): 445-469.

M. Engman, O. Onoder & E. Pinali. “Export Processing Zones: Past and Future Development.” *OECD Trade Policy Working Paper* No. 53, May 22, 2007.

David Harvey. “The Right to the City”, *New Left Review*, no. 53 (2008): 23-40.

Ananya Roy. “Civic Governmentality: The Politics of Inclusion in Beirut and Mumbai”, *Antipode* 41, no.1 (2009): 159-179.

Michael Levien. “Special Economic Zones and Accumulation by Dispossession in India.” *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 11, no.4 (2011).

<sup>106</sup> Keller Easterling. “Zone.” In Ilka & Andreas Ruby (Eds.), *Urban Transformation* (Berlin: Ruby Press, 2008), pp.30-45.

<sup>107</sup> Aihwa Ong. “Mutations in Citizenship”, *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 2-3 (2006): 499-531.

<sup>108</sup> Claude Baissac. Brief history of SEZs and overview of policy debates. In Thomas Farole, *Special Economic Zones in Africa: Comparing Performance and Learning from Global Experience* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2011).

<sup>109</sup> Michael Engman, Osamu Onoder & Enrico Pinali. “Export Processing Zones: Past and Future Development.” *OECD Trade Policy Working Paper* No. 53, May 22, 2007.

<sup>110</sup> X. Zhou. “North Korea Investment Zone Promoted to Chinese as Next Shenzhen.” *Bloomberg*. September 12, 2012.

regions.<sup>111</sup> From 2006 to 2011, there were six zones being constructed by China in Africa, namely in Zambia, Egypt, Mauritius, Ethiopia and two in Nigeria.<sup>112</sup> It may be too soon to evaluate the economic effectiveness and social impact of these zones, yet it is already worrisome that the model of Shenzhen SEZ is regarded as a prototype that is ready for rapid application in various localities. Careless transplantation of urbanization strategy from one locality to another may result in devastating consequences such as the erasure of deep local history, as well as the mismatch between international resource and dire need of local communities.

While most host countries of Chinese-initiated SEZs have welcomed these projects, they have faced challenges in exactly these areas—in other words, challenges associated with engaging local participation and facilitating the transfer of expertise. Observations of the recent international SEZs have noted serious problems related to local context and people: “As for investments for instance, local entrepreneurs in African SEZ-host countries have complained about not being allowed to invest and develop their businesses in the zones. Besides, modernisation and urbanisation around the regions that host the SEZs can create social and spatial inequalities between these hubs and other parts of the country. People who were living in the areas where the zones are built have been displaced—sometimes without compensation—and lost their livelihoods. Chinese Special Economic Zones in African countries currently do not really appear to involve local entrepreneurs and populations’ needs in term of investments and employment. National policies around the SEZ therefore have to be strategic and well managed.” Within the Shenzhen SEZ, “local entrepreneurs” were not only involved but were amongst the most important economic and creative driving forces. The displacement of “people who were living in the areas” in order to facilitate the construction of SEZs is not only happening in Chinese SEZs in African countries. Displacement and forced relocation of villagers for the construction of SEZs has been reported in India and other South Asian countries.<sup>113</sup> Again, this was not the case in Shenzhen, where housing provisions and employment opportunities created by the original villagers were essential to the SEZ’s survival and eventual success. The “model” makers, some intentionally and others unintentionally, have created a misleading image of the city that strips away much of the nuance, conflict, and ingenuity involved in its development, as well as the contributions of its original residents

However, perhaps the greatest lesson that Shenzhen has to teach is the lesson of *purpose*. Shenzhen is a Special Economic Zone—this is a fundamental and irrefutable fact. But Shenzhen is not *only* a Special Economic Zone. Rather, Shenzhen is a dynamic and complex city, whose qualities cannot be reduced to the apparatus of a single policy, or even a suite of strategies, used to establish an SEZ. One of the most problematic misconceptions about Shenzhen is calling it merely an “illustration” of the

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<sup>111</sup> Claude Baissac. Brief history of SEZs and overview of policy debates. In Thomas Farole, *Special Economic Zones in Africa: Comparing Performance and Learning from Global Experience* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2011).

<sup>112</sup> Deborah Brautigam & Xiaoyang Tang. "African Shenzhen: China's Special Economic Zones in Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 49, no. 1 (2011).

<sup>113</sup> Physicians for Human Rights, "A Foreseeable Disaster in Burma: Forced Displacement in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone," (New York, NY: Physicians for Human Rights,, 2014).

Chinmoy Banerjee, "Tea Garden Workers in Bangladesh Resist Displacement by Sez," (New Westminster, BC: South Asian Network for Secularism and Democracy, 2016).

effectiveness of SEZ policies. I question the assumption that Shenzhen's success is mainly due to SEZ policies. By extension, I do not subscribe to the assumption that the SEZ policy is the most effective instrument to emulate, or to learn from, in the case of Shenzhen. Shenzhen's success is founded in the efforts of local city-makers to create not just a "zone," but a real city. While economic zones are invested in quick returns, cities are invested in the future, engaged in building endeavors and institutions whose rewards may not be reaped for many years. The aspirations of Shenzhen initial leaders for Shenzhen SEZ to become a comprehensive city—in other words, more than an industrial export processing zone—were exemplified by Liang Xiang, Shenzhen's mayor from 1981 to 1985. Liang Xiang saw the value in establishing schools, universities, and technology parks—investments in future generations—alongside the factories and commercial buildings built for rapid economic returns. City-makers who look to Shenzhen must understand this distinction in purpose, striving to build dynamic and sustainable cities rather than mere economic zones.

Viewed as a comprehensive city rather than a zone, Shenzhen is truly unique among China's SEZs. Most SEZs are significantly smaller in land area than Shenzhen. In 1980, the Shenzhen SEZ encompassed 327.5 square kilometers mainly south of the Second Line Border (although in 2010, it was redesignated as the 2,000 square kilometers comprising the entire city). Of the other SEZs designated in the same period, Zhuhai SEZ was 6.8 square kilometers, Xiamen SEZ was 2.5 square kilometers, and Shantou SEZ was 1.6 square kilometers.<sup>114</sup> These SEZs were already larger than the zone development precedents from around the world prior to China's efforts in 1979. The exaggerated size of the Shenzhen SEZ was often criticized by detractors and became the most significant practical challenge for its early leaders. It is certainly true that a bigger SEZ is *not* necessarily a better SEZ, and there are examples of failures among zone developments larger than Shenzhen. However, the scale of the Shenzhen SEZ enabled it to be more inclusive of functions, programs, industries, and communities closely associated with the concept of a comprehensive city. Shenzhen experienced difficult years during its fledgling decade, and its success was far from obvious or "instant" during this period. However, the local leadership's decisions to devote substantial proportions of limited municipal resources to schools, parks, and civic programs during these initial years enabled Shenzhen to later become a fully functioning city.

This research challenges the current planning and design directions of the urban villages and the overall city, with the ultimate goal to impact policy changes for the betterment of the future of the city. The findings of this project aim to offer an important breakthrough at the empirical and theoretical levels of the research and literature on Shenzhen's urbanization, informal urban development, and planning policy. Through offering a different perspective on Shenzhen's rapid urbanization, the eventual impact is

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<sup>114</sup> Zemin Jiang, "Shezhi Jingji Tequ, Jiakuai Jingji Fazhan (Setting up Sez, Accelerating Economic Development)," in *Jiang Zemin Wenxuan (an Anthology of Jiang Zemin)* (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1980). "Chuangban Jingji Tequ (Establishing Sez)," in *Xi Zhongxun Zhuzheng Guangdong (Xi Zhongxun Leading Guangdong)* (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe 2008).

to influence and direct future research on the Shenzhen and other associate cities around the world in terms of urban studies, planning, and architecture.

Informal settlements historically demonstrate a high degree of resilience against redevelopment. The complexity in land ownership, settlers' uncertainty to the redeveloped future, and the essential social roles that the informal settlements play are some major factors that had led to the persisting resistance. Dharavi in Mumbai, the largest slum in Asia,<sup>115</sup> being situated in the center of the urbanized area, was an idyllic fishing village until the early twentieth century. Although in 1971, the State of Maharashtra had passed Slum Areas Act to foster slum improvement and clearance, only limited actions had succeeded in implementation. Although two ambitious redevelopment projects had been proposed on the area of Dharavi historically- the Modak-Mayer Dharavi Layout in 1948 and the Prime Minister's Grant Program in 1985, both had failed to be substantially implemented. Since the late 1970s, a number of community-based organization became active on issues concerning developmental actions in slums in Mumbai, namely the National Slum Dwellers' Federation (NSDF) since 1974, the Society for the Protection of Area Resources Centres (SPARC) since 1984 and Mahila Milan since 1986. These three organizations collectively name themselves as the Alliance. These organized community forces, according to Arjun Appadurai (2001), "has articulated new relations to urban governmentality."<sup>116</sup> Following the initial state approval of the Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP) in February 2004, there were major demolition programs conducted in Dharavi 2004-2005, with the coordination of state actions. However, due to the complexities and contentions on the project, the first developmental draft was not approved by the state government until 2013.<sup>117</sup>

The Shenzhen municipal government launched an aggressive redevelopment masterplan in 2005 to demolish and reconstruct the urban villages of the city.<sup>118</sup> This research demonstrates that the ambitious planning, the number of large-scale urban village redevelopments as well as the volume of demolitions and redevelopments in the period of 2005-2015 are far below the planned intentions. More prevalent, however, are urban village renovations and small-scale redevelopment projects of public spaces, streets, and buildings within the neighborhood scale of most of the urban villages. Moreover, most of the urban village incremental renovations have been a continuous process since the earliest stages of Shenzhen's urbanization beginning in 1980 till the present day. The unique spatial pattern of the former villages meant that Shenzhen's most affordable housing was evenly distributed throughout its most urbanized centers. The spatial arrangement had enabled the majority of working population to live close to their places of work. The current trend of urban village redevelopment has many implications for

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<sup>115</sup> Kalpana Sharma. *Rediscovering Dharavi: Stories from Asia's Largest Slum*. (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2000).

<sup>116</sup> Arjun Appadurai. "Deep democracy: urban governmentality and the horizon of politics", *Environment & Urbanization* 13, no. 2 (2001): 23-43.

<sup>117</sup> Ravikiran Deshmukh. "Dharavi Redevelopment Project: After 9-year wait, draft for redevelopment gets state nod." *Midday*. 2013, August 8, Retrieved February 28, 2014.

<sup>118</sup> Shenzhen Urban Planning Bureau (SUPB). "Shenzhen Shi Chenghongcun (Jiucun) Gaizhao Zongti Guihua Gangyao (2005-2010) [*Master Plan of Urban Village Redevelopment 2005-2010*]," Shenzhen Urban Planning Bureau Document (2005).



the future development of Shenzhen. Will the city's transportation network be crippled by the increasing congestion due to decreased walkability? Will Shenzhen hit an economic crisis when the urban villages are redeveloped to a scale that renders the city unaffordable to the labor force? As in its past thirty years, the present reality and future possibilities of these former village sites continue to transform the urban landscape and economic vitality of Shenzhen.

## Epilogue

A clear distinction between formal and informal is impossible since any kind of urban development shares a certain degree of both. The current pervasive framework of top-down and bottom-up in understanding the urban villages are limiting because it only indexes planning. This thesis addresses the current lack of nuance and details in the study of urban village developments, which had led to problems of overgeneralized statements and unproductive debates. While a limited number of past research works have addressed the co-evolution of the villages and the city in Shenzhen, the interrelations and differences in the development process and spatial outcomes between informal and formal development in Shenzhen previously lacked systematic examination. In addition, this research expands on the theoretical framework of urban informality in understanding the land development process in Shenzhen by retracing the constant interactions between the formal and informal, rural and urban. This research contributes to the emerging critique on the dualism of the formal and informal as insufficient in examining the case of "informal settlements" such as the urban villages due to their intertwined relationships with the formal land administration and planning sectors. This thesis constructs a socio-spatial framework of research aiming to be more holistic and productive. Further understanding of the nuanced reciprocal, push-and-pull, relationships between formal planning and informal responses must be constructed upon the foundational knowledge that this proposed research aims to provide, namely, the knowledge of how the urban villages have been conducting incremental renovations of public spaces, streetscape, basic infrastructure, and building qualities within the neighborhood scale throughout Shenzhen's urbanization process from 1979 to the present. Through dissecting the parallel impacts and interactions between the informal and planning sectors throughout the development history of the SEZ, the framework of this thesis systematically presents the potentials of incorporating informality in future formal spatial and economic planning.

At a larger scale, this thesis set out to tell a new history of the city, inclusive of the many perspectives and positions, the many conflicts and negotiations, that shaped the evolution of Shenzhen. This thesis argues that a faithful account of the city's social and material landscape *must* zoom in to the level of the local artifacts, natural features, infrastructures, buildings, animals, and humans who define it. We can learn a great deal more about this remarkable city by moving beyond the centralized plans for—and the standard narratives about—its development, and instead studying the local, informal, and often contradictory ways in which it *actually* developed. By tracing the transformations in individual

lives, communities, events, and material landscapes of Shenzhen, this thesis connects temporal, spatial, social, cultural, political, and economic discourse to present a new portrait of this complex and exceptional city. Shenzhen and its urban villages offers the world new perspectives on urgent issues such as collaborative governance, cultural continuity, inclusive community, flexible planning, the informal economy, and the rural-urban continuum. This research contends that the most unexpected and valuable insights offered by Shenzhen are those that contrast with generic misconceptions about its development and its success.

Generalizations of Shenzhen as an instant city that had no prior history and culture pave the way for assumptions of the power of state control and master planning. Shenzhen holds important lessons for cultural history, community organization, informal development, flexible planning, and sustainable growth. As the majority of the world population is living in cities, Shenzhen's urban villages demonstrate the values of place and people that have become mistakenly seen as replicable within the rush of creating economic zones and cities of the globalizing world. The transformations of individual lives, massive changes to natural ecologies, outsized constructions of physical environments, volatile political and institutional fluctuations, and rapid shifting of ethical standards and value systems, all await further evolution, implementation, and eventual evaluation. The full impact of the transformational changes of the post-1979 reforms, especially those radical changes to national governance and operations, are still being played out in Shenzhen and elsewhere in the world.

In the decades and even centuries ahead, Shenzhen will most likely face additional challenges, including disasters both natural and man-made. Given the current accelerated urbanization and population growth, the scales of the future challenges will correspondingly escalate in China and around the world. Globalization is not selective in its progressive benefits and consequences. What can we leave behind to prepare future generations for an ever-globalizing and destabilizing world? Shenzhen holds important lessons for cultural history, community organization, informal development, flexible planning, and sustainable growth. Careless transplantation of urbanization strategies from one locality to another may result in devastating consequences, including the erasure of deep local histories as well as a mismatch between international resources and the needs of local communities. As the majority of the world's population continues to migrate into cities, the lessons of Shenzhen will only take on increasing global importance in the years to come.



**Figure 53** Graffiti on a border wall of Shenzhen's Nantou Urban Village. Throughout its past 40 years of development, informal initiatives and bottom-up actions by individuals and communities in Shenzhen has inadvertently provided for millions left out of civic provisions of the city's formal planning. These neighborhoods hold the key to the city's socio-cultural vitality as well as continued economic sustainability, both in the past and for the future. This particular Shenzhen lesson is the antithesis of the currently globalizing "China Model".

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