Power of Narratives and Narratives of Power: Storytelling of, in, and for Placemaking in "Nantou Ancient City" in Shenzhen, China

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Power of Narratives and Narratives of Power:
Storytelling *of*, *in*, and *for* Placemaking in "Nantou Ancient City" in Shenzhen, China

By

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Bachelor of Engineering in Urban Planning, Tongji University, 2019

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master in Design Studies
Critical Conservation

At the Harvard University Graduate School of Design

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Di Zeng
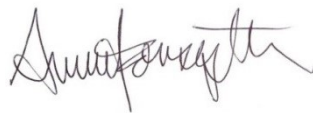Harvard University Graduate School of Design

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Power of Narratives and Narratives of Power

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Master in Design Studies Thesis

Harvard University Graduate School of Design

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Contents

Abstract

Urban planning and placemaking are in part implemented through storytelling. What are the dominant and demotic or popular narratives of, in, and for placemaking during the regeneration process of urban villages recently and over the past decades in Shenzhen? What are the embedded power relations among their narrators? There are two reasons these questions are important. First, the present and past historical, political, and cultural narratives have become useful tools for dominant narrators to manipulate placemaking, achieving their desired outcomes at high speed and excluding the "undesirable" groups. Second, those creating the demotic or informal stories have constructed an important part of the city's development but are relatively powerless faced with the dominant ones. This thesis challenges orthodox storytelling, providing a new perspective in examining how "culture" acts as an agent in urban regeneration that draws more attention to bottom-up narratives told by the less empowered group.

In making this sense, I examine the case of "Nantou Ancient City," where the conception of "culture" has been introduced into the regeneration strategy of the urban village. The thesis first articulates the historic and demotic narratives ranging from ancient times to the recent past to reveal what made this place's identity before regeneration, which is essential to understanding the foundation of present interventions. In the next step, I analyze how the central political will, nostalgia and patriotic emotions, middle-class values, and a closed benefit coalition are embedded in the rhetoric of planning strategies and actions. Finally, the thesis finds out that the "Nantou Ancient City" is packed by the new branded identity of an internet-famous place for tourism and consumption and the "future heritage" conception, which has served the spatial cleansing of the blue-collar migrants while attracting the rising creative class.

Chapter 1   **Introduction**

"What are at issue are competing histories of the present, wielded as arguments over what should be the future." [1]

-- Doreen Massey, 1995

BACKGROUND

"Regeneration," in biology, refers to the natural process of restoration or renewal of damaged cells, tissues, and organs for creatures. "Urban regeneration," as implied by the name, bears the metaphorical meaning of restoring decayed and problematic urban spaces, and bringing new vitality to the city. The notion of urban regeneration dates back to the post-war period in the 1950s among western countries, when they conducted reconstruction and extension of city's older areas and evolved to a more comprehensive urban strategy in the 1980s to achieve neighborhood revitalization. [2] Since the mid-1980s, under the background of de-industrialization and post-Fordism, culture-led regeneration has become a global mainstream starting in Europe. This involved the methods of reshaping the city image, promoting the development of cultural and creative industries, and attracting the "creative class," [3] to achieve social unity and new urban prosperity.

In China's context, urban regeneration practices have involved decades of demolition and reconstruction accompanied by rapid urbanization. In recent years, the direction of urban regeneration strategies has changed to making comprehensive improvements in decayed areas.

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[1] Doreen Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," *History Workshop Journal* 39, no. 1 (1995): 182–92, https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/39.1.182.

[2] Peter Roberts, "The Evolution, Definition and Purpose of Urban Regeneration," in *Urban Regeneration: A Handbook* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2008), 9–36, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446219980.

[3] Richard L. Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2005).

Terms such as "micro-regeneration" and "organic regeneration" were coined to propose the models of relatively small-scale and detailed interventions to improve the urban environment and tackle social issues. With industry transformation in full swing in the post-industrial cities, culture-led regeneration became the most popular modality in nationwide planning experiments and practices since the last decade.[4] Representative cases include artist-led regeneration of the "Seven-Nine-Eight" industrial park in Beijing, creative industry-led regeneration of the Tianzifang neighborhood in Shanghai, protective regeneration of the old South City cultural district in Nanjing, and tourism-oriented redevelopment in Pingjiang Road in Suzhou.

This thesis examines narratives pertaining to regeneration in the context of Shenzhen. It asks two questions. What are the dominant and demotic or popular narratives of, in, and for placemaking during the regeneration process of urban villages recently and over the past decades in Shenzhen? What are the embedded power relations among their narrators? Though the municipality has been established for only forty years, Shenzhen is a city in need of regeneration due to its many urban villages, the by-products of rapid urbanization. For many years, urban development and villages have been in opposition in official discourse, especially when the urban village typology usually occupies the most valuable land while appearing disordered with informal housing, low-income migrants, and unregulated businesses. The previous approach mostly adopted large-scale demolition and reconstruction for regeneration, replacing these problematic "organs" for land value capture and creating a seemingly more "beautiful" city. In the past half-decade, scholars started to reexamine the value of urban villages and the relation between them and the city. The historical and cultural values of urban villages raised the public's attention, causing a different approach to redevelop these areas, which I call a policy turn.

I examine the case of the Nantou Ancient City, or Jiujie Village, where the conception of "culture" has been introduced into the regeneration strategy of the urban village. Previously,

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[4] Jianqiang Yang and Yue Chen, "Review on the Development of Urban Regeneration in China from 1949 to 2019," *City Planning Review* 44, no. 02 (2020): 9-19+31.

Jiujie was a typical urban village located on the Shennan Boulevard in the central Nanshan district, with 90% of its population being migrant tenants. Branded as "an ancient city of 1,700 years,"[5] this urban village has been transformed into a cultural district designated as a demonstration project for urban village regeneration. In the context of the city's attitude toward urban villages for decades, the case of Nantou is an unprecedented policy turn to micro-regeneration and has received good reviews on the internet for its "preservation of Shenzhen's history and memory" and "representative of Shenzhen's culture."[6] The project was proposed in early 2019, and by August 2020, the first stage of regeneration was finished. Within merely five months, the implementation was completed, including negotiating leasing contracts with owners of 88 buildings, replacing all the tenants, and conducting the construction.

Based on field research of this process, I argue that the micro-regeneration project has been packed by fabricated stories and has caused the large-scale displacement of the residents under the mask of retaining physical spaces. In making this sense, the following chapters first articulate the historic and demotic narratives ranging from ancient times to the recent past to reveal what made this place's identity before regeneration, which is essential to understanding the foundation of present interventions. In the next step, I analyze how the central political will, nostalgia and patriotic emotions, middle-class values, and a closed benefit coalition are embedded in the rhetoric of planning strategies and actions. Finally, the thesis finds out that the "Nantou Ancient City" is packed by the new branded identity of an internet-famous place for tourism and consumption and the "future heritage" conception, which has served the spatial cleansing of the blue-collar migrants while attracting the rising creative class.

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[5] "南头古城蝶变 (The Stunning Transformation of the Nantou Ancient City)," 深圳市南山区人民政府 (Shenzhen Nanshan District Government), accessed March 24, 2021, http://www.szns.gov.cn/ztzl/nsrdzt/ntgcdb/index.html.

[6] Ibid.

NARRATIVE AS AN APPROACH TO PLACE

Narrative, as Phelan has raised, is defined as a "rhetorical act: somebody telling somebody else on some occasion and for some purpose(s) that something happened."[7] It plays a significant role in communicating meanings between individuals and the culturally constituted world. As Hannah Arendt argues, politics in human society are embedded in a power relationship between private and public realms, and storytelling serves as a medium that could bridge these realms and transform private into public meanings.[8,9] Based on Arendt's point, Michael Jackson also concludes that storytelling is "a vital human strategy for sustaining a sense of agency in the face of disempowering circumstances."[10] It means that narratives are reconstructed experiences that people keep reworking in conversation with others or in their own imaginations.

In circumstances of high modernity, the consumption system contributes greatly to the transfer of stories and meanings. Individuals build up self-identity through their plural choices, choices of work, daily goods, etc., while their choices are largely dominated by external constraints.[11] Therefore, cultural meanings could be transferred from the public to individuals through the controlled advertising system and consumer goods.[12] In this sense, narratives, whether verbal or visual, text-based or non-texted-based, are the carriers of meanings that negotiate between general understandings and individual experiences.

Places are intersections of narratives. On the one hand, as Ryan and others suggest, "Space is

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[7] James Phelan, *Experiencing Fiction: Judgments, Progressions, and the Rhetorical Theory of Narrative* (The Ohio State University Press, 2007), 3.

[8] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Charles R. Walgreen Foundation Lectures (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

[9] Michael Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling: Variations on a Theme by Hannah Arendt*, Second edition. (Copenhagen: Museum Musculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2013).

[10] Ibid., 34.

[11] Anthony Giddens, "Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age" (Cambridge: Polity Pr, Polity Press, 1991).

[12] Grant David McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

a relatively neglected dimension of narrative, especially when compared to time."[13]

Environmental settings, such as location, arrangement, distance, etc., are the spatial elements, while these elements' connotative meanings will be established in a given narrative. It is to say, when the physical settings are shaped by human activities and cognitions, the generated narratives construct a *place*. On the other, in the era of globalization, the "time-space compression" redefines the conception of place. The flows and convergence of transportation and migration disrupt the old coherence of "local." [14] Place's identity no longer exclusively lies in their long-term, internal historical narratives but is naturally intruded and reshaped by the interwoven narratives in a global network.

Narratives act as an important instrument in the process of planning and placemaking. Throgmorton argues that planning itself serves as persuasive storytelling about a place's future, and good planning should "include collecting and telling stories about both the past and the future" and "should enable diverse stories to inform and potentially transform one another."[15] It echoes with the notion of participatory planning and communicative planning, which propose to engage multiple stakeholders' for better communication and collaboration. [16,17] However, as Purcell raises, there exist limitations in the communicative process, since the communicative desire to neutralize power might impose particular relations of power.[18]

Therefore, a re-examination of the planning and placemaking process through the view of

[13] Marie-Laure Ryan, Kenneth Foote, and Maoz Azaryahu, *Narrating Space / Spatializing Narrative: Where Narrative Theory and Geography Meet*, Theory and Interpretation of Narrative (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2016), 16.

[14] Doreen B. Massey and P. M. Jess, *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures and Globalization*, Shape of the World ; v.4 (Oxford, England ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[15] James A. Throgmorton, "Planning as Persuasive Storytelling in a Global-Scale Web of Relationships," *Planning Theory* 2, no. 2 (July 1, 2003): 125–51, https://doi.org/10.1177/14730952030022003.

[16] John Forester, *The Deliberative Practitioner: Encouraging Participatory Planning Processes* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999).

[17] Mark Purcell, "Resisting Neoliberalization: Communicative Planning or Counter-Hegemonic Movements?," *Planning Theory (London, England)* 8, no. 2 (2009): 140–65, https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095209102232.

[18] Ibid.

narratives is needed to understand how different stories from the past, present, and different narrators, actually act in shaping a place's future. Ameel introduces a three-fold taxonomy of examining narratives in the context of planning, which is bounded with the sequence of the planning process.[19] Based on Ameel's argument, I establish the framework (fig 1-1), which is the narratives *of*, *in*, and *for* placemaking, to deconstruct the intersections of old and localized narratives, the use of narratives in placemaking, and the narratives for a new fabricated identity.[20] Here is the meaning of the three types of narratives:

(1) Narratives *of* placemaking: the previously formed historical and vernacular stories of the place before the intervention that planners could refer to and utilize.

(2) Narratives *in* Placemaking: policy documents, actions, and process in the planning and practice period, which are the rhetoric strategies actors put into the place.

(3) Narratives *for* Placemaking: the storytelling after or alongside the implementation that acts as a branding agent in creating new localized identity.

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[19] Lieven Ameel, *The Narrative Turn in Urban Planning: Plotting the Helsinki Waterfront* (London: Routledge, 2020).

[20] I revised the usage of the three propositions based on Ameel's argument, which is "narratives *for*, *in*, and *of* planning" since I understand the narratives *of* placemaking as the place's more naturally formed stories from the past and present, and the narratives *for* placemaking function as instrumental stories for a future fabricated place identity.
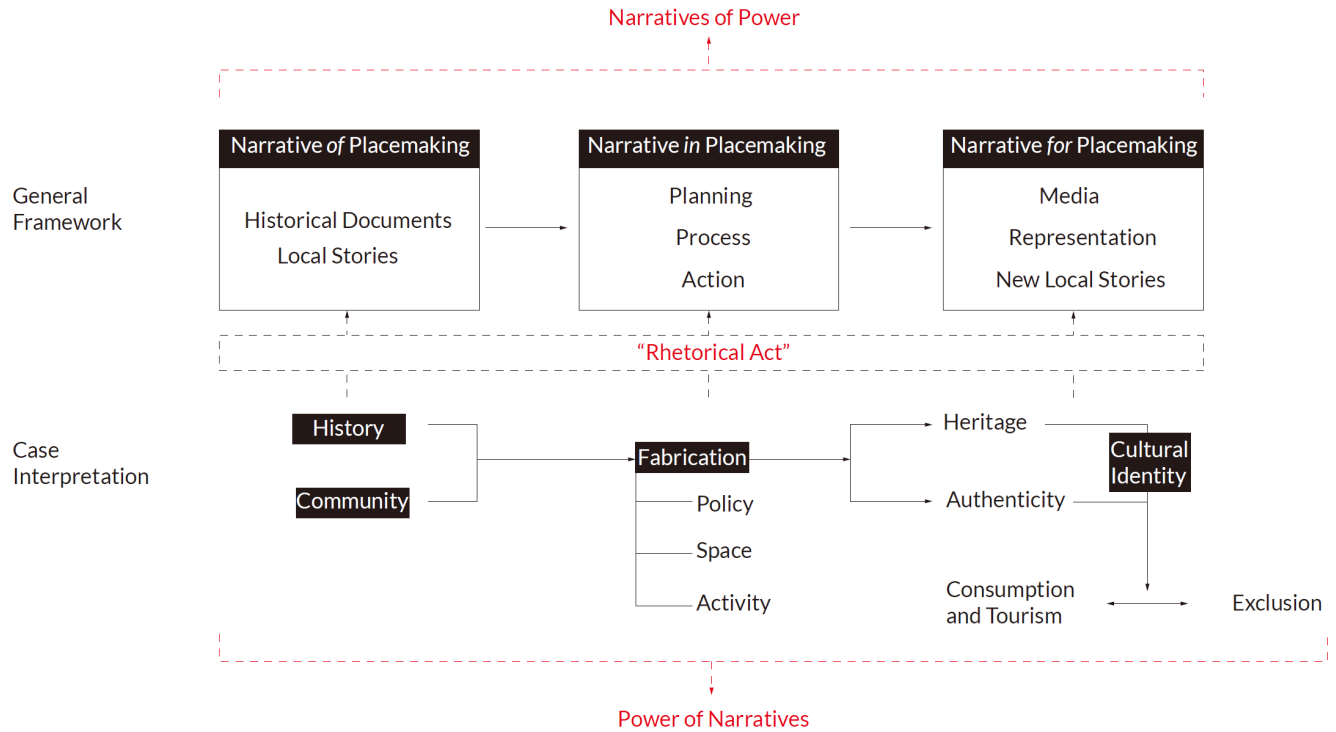
Narratives of Power

Narrative *of* Placemaking

Historical Documents
Local Stories

Narrative *in* Placemaking

Planning
Process
Action

Narrative *for* Placemaking

Media
Representation
New Local Stories

General Framework

"Rhetorical Act"

Case Interpretation

History

Community

Fabrication

Policy
Space
Activity

Heritage

Authenticity

Consumption and Tourism

Cultural Identity

Exclusion

Power of Narratives

Fig 1-1. The Thesis Framework

RESEARCH AIM AND METHODOLOGY

This thesis aims to challenge orthodox storytelling, providing a new perspective in examining how culture acts as an "agent" in urban regeneration that draws more attention to bottom-up narratives told by the less empowered group. It focuses on the conception and making of place identity in the urban village regeneration and deconstructs how it appropriated and commissioned the local narratives. At the same time, the thesis seeks dialogue with existing studies on urban villages in China about land economics, property rights, stakeholder interest, migrant's housing rights, urban governance, and the recently raised topics of cultural events and urban villages' heritage value.

The research mainly uses the method of qualitative analysis, proceeding with a combination of historic study, policy study, spatial analysis, and field research. Data mainly comes from literature, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and web scraping. Field research

happened during January 2020, and a return visit was conducted during January 2021. Interviews (N=30) involved representatives of multiple stakeholders, including migrant tenants, homeowners and sub-lessors, employees in the real estate development company, sub-district government staff, planners and designers in the design company, and tourists.

Chapter 2   Narratives *of* Placemaking – Understanding the Past, Understanding the Present

STORY OF THE "NANTOU ANCIENT CITY" - AN OFFICIAL HISTORIC NARRATIVE

The place of "Nantou Ancient City" had different names during China's imperial time, and all of them were related to the place's history as a regional administrative center. The documented history of this area started from the Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.), when the first emperor of China unified the *Lingnan* region (Southern China) and created three prefectures, one of which was *Nanhai Jun* (The Prefecture of the South Sea) located where Shenzhen is today. In the East Jin Dynasty (317-420 A.D.), *Nanhai Jun* had been restructured to *Dongguan Jun*, and *Bao'an County*, one of its administrated six counties, set the governmental seat near today's Nantou Ancient City. After 757 A.D., in the Tang Dynasty, *Bao'an County* was changed to *Dongguan County*. The governmental seat of *Dongguan County* was moved to today's *Guancheng*, and the central government set the *Tunmen Military Town* around this place, which is also the origin of the name of today's *Tunmen* in Hong Kong. In the first year of the *Wanli* period of the Ming Dynasty (1573 A.D.), a part of the *Dongguan County* was designated to be *Xin'an County*, and a walled city (fig 2-1) was set to be the administrative center, which is the origin of the current form of the Nantou Ancient City. Until the third year of the Republic of China (1915 A.D.), *Xin'an County* was renamed to be *Bao'an County*, and the county seat was named *Nantou City*.[21,22]

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[21] Nantou Ancient City Museum, "Nantou Ancient City History Exhibition," in *Nantou Ancient City Museum*, 2020.

[22] Maoguan Shu and Chongxi Wang, eds., 新安县志嘉庆 *(Annals of Xin'an County: Jiaqing Version))* (Beijing: Qing Government, 1819).

Fig 2-1. Xin'an Walled City, 1819[23]

The story of "Nantou Ancient City" mainly came from historic documents written by past historians and government officials. *Xianzhi*, or the county annals, is the most used written records for later generations to investigate the past time of places, which is a type of historic encyclopedia or set of official records for major counties and townships titled by the past administrative name. There are two editions of *Xin'an County Annals* preserved to this day, which were both compiled in the Qing Dynasty, one in the *Kangxi* period (1688 A.D.), and the other one in the *Jiaqing* period (1819 A.D.). The other editions written earlier in the *Ming* and *Qing* Dynasties were lost. The later generations mostly referenced the 1819 version, which was

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[23] Source: Peter Y. L. Ng, *New Peace County: A Chinese Gazetteer of the Hong Kong Region* (Hong Kong University Press, 1983).

chiefly compiled by Shu Maoguan and Wang Chongxi, for its comprehensiveness and accuracy.[24] The *Xinan Xianzhi* indicated how the site of *Nantou City* has always been a regional political, commercial, and cultural center during China's imperial era for its function as the governmental seat, salt industry hub, gateway city, and the fortress for maritime military protection over dynasties.

The ancient story of Nantou features the central government operated salt industry and abundant maritime activities. The emergence of the salt industry and shipping trade in this area could date back to the Qin (255-206 B.C.) and Han (206-220 B.C.) Dynasties. It was the natural resources for producing salt, which was a significant commodity in ancient China, that first drew the central imperial governors' attention to the South Sea Prefecture. During the imperial times, salt production was one of the most profitable industries, and it became unified and controlled under the imperial court during the period of the ambitious Emperor Wu. Historians have inferred that the salt works located in the Nantou area became the main hub of the *Panyu* Salt Works, one of the twenty-eight salt works established by the Han Empire in the Pearl River Delt area.[25] With the active commerce along the ancient Maritime Silk Road, the *Chiwan* Harbor of Shenzhen area became an important node from the Song to Ming Dynasties. The county annal documented that the Tianhou Temple in Chiwan, a shrine blessing maritime safety, was rebuilt several times in a grander form by the Ming court.[26] The adjacency to the Canton Port also brought transportation and trading opportunities towards the Nantou area. Today's Qianhai Bay, surrounding Nantou, served as the main stopover for merchant ships to avoid the shallow waters in the Pearl River Estuary. The Dongguan Guild Hall, which is currently a municipally designated heritage site inside Nantou City, was established in 1868 by the Qing merchants,

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[24] Ling Huang, "Cong Lici Xiuzhi Kan Shenzhen Wenmingshi (Civilization History of Shenzhen through the Editing of Several Versions of Annuals)," in *Jingji Tequ De Jianshe (The Construction of the Special Economic Zones)* (Beijing: Chinese Literature and History Press, 2007).

[25] Zhang Yibing, *Shenzhen Gudai Jianshi (A Brief History of Ancient Shenzhen)* (Beijing: Cultural Relics Press, 1997).

[26] Shu and Wang, 新安县志·嘉庆 *(Annals of Xin'an County: Jiaqing Version))*.

symbolizing the place's commercial significance at that time.

The location near the traffic artery on the southern coast of China also led to contestations and defenses in this place (fig 2-2). In the Tang Dynasty, naval forces were present when the *Tunmen Military Town* was located in this area. As the county annal recorded, in 1520, Wang Hong, the Guangdong Judicial Commissioner, was stationed at Nantou and led the Ming navy to defeat the Portuguese fleet in the 1521 naval battle, the *Tunmen Battle*, which was the first time that China encountered a colonizing western power. Considering the local rampant piracy and foreign invasion and the distance of Dongguan County's political center from the coast, the Ming Imperial established *Xin'an County* in 1573 to reinforce the military protection and administrative governance for southern coastal Canton. The name of *Xin'an*, which means "New Peace," anticipated bringing safety and peace to the coastal region. Nantou Walled City served as a base for the naval defense troops and had jurisdiction over six defense hubs in the area of today's Shenzhen and Hong Kong. Until the 19th year of *Wanli* (1591 A.D.), the Nantou City had 112 warships and more than 2,000 troops, which was called "the Bureau outside *Humen*[27], and the Guardian of the Provincial Capital."[28]

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[27] *Humen* was the military center of the Dongguan County.

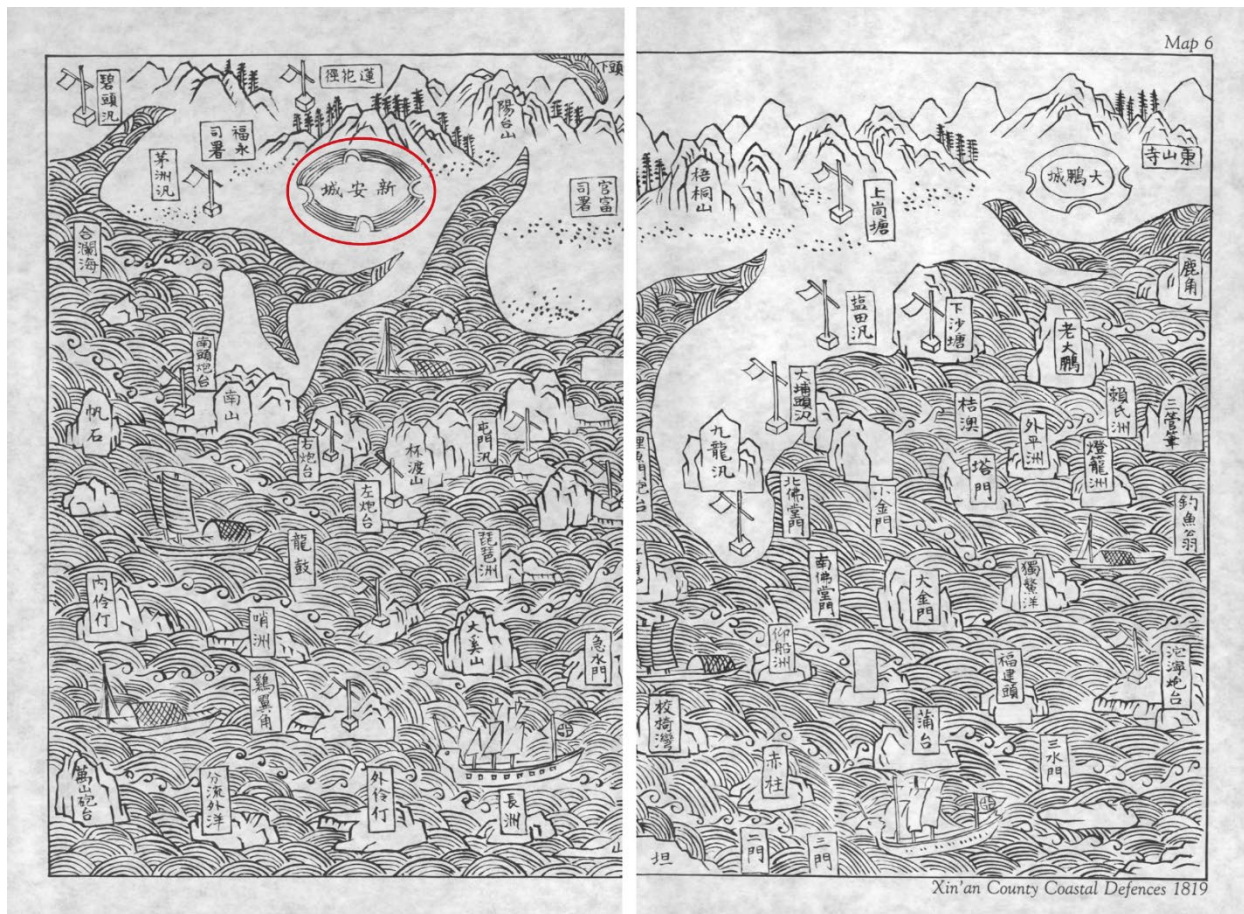[28] Shu and Wang, 新安县志·嘉庆 *(Annals of Xin'an County: Jiaqing Version))*.

Fig 2-2. Xin'an County's coastal defense, 1819[29]

Xin'an County governed the area of today's Shenzhen and Hong Kong, which indicates a sharing administrative origin of these two cities during imperial China. Many places' names in ancient times have remained today, such as *Yuanlang (also called Yuen Long in Cantonese)*, *Jiulong (Kowloon)*, *Tunmen (Tuen Men),* and so on. Until modern China, the Opium Wars (1839-1842, 1856-1860) caused conflicts in this region for decades. The Qing imperial court ordered the cession of Hong Kong island to the United Kingdom during the First Opium War, while the *Kowloon Peninsula*, which was a territory belonging to *Xin'an County*, was also ceded by "the Sino-British Convention of Peking" during the Second Opium War.[30] In 1898, the cession

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[29] Source: Ng, *New Peace County*.

[30] Nantou Ancient City Museum, "Nantou Ancient City History Exhibition."

expanded to Hong Kong New Territory, the area south of Shenzhen River in *Xin'an* County, in accordance with the Second Convention of Peking, and the territory was officially ceded inside the Nantou City's magistrate court.[31]

The struggles in this place continued through modern times. During the Sino-Japanese War (1931-1945), the Japanese invaders recognized the geographical importance of Xin'an County as a gateway connecting international aid from Hong Kong and Macau, so they bombed and occupied this area. Nantou City became the military base for the stationed army. As the Japanese army built military facilities and reconstructed many existing structures, the appearance of the ancient city changed a lot during this period. After defeating the Japanese invaders, the Nationalist Party took over Nantou. In October 1949, the Communist Liberation Army took Nantou, the first Bao'an County committee, and the people's government of the Communist Party were established in the walled city. In 1953, the relocation of the Bao'an County government marked the end of Nantou's long history as a regional administrative center. During the period of China's Great Leap Forward (1958-1960) and the following Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), many of the historic structures, including the fortress wall and temples, were dismantled for the movements of Backyard Furnaces and Destroying the Four Olds.[32] Thus, many of the material remains from the past were destroyed, and only some sites survived, including the South Gate Wall (Ming), the Xin'an County Government Office (Ming), Guandi Temple (Ming), Wen Tianxiang Memorial Hall (Qing), and Dongguan Guild Hall (Qing).

The past stories of the Nantou Ancient City are now intangible history mostly existing in written documents, which, nevertheless, in the last five years received much attention from the municipal and local government, developers and planners. Admittedly, any understanding of a place inevitably would rely on the reading of its past. As Massey has pointed out, people usually believed that a place's past contributes to its uniqueness and "tradition." However, places

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[31] Juan Du, *The Shenzhen Experiment: The Story of China's Instant City*, 2020.

[32] The Four Olds were Old Ideas, Old Culture, Old Customs, and Old Habits.

"stretch" through time in the way that they are caught in a moment and become "slices" of history.[33] This is to say, any attempt to establish a dominant historic narrative of the Nantou Ancient City is trying to stabilize slices through time based on particular readings of its past. What is usually neglected by people is that the "tradition" or uniqueness of place also exists in the present, and is "internally varied, constantly being built, molded, and added to."[34] This is the case that the place of the Nantou Ancient City is not only the narratives distant to us, but it is also constructed by living stories keeping narrated by the dynamic present and social relations.

STORY OF THE "JIUJIE VILLAGE" – A DEMOTIC NARRATIVE

Jiujie, which means "Nine Streets" because nine main streets constituted the village's form, is the more familiar name of this neighborhood for residents since the 1980s. Jiujie village's evolution as a Chinese urban village is a more common story than its history as the "Nantou Ancient City." The concept of "urban village" in China's context is different from that in the Western discourses. In the Western planning context, urban villages refer to relatively small-size neighborhoods located at city peripheries where urban and rural meet and are self-sustaining with mixed functions for living, working, transport, retailing, and leisure.[35,36] In China, however, urban villages are named "*chengzhongcun*", which literally means "village inside urbanized areas." The formation and dynamics of China's urban villages, as scholars commonly acknowledge, was the result of the rapid urbanization after the Reform and Opening-up policy and the institutional urban-rural dichotomy.[37,38] Previous to the 1980s, urban villages were rural

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[33] Massey, "Places and Their Pasts."

[34] Ibid.

[35] Arthur O'Sullivan, *Urban Economics* (Homewood, IL: Irwin, 1990).

[36] Tony Aldous, *Economics of Urban Villages* (London: Urban Villages Forum, 1995).

[37] Yuting Liu et al., "Urban Villages under China's Rapid Urbanization: Unregulated Assets and Transitional Neighbourhoods," *Habitat International* 34, no. 2 (April 1, 2010): 135–44, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2009.08.003.

[38] Stefan Al, "Bottom-Up Urbanism in China Urban Villages and City Development," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Bottom-Up Urbanism*, ed. Mahyar Arefi and Conrad Kickert (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 255–

settlements supported by traditional agriculture, while the urbanization of city areas they surrounded was limited. After the 1980s, with the Reform and Opening-up Policy leading to a boost in urban development and expansion, lands in cities were rapidly made available for construction. This kind of transition turned out to be most prominent in cities like Beijing, Chongqing, cities in the Yangtze River Delta Area, Pearl River Delta Area, and the designated Special Economic Zones (SEZ). The agricultural lands of villages were acquired for city construction, and village settlements became encircled by urbanized lands and newly constructed urban residences, offices, and commercial centers.
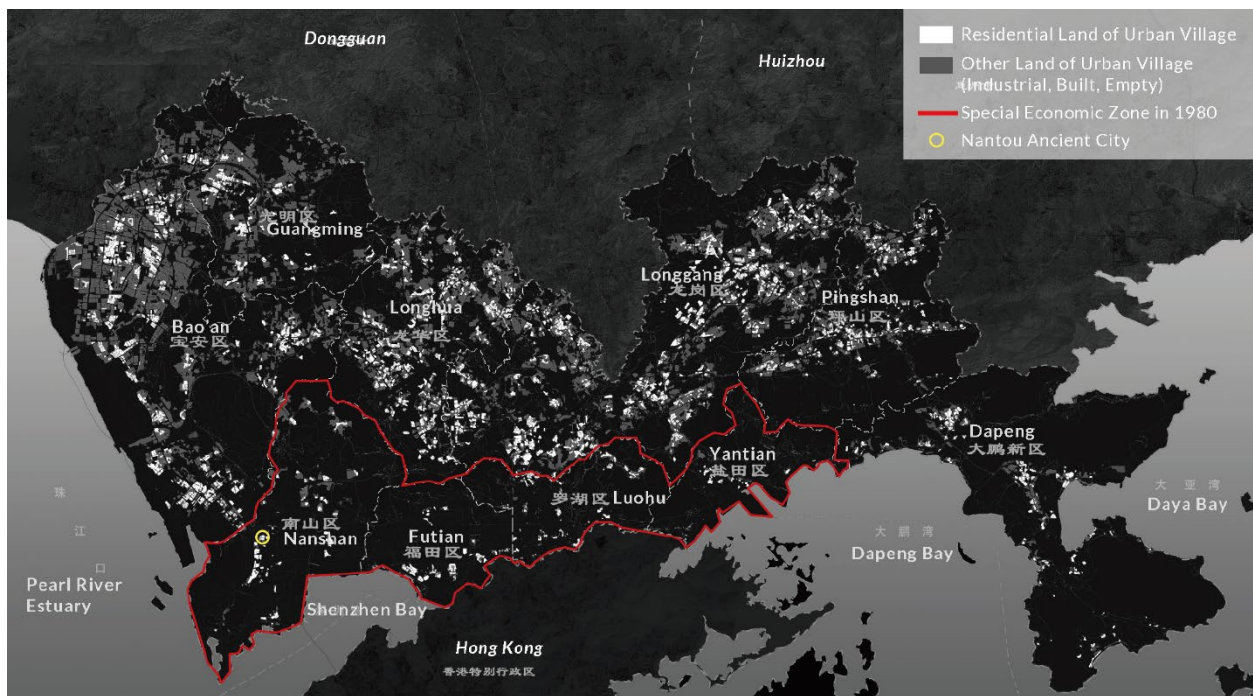

Fig 2-3. The Distributions of Urban Villages in Shenzhen, 2019[39]

67, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-90131-2_16.

[39] Edited based on "Comprehensive Improvement Planning on the Urban Villages (Old Villages) in Shenzhen (2019-2025)," March 27, 2019.

	Traditional Village	Urban Village	Urban Community
Land Ownership	Collective-owned	Collective-owned	State-owned
Main Industry	Agriculture (partly manufacture)	Non-agriculture	Non-agriculture
Economy	Collective economy (joint-stock company) and private economy	Collective economy (joint-stock company) and market economy	State economy and market economy
Organization	Villagers' committee (gradually changed to residents' committee)	Villagers' committee (gradually changed to residents' committee)	Residents' committee

Fig 2-4 The Dual Characteristics of Urban Village

"Informality" is a word that scholars and government officials usually use when describing the situation in urban villages. China's dual-track land ownership institutions and the resulting rural-urban mixed characteristics (fig 2-4) in urban villages contributed to the vacuum of state regulations.[40,41] After the land reform in 1985, lands in China have been categorized into state-owned lands and collective-owned lands. The lands in village settlements were designated to be owned by the village collective, and the ownership was distributed to collective members within the collective ownership framework. In this way, individuals and the collective retained the property rights to their houses and housing plots (named "*zhaijidi*" in Chinese), and their operations on their houses were "unregulated" to some extent. After the 1990s, when farmers lost their farmlands inside urban villages due to the government's requisition, they started to capitalize their lands by building up high-density houses for informal renting. Due to a lack of top-down planning and regulations, these houses had extremely narrow setbacks, poor ventilation, and limited lighting, and sometimes low construction quality. The buildings, usually 2-8 floors in height and occupying nearly the whole plots without much spare space, are so near

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[40] Fulong Wu, Fangzhu Zhang, and Chris Webster, "Informality and the Development and Demolition of Urban Villages in the Chinese Peri-Urban Area," *Urban Studies*, November 26, 2012.

[41] Liu et al., "Urban Villages under China's Rapid Urbanization."

to each other that people call them "shaking-hands buildings." (fig 2-5) In most cities, a house of this kind, named a "peasant house," would be defined as illegal if it is higher than four floors by the subsequently issued regulation. In Shenzhen, the heat of construction in urban villages became even much higher when the law to formalize the spontaneously built structures was about to be announced in the 1990s, because villagers intended to capture the last chance to build informal houses and hoped to acquire more compensations if the government would conduct requisition on the houses in the future.[42,43]

Fig 2-5. The "Shaking-Hands" Peasant Houses, 2020

[42] Juan Du, "History of Shenzhen and the Formation of Urban Villages)," *Urban Environment Design, In Chinese* 108 (September 1, 2017): 34–39.

[43] Fulong Wu, Fangzhu Zhang, and Christopher J. Webster, *Rural Migrants in Urban China: Enclaves and Transient Urbanism*, Routledge Contemporary China Series 104 (New York: Routledge, 2013).

From the villagers' and residents' angle, it is the informality that contributes to the vitality inside urban villages. The absence of some regulations in these enclaves fostered many small businesses that cannot be operated in planned residential blocks. The spontaneously built peasant houses inside urban villages inherited some characteristics from the traditional rural ones. Unlike the residential buildings in *xiaoqu*, which is the planned gated community emerging after the housing reform, the peasant houses' spaces are used in a more free and mixed way. In urban villages, the first floor of a house usually functions as a store, while the store owner's family usually lives inside or neighboring it. The space of a restaurant or a small shop may also function as the family's informal living room. Along with gaps in regulation, the vague division of private and public territories also enables people to engage in businesses that they cannot do in standardized residences:

> There are some tenants doing decoration businesses here. In peasant houses, they usually stack some materials and tools in yards and doorways, and almost nobody can forbid these behaviors as long as they don't bother neighbors a lot. I went to see some peasant houses renovated by the developers, and they made regulations to prohibit stacking. These business owners cannot continue their work if all the peasant houses become renovated and formalized.
>
> Interview with a sub-lessor of a peasant house in Jiujie, Jan 2021

Hence, the unregulated settlements in Jiujie provide many low-threshold opportunities for migrants to start businesses to make a living and look after families while working. When I was walking along the narrow alleys during the field study in Jiujie, I encountered women running tailor shops while babysitting, and restauranteurs serving customers while watching children do homework. Before 2020, East Zhongshan Street used to be a wet market street, providing cheap food and daily necessities for residents in Jiujie and nearby neighborhoods. Formal and informal stands co-existed along the street, and it would be bustling with people coming and going every evening when residents got off work and came back to the village. (fig 2-6)

Fig 2-6. The Wet Market on East Zhongshan Street before Regeneration, 2020

The narratives of urban villages in Shenzhen are interwoven with the city's popular anecdotal saying, "when you come to Shenzhen, you become a Shenzhener (*laile jiushi Shenzhen ren*)." Under the Reform and Opening-up Policy since the 1980s, Shenzhen has become a world factory with many global companies establishing their branches here. It resulted in a boom in the manufacturing industry and created massive job opportunities, attracting thousands and millions of workers migrating from all over the country to Shenzhen for job-hunting.[44] Therefore, Shenzhen has become a city of migrants, with an average of 80% of its population consisting of people whose registered permanent residences were outside Shenzhen, according to the 2010 census data.[45] Workers' great demand for cost-efficient housing incentivized villagers to build houses for rent. Urban villages became concentrated settlements for these migrant workers for their adjacency to working locations and affordable prices. According to the 2014 housing survey in Shenzhen, the housing area in urban villages occupied approximately 48% of the city's

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[44] Linda Vlassenrood, *Shenzhen: From Factory of the World to World City* (Almere, Rotterdam: International New Town Institute, 2016).

[45] Shenzhen Municipal Statistics Bureau, "Shenzhen Sixth National Census Data (2010)," Shenzhen Statistics, June 14, 2016, http://tjj.sz.gov.cn/zwgk/zfxxgkml/tjsj/tjgb/content/post_3084945.html.

housing stock, whereas the rental housing in urban villages occupied 60.6% of the city's rental housing market.[46] In Jiujie, the average monthly rent of a single room in 2019 was around $150, which is half or one-third of the rent for a single room in a planned community. According to interviews, before 2018, nearly 30,000 people lived in the area, and around 90% of the residents were migrant workers.[47] They were taxi drivers, factory workers, restaurant servers, small business owners, etc., coming from other provinces such as Hubei, Hunan, Sichuan, Guangxi, and other cities in Guangdong. Some of them had lived in this area since the 1990s when the Nanshan District started to urbanize. In many migrants' minds, their life stories were with the stories of the city:

> When I first arrived in Nanshan in 1989, the district just started to develop upon rural lands. I have run the store in Jiujie since 1995. I could say that I have witnessed the history of Shenzhen. After all, the city was just established 40 years, whereas my store has a history of over 20 years. Many people living in this neighborhood were always accompanied by my store's dessert as they were growing up. My store is also part of Jiujie's history.
>
>   Interview with the owner of *Jiujie Tangshui*, or Jiujie Dessert Store, Jan 2021

The diversity of catering commerce is a lens to look at the culture of migration in Jiujie. Migrants from all over the country have brought their food customs here. In 2018, along the main crossing streets, the South, East, and West Zhongshan Street, there used to exist 161 stores providing catering and services.[48] The cuisine included the local Guangdong food and many other styles from provinces such as Sichuan, Hunan, and Hubei (fig 2-7). These restaurants were mostly individual-operated businesses and were usually at a lower cost than those outside the village for the lower rents. The significances of small catering commerce in urban villages lie in not only providing a sense of intimacy of hometown for migrants, but also the affordability of daily consumptions.

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[46] Haolun Huang, "Analysis of Shenzhen Housing Supply System and Policy Suggestions," *Housing and Real Estate* 522, no. 36 (December 2018): 12–13.

[47] The data is inferred from interviews with residents.

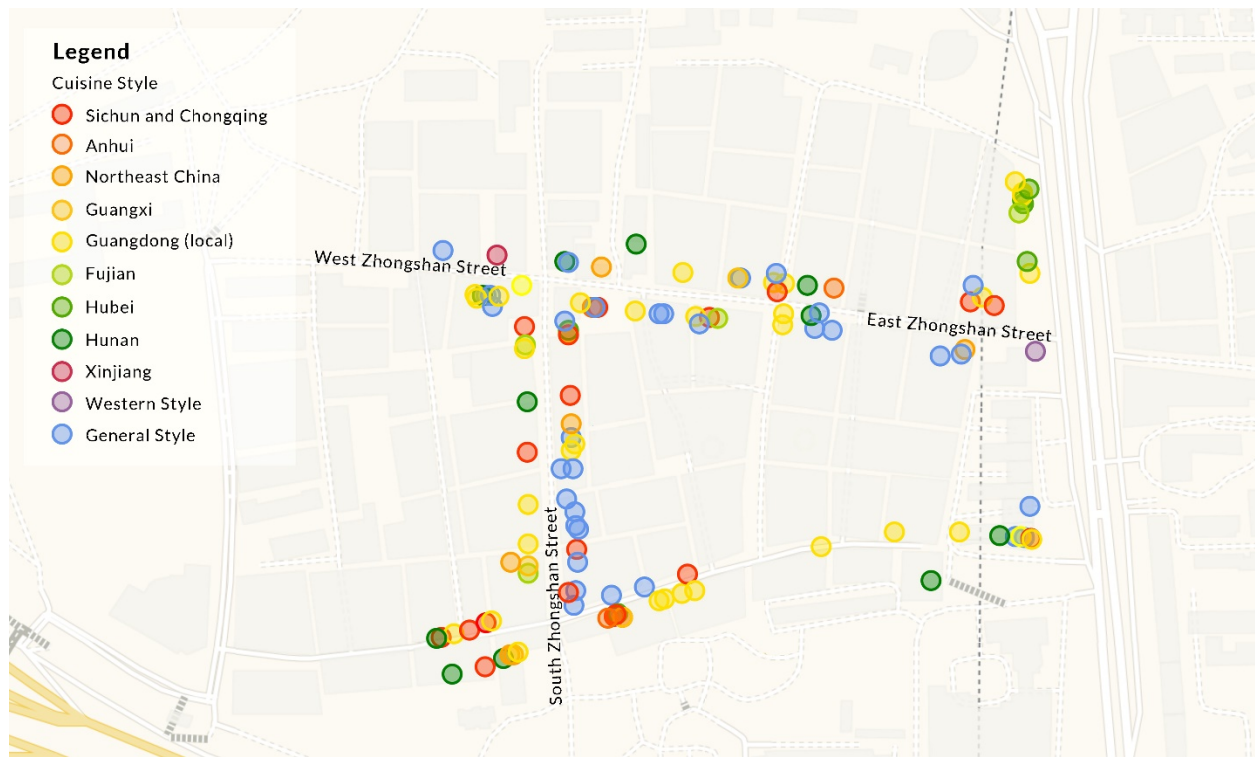[48] The data comes from the 2018 POI data on the Amap platform.

Fig 2-7. Catering Commerce on Main Streets, 2018

However, I argue that the above popular saying about being a Shenzhener is de facto a myth due to the regulations of the *hukou* system, also known as the household registration system. The system rules citizens' access to social infrastructures, including healthcare, education, welfare in a certain place, and plays a vital role in administering resource distribution and controlling the migration among provinces and cities.[49,50,51] Under this system, migrants are considered as "floating populations", or temporary residents in the local city. In other words, people whose registered permanent residence is outside Shenzhen cannot become a real Shenzhener if their

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[49] Zai Liang, *The Emergence of a New Urban China: Insiders' Perspectives* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2012).

[50] Dorothy J. Solinger, *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China: Peasant Migrants, the State, and the Logic of the Market*, Acls Humanities E-Book (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.09177.

[51] Dorothy J. Solinger, "The Floating Population in the Cities: Markets, Migration, and the Prospects for Citizenship" (University of Hawaii Press, 2002).

registration has not been relocated to Shenzhen. Therefore, they cannot get the same access to social services as the local registered citizens do. There are also regulations restraining non-natives from relocating registrations. In general, the registration relocating policies are more supportive to the city's desired workers with higher education, whereas migrants who are blue-collar workers or small business owners cannot meet the criteria for registering for permanent residence in Shenzhen. Consequently, even a migrant who has lived in Shenzhen for 20 years might not be regarded as a Shenzhener in the legal sense, which is the case with many tenants in urban villages.

The *hukou* system imposes institutional barriers on migrants' well-being in urban villages. Children's education is one of the migrants' most concerning conditions in their life in Shenzhen. According to the *Shenzhen Municipal Measures for the Administration of Compulsory Education for Children of Non-Shenzhen Registered Persons*[52], admission to public primary schools depends on a points system, which is decided by several conditions, including household registration, homeownership, social security payments, and abiding by the one-child policy or not. For tenants living in urban villages, the possibility of displacement brings much instability for second-generation migrants' educational opportunities:

> I lease this store and have run the herbal tea shop in Jiujie for 14 years. I pay for the local social security, and the accumulated points would have allowed my daughter to get admitted to the Nantoucheng Primary School, which is just located inside the Jiujie village. However, the regeneration program was displacing all the tenants along this main street, and I have to leave soon. If I move to another place or go back to my hometown in the next step, where my daughter can go to school bothers me the most.
>
> <div align="right">Interview with the owner of Xuqixiu Herbal Tea Shop, Jan 2020</div>

In terms of understanding the embedded global-local nexus of places, Massey suggested:

> Places, then, on the argument so far, can be understood as articulations of social relationships, some of which will be to the beyond (the global), and these global

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[52] 深圳市人民政府 (Shenzhen Municipal People's Government), "深圳市非深户籍人员子女接受义务教育管理办法 (Shenzhen Municipal Measures for the Administration of Compulsory Education for Children of Non-Shenzhen Registered Persons)," January 24, 2018.

relationships as much as the internal relationships of an area will influence its character, its 'identity.'[53]

Therefore, it is Jiujie's demotic narratives told by migrants that have constructed the sense of *place*. The uniqueness, or identity, of this place depends on the dynamism from the interconnections with the geographical world beyond. The coming and going of migrant tenants brought their customs and activities to Jiujie from other places, creating a new vernacular through an effect of the "time-space compression."[54] Their lives in Jiujie have established interactions between the local space and the global social networks, contributing to the process of "re-localization."[55] This process was constructed by bottom-up stories that are told by the migrants rather than a planned dominant agenda. The next chapter, however, will discuss how the different narratives *of* this place would be referred to and utilized *in* the process of placemaking to achieve planning goals.

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[53] Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," 186.

[54] Doreen Massey, "A Global Sense of Place," in *Space, Place, and Gender*, by Doreen Massey (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

[55] Kevin Robins, "Tradition and Translation: National Culture in Its Global Context," in *Enterprise and Heritage: Crosscurrents of National Culture*, by John Corner and Sylvia Harvey (Routledge, 2005), 29–52.

Chapter 3　Narratives *in* Placemaking – Politics in the Process

THE NARRATIVE TURN IN THE CITY

Urban villages have been stigmatized in the planning discourse since their emergence. I argue that describing urban villages as "problematic" or "dirty, messy, rundown (*zang, luan, cha*)" enclaves has served to justify the land requisition and large-scale redevelopment of urban villages. In policy documents, urban villages were often described to have harsh environmental and safety issues, therefore needing to be transformed and redeveloped. The *Interim Regulations of the Urbanization of Villages in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone* issued in 1992 marked the government's first attempt at formalizing the informality of city-wide villages.[56] Starting in the 1990s, the Shenzhen Municipal Government started to make a series of policies and regulations for house demolition (1994)[57], dealing with illegal private constructions (2002)[58], old village redevelopment (2004)[59], and urban renewal (2009)[60], aiming at solving the informality and the disordered situation inside urban villages.

The demolition and reconstruction of urban villages in Shenzhen have lasted for decades. Land requisition, which is comparable to the eminent domain notion in the U.S., was the method used by the government and developers to capture the land value and exclude undesirable

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[56] 深圳市人民政府 (Shenzhen Municipal People's Government), "关于深圳经济特区农村城市化的暂行规定 (Interim Regulations of the Urbanization of Villages in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone)," June 18, 1992.

[57] 深圳市人民政府 (Shenzhen Municipal People's Government), "深圳经济特区房屋拆迁管理办法 (Measures of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone on House Demolition)," January 29, 1994.

[58] 深圳市人民政府 (Shenzhen Municipal People's Government), "深圳经济特区处理历史遗留违法私房若干规定 (深府令[2002]111 号) (Regulations of Dealing with Illegal Historical Private Buildings in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (No. 111))," February 25, 2002.

[59] 深圳市人民政府 (Shenzhen Municipal People's Government), "深圳市城中村（旧村）改造暂行规定 (深府[2004]177 号) (Interim Regulations of Urban Village (Old Village) Redevelopment in Shenzhen (No. 177))," October 22, 2004.

[60] 深圳市人民政府 (Shenzhen Municipal People's Government), "深圳市城市更新办法 (深府[2009]211 号) (Methods of Urban Renewal in Shenzhen (No. 211))," October 22, 2009.

groups. Research by Fulong Wu suggested in 2005, Shenzhen demolished the low-rent homes to force the low-income migrant workers to leave, thus making way for the economy to shift towards the manufacturing and service industries with higher added value.[61] There was a second embedded logic in the eradication of urban villages, which was to drive migrants and their informal activities away to the urban periphery and the newly formed urban villages there, so policymakers could deal with the informality later.[62]

This approach ran well for years as the dominant stakeholders, including the government, real estate developers, and the village collective formed close liaisons and benefited from the redevelopment. The villagers, who owned the land and houses inside villages, received a considerable amount of compensation from the developers and created the mythology of "overnight billionaires." Meanwhile, real estate developers could make money from redeveloping and selling new properties for high-end office, residential, and commercial programs. The government also benefited from beautifying and improving the environment and a growing local economy resulting from the redevelopment. Discussions on the costs of losing the main sources for affordable homes and resulting marginalization of migrant workers group were rarely comparable with the discussions on the advantages.

Until the mid-2010s, the notion of "conserving" urban villages in Shenzhen still sounded strange to people. It was the 13th five-year urban renewal planning compiled in 2016 that raised the scheme of prioritizing renovation and regeneration of urban villages while taking demolition and reconstruction as auxiliary.[63] In 2019, the issuance of the first plan on the comprehensive improvement of urban villages marked a temporary end of the 20 years of large-scale redevelopment and a policy turn to the "micro-regeneration" notion in Shenzhen. The document

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[61] Wu, Zhang, and Webster, "Informality and the Development and Demolition of Urban Villages in the Chinese Peri-Urban Area."

[62] Ibid.

[63] 深圳市规划和自然资源局 (Planning and Natural Resources Administration of Shenzhen Municipality), "深圳市城市更新'十三五'规划 (The 13th Five Year Planning of Urban Renewal in Shenzhen)," 2016.

suggested:

> A certain proportion of the urban villages should be retained. The regeneration projects in urban villages should aim to solve safety issues, preserve the urban fabric, maintain the historical context, guarantee the low-cost spaces, and improve infrastructure and environment quality.[64]

It could be inferred that the significance of retaining and preserving urban villages has been paid much more attention than ever before. To fulfill the aim to reuse urban villages' value, the municipal government also launched experimental projects promoting historical and cultural protection in urban villages, and the Nantou Ancient City was one of the seven selected sites.[65]
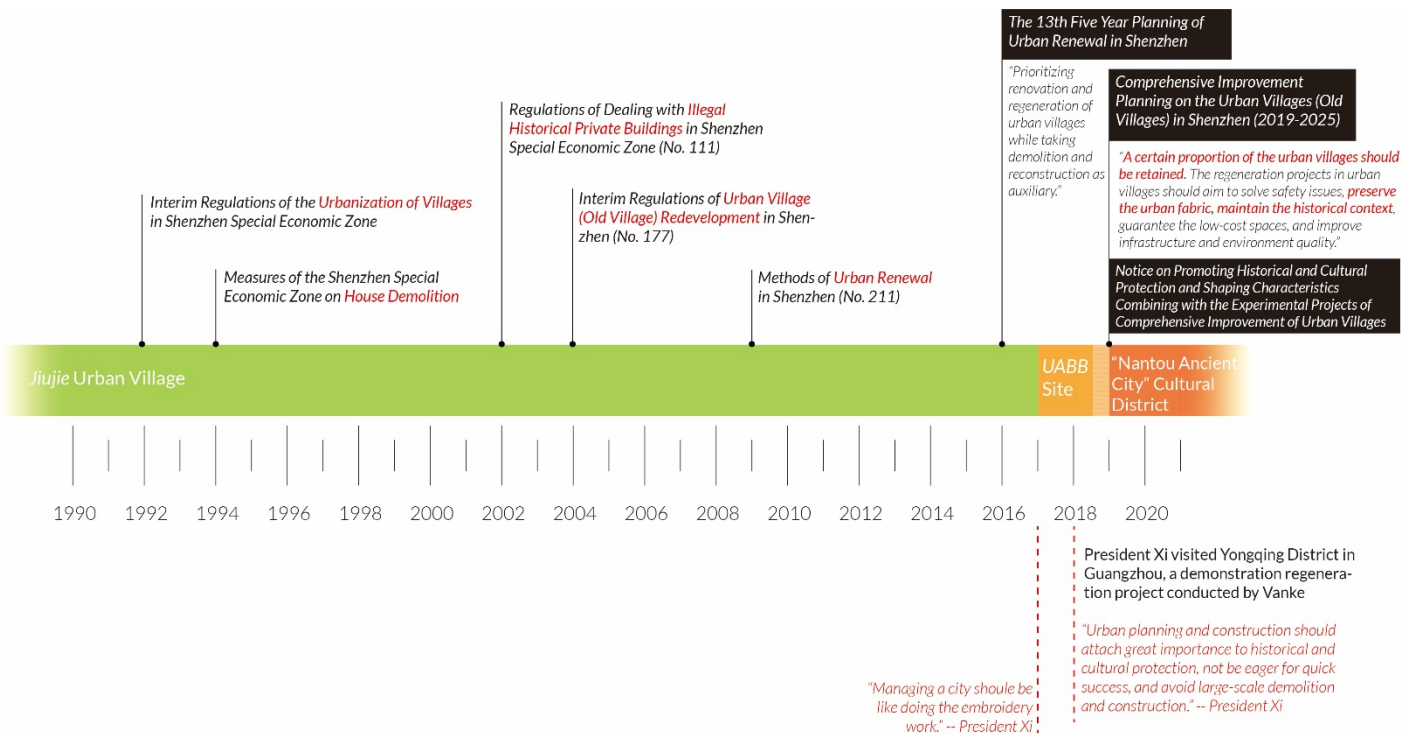
Fig 3-1. The Policy Turn on Urban Village Redevelopment

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[64] 深圳市规划和自然资源局 (Planning and Natural Resources Administration of Shenzhen Municipality), "深圳市城中村（旧村）综合整治总体规划（2019-2025）(Comprehensive Improvement Planning on the Urban Villages (Old Villages) in Shenzhen (2019-2025))," March 27, 2019.

[65] 深圳市规划和自然资源局 (Planning and Natural Resources Administration of Shenzhen Municipality), "深圳市人民政府关于结合城中村综合整治试点项目推进历史文化保护和特色风貌塑造工作的通知 = Notice on Promoting Historical and Cultural Protection and Shaping Characteristics Combining with the Experimental Projects of Comprehensive Improvement of Urban Villages," 2019.

The embedded reasons behind the policy turn lie in several aspects. First, it is influenced by a narrative shift at the national level. At the plenary meeting of the Shanghai delegation of the Twelfth National People's Congress held in March 2017, President Xi Jinping raised the notion of "managing a city like doing the embroidery work," which was a metaphor to state that the urban management, development, and redevelopment should be done carefully with progressive and small interventions.[66] In October 2018, when Xi made an inspection tour in Guangdong Province, he stressed that "urban planning and construction should attach great importance to historical and cultural protection, not be eager for quick success, and avoid large-scale demolition and construction."[67] Under these central narratives, the propaganda of "micro-regeneration" came into effect rapidly in many cities' redevelopment projects.

Second, with the rising land and housing prices in the city's market, the cost of massive land requisition has increased for real-estate developers in both a financial sense and an institutional sense. It is more difficult for a real estate company to undertake a redevelopment project of a whole village than before. For example, in the most recent urban village redevelopment project of Hubei village in Luohu District, it took the China Resources Company, one of the largest central enterprises, eight years to negotiate with over 7,000 village households on the compensation, and the compensated price reached 4,000 US dollars every square meter.[68] Since the demolition and reconstruction projects require large capital investment, complicated procedures, and increasingly longer cycles, and the government has realized the potential social issues caused by large-scale displacement, developers and the government need to find new approaches to conduct urban village redevelopment.

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[66] The Newspaper Commentator, "用绣花功夫抓好城市管理 (Manage City like Doing the Embroidery Work)," *Guangming Daily*, November 15, 2018, https://epaper.gmw.cn/gmrb/html/2018-11/15/nw.D110000gmrb_20181115_3-11.htm.

[67] Yan Guang, "城市更新上水平，尤需做好绣花功 (To Improve the Urban Regeneration Quality, Tasks Should Be Done like Doing the Embroidery Work)," *Guangzhou Daily*, August 16, 2019, https://guancha.gmw.cn/2019-08/16/content_33082798.htm.

[68] The data comes from the agreement of compensation among China Resources Company and property-owners proposed in 2018.

Third, a more important motivation comes from the city's desire to maintain its "capitalist expansion" when faced with the post-industrial urban decline.[69] In the 1940s, when the Frankfurt School created the term "cultural industry" to describe how art and culture were installed into products on the Fordist production lines.[70] Since the 1970s, with the booming information technology revolution, capitalizing on culture has become an emerging global strategy for cities to stimulate a new round of economic development and create their structural and systematic competitiveness.[71,72,73] Urban cultural policies and making of the creative city have been engineered worldwide with the designation of Creative Cities Network by UNESCO since 2004.

As a city that used to be supported by the massive manufacturing industry, Shenzhen is no exception to follow this pathway to promote culture-driven policies as an urban economic resource to deal with the industry transformation and urban development. Shenzhen first used the slogan "Build the City on Culture (*wenhua lishi*)" in 2003, hanging it to "Build a Leading Cultural City (*wenhua qiangshi*)" in 2009, showing the government's determination to strengthen the city's cultural competitiveness.[74] In the 13th Five-Year Plan of Shenzhen, the municipal government listed developing cultural and creative industry as one of the main tasks.[75] The

[69] Andy C. Pratt, "Creative Cities: Tensions within and between Social, Cultural and Economic Development: A Critical Reading of the UK Experience," *City, Culture and Society* 1, no. 1 (March 1, 2010): 13–20, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2010.04.001.

[70] Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, and Gunzelin Schmid Noeri, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002).

[71] Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 2nd ed., Castells, Manuel, 1942- Information Age ; v. 1 (Oxford ; Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

[72] Allen J. Scott, *Social Economy of the Metropolis: Cognitive-Cultural Capitalism and the Global Resurgence of Cities*, OUP Catalogue (Oxford: University Press, Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2008), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199549306.001.0001.

[73] David Harvey, "From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism," *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 71, no. 1 (1989): 3–17, https://doi.org/10.2307/490503.

[74] Si-ming Li, Hung-ha Cheng, and Jun Wang, "Making a Cultural Cluster in China: A Study of Dafen Oil Painting Village, Shenzhen," *Habitat International* 41 (2014): 156–64, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2013.07.004.

[75] 深圳市人民政府 (Shenzhen Municipal People's Government), "深圳市国民经济和社会发展第十三个五年规

urban village Dafen, which was branded as the oil-painting center, was one of the early designated cultural districts. In this case, cultural and historical resources in urban villages were valued and utilized to construct local narrations and boost the local economy.

In short, the planning policies for urban villages have functioned as narratives to ensure they play desirable roles in urban development. To justify the policy that legally formalizes the area by demolition and reconstruction, the government regarded urban villages as problematic enclaves to be eradicated, while their cultural and historical significance started to be emphasized when the city's cultural policy was in full swing. The shift in descriptions reflects the change of the central and local government will and indicates how they act as dominant narrators to tailor the stories for their different planning goals.

RECONFIGURING HISTORY FROM THE PAST

As Lowenthal says, "the past is a foreign country." It is a metaphor to describe how people tend to differentiate the past from the present and yearn for experiencing what they believe as "past."[76] What makes the past so important is that it generates comfort when we lack confidence in the present and the future.[77,78] The embedded nostalgia motion is rooted in human's psychological need to know ourselves from the past. However, since the past is established upon memories, and memories are impressionable, historic narratives become powerful as they shape collective memories, from which humans know about the past.[79] Nantou's regeneration is the case of the "history-heat" in Shenzhen. "The regeneration of Nantou Ancient City bears a

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划 (The 13th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development in Shenzhen)," 2016.

[76] David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[77] Arthur P Dudden, "Nostalgia and the American," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22, no. 4 (1961): 515–30, https://doi.org/10.2307/2708028.

[78] David Lowenthal, "Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory," *Geographical Review* 65, no. 1 (1975): 1–36, https://doi.org/10.2307/213831.

[79] Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country*.

political task, which is to rediscover the history of Shenzhen," said Changfeng Ding, the group partner at the real estate company Vanke Group, which is the dominant developer of the regeneration.[80] Urban villages, which existed longer than modern constructions, have attracted the government, developers, and designers' attention.

The infatuation with the past could be seen in Shenzhen's recent policy trends. As an emerging city's municipal government which was set up forty years ago, since the last decade, it has started to pay more attention to the city's history. In 2009, the municipal government launched its first city-wide historic preservation planning. It was not until December 2014 that Shenzhen City Planning and Land Resources Committee started to conduct general investigations and evaluations of city-wide buildings. It finally designated 42 sites as the first batch of city-level historic buildings in 2018.[81] The attention towards the city's historic resources is also under the influence of the Chinese central government. In 2019, President Xi raised the notion of "Let the city keep memories, and let the people remember homesickness," stressing the importance of preserving the historical remains to create cultural identity in cities.[82]

The brand of a "historical place" is part of the dominant storytelling for Nantou's regeneration. The name of "Nantou Ancient City" is emphasized to evoke historical meanings, and the name of "Jiujie Village" is barely mentioned. A frequently used introduction of the place in public media, for example, the website of Shenzhen Nanshan District Government, is as follows:

> Nantou Ancient City, which was initially built in Jin Dynasty, has a history of nearly 1,700 years. It is the economic, political, and cultural center in southern China and the root of Shenzhen-Hong Kong's history and culture. … The preservation, restoration, and upgrading

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[80] Changfeng Ding, "Urban Renewal in China in the Next 20 Years from the Perspective of Policy and Industry," March 19, 2021.

[81] 深圳市规划与国土资源委员会 (Shenzhen City Planning and Land Resources Committee), "深圳市历史建筑名录（第一批）(Shenzhen Historic Building List (First Batch))," 2017.

[82] Jiaxu Jin, "习近平年度'金句'之二 让城市留住记忆，让人们记住乡愁 (Xi Jinping's Annual Golden Verses: Let the City Keep Memories, and Let the People Remember Homesickness)," Xinhua, accessed April 26, 2021, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/xxjxs/2019-12/24/c_1125380463.htm.

of the characteristic cultural district of Nantou is a "Plan for Stunning Transformation and Regeneration."[83]

The embedded intention behind this narrative is to refute a long-lasting impression that Shenzhen is a city with merely a 40-year history, utilizing the Nantou Ancient City as evidence of its long-time existence. The notion of "regeneration," in this case, is a method to reconstruct a present place from the interpretations of the past, therefore reshaping present public cognitions. The government and developer's aim was de facto to create desirable present images for the city.

The past is not only reached by recall but "is incarnate in things we build and landscapes we create."[84] They use tangible elements to install the past into present landscapes, influencing people's present life by creating everyday surroundings. When storytelling is transformed into tangible landscapes, the environment itself has become a form of non-verbal storytelling, conveying historic meanings toward the visitors. Just as histories are constructed narratives, heritage is also fabricated by using historical traces to tell historical tales.[85] Tangible landscapes visualize history into everyday geography and serve as an ideological tool to influence individuals unconsciously.[86]

In Nantou's case, the regeneration followed the principle of "Repairing the Old as Before (xiu jiu ru jiu)" and utilized the historical remains to create an "ancient city." The measures included several aspects:

1) preservation, restoration, and representation of the relics of the ancient city wall and designated historical sites;

2) revision of the styles of other non-historical buildings;

3) construction of museums, galleries, and educational landscapes.

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[83] "南头古城蝶变 (The Stunning Transformation of the Nantou Ancient City)."

[84] Lowenthal, "Past Time, Present Place," 6.

[85] David Lowenthal, "Fabricating Heritage," *History and Memory* 10, no. 1 (1998): 5–24.

[86] James S. Duncan and Nancy G. Duncan, "The Aestheticization of the Politics of Landscape Preservation," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91, no. 2 (2001): 387–409.

Just as Roland Barthes raises the idea that a city could be regarded as a discourse conveying meanings[87], the physical spaces and elements created by the regeneration, in this case, are signifiers that embody the metaphorical symbols of an "ancient city." The current form of the site originated from the Wanli period of the Ming Dynasty when Nantou Ancient City was the former administrative center of Xin'an County set in 1573 A.D. The restored relics of the ancient city wall and historical buildings tell that history, while the recreation of the façades on main streets and the introduced "100-Year-Old Stores" shape the image of an ancient street. The museums and galleries also emphasize the rich history in this place by exhibiting cultural relics, photographs, and videos. The fabricated landscapes in Nantou serve as a storytelling instrument that conveys historical meanings to visitors, assisting them in imagining a past place.

Lowenthal suggested that people tended to "express selective nostalgia about particular times and places in the more or less remote past."[88] What Nantou physically manifests to the public today reflects how history is selectively told in "conservation and adaptive reuse," influenced by present preferences for a selected past. It contains 15 designated Protected Historical and Cultural Sites, including 4 provincial and municipal protected sites and 11 general immovable sites, constituting merely 1.8% of the buildings at the site. (fig 3-2) Besides utilizing these historical resources, the developer Vanke chose the late Qing dynasty (1840 A.D. – 1912 A.D.) as the major historic period to represent. They reconstructed the buildings' façades along the main cross streets in an architectural style imitating this period, though most of the buildings were in reality constructed after the 1980s. (fig 3-3, fig 3-4) These modifications were to beautify the environment and make the existing houses better accommodate the newly introduced chain nostalgic restaurants, fashion boutiques, and "internet-famous" shops. Therefore, the regeneration is not about telling how "ancient" the place truly is, but about copying styles from

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[87] Roland Barthes, "Semiology and Urbanism," in *The City and the Sign: An Introduction to Urban Semiotics* (Columbia University Press, 1986), 87–98.

[88] Lowenthal, "Past Time, Present Place," 3.

the past for present preferences and commercial development needs.
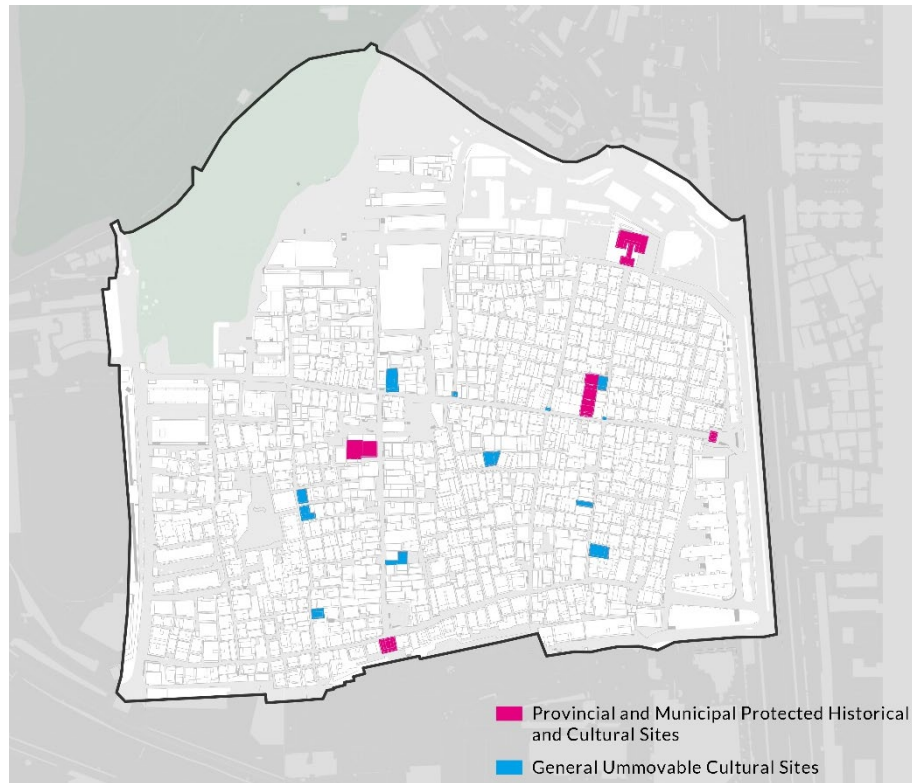

Fig 3-2. The Designated Preservation Sites

Fig 3-3 (left). The Peasant House before Regeneration, 2019[89]

Fig 3-4 (right). The Antique-style Façade of the Peasant House after Regeneration, 2021

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[89] Source: Vanke Group. "The Regeneration Project of Nantou Ancient City," 2019.

In this case, preserving, reconfiguring, and displaying the tangible past, as Lowenthal raised, is an act of patriotic and nationalistic narratives.[90] Herzfeld also points out that heritages embody the ideology of nationalism for modern nation-states, and the fabrication of heritage is about creating collective memory and forming a national identity.[91] Nantou Ancient City is named as "the shared origin for Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau" in the regeneration project, serving the political aim of national unity and integrating the Guangdong-HongKong-Macau Greater Bay Area. The historic sites in Nantou have become one of the Patriotism Education Bases, which are the Chinese central government designated places for tours aiming at educating the public with the embedded historical stories. (fig 3-5)

Fig 3-5. The Displayed Patriotic and Nationalistic Narratives in the Exhibition, 2021

As a real estate company whose holdings are mainly controlled by central and state-owned

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[90] Lowenthal, "Past Time, Present Place."

[91] Michael Herzfeld, "Heritage and Corruption: The Two Faces of the Nation-State," *International Journal of Heritage Studies : IJHS* 21, no. 6 (2015): 531–44, https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2014.948486.

enterprises, Vanke's interventions have represented the government's will. Among the newly introduced stores on South Zhongshan Street, many are vintage-style restaurants from Hong Kong or Macau intentionally selected by the developer. There is a special gallery in the village with the theme of "The Region with the Same Origin" that says:

> Over the past time, an open, mixed and colorful cultural identity has emerged here. When we look back into history, we can take this cultural identity as the origin of this place. Here in the Pearl River Estuary, the economy is common, the culture is integrated, the landform is the same, and cities have been historically governed by the same administration.[92]

This regeneration utilized Nantou's history of governing the area of Shenzhen and Hong Kong in ancient times before the British colonization and displayed it through tangible exhibitions and other branding methods. In essence, the government, and the real estate developer, who have the dominant voices in the urban regeneration of Nantou, selectively chose and displayed particular past periods that could serve their political will and commercial purposes.

YUPPIES AS NARRATORS

If we look back a little bit before the regeneration by Vanke was launched, the externally driven transformation of this neighborhood started in 2017 when the Nantou Ancient City was designated as one of the exhibition sites of the 2017 Shenzhen-Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture, and this place first came into the attention of the "Yuppies." Bishir labeled the group of planning and design professionals as "Yuppies", who were non-local and received higher education and with an upper-class value and taste.[93] They have played a significant role in preservation and regeneration actions, as they have powerful voices to decide what should be retained or changed, therefore installing their distinct values in planning projects.

The architectural design company, URBANUS, who was the main curator of the biennale,

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[92] Vanke Group, "同源展 (The 'Region with the Same Origin' Exhibition)," 2021.

[93] Catherine W. Bishir, "Yuppies, Bubbas, and the Politics of Culture," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 3 (1989): 8–15, https://doi.org/10.2307/3514289.

represented the group of Yuppies who use design and exhibitions to create the narratives of urban villages from a different view:

> We initially had two optional sites for the exhibition, the Nantou Ancient City and Baishizhou Village, and the latter was the largest urban village in Shenzhen. The main reason that we finalized Nantou was that the whole site of Baishizhou had already been expropriated by a real estate company, while the future of Nantou had not been decided yet. Therefore, we experimented on displaying the real life of the people living in urban villages. Our aim was not to find a solution through the exhibition, but to draw the public's attention to rethink and discuss the value of urban village other than that for land requisition and reconstruction.

<div align="right">Interview with the project manager at URBANUS, Jan 2020</div>

The biennale demonstrated a narrative combing grassroots lives and middle-class aestheticization, whereas the process was led by Yuppies' external interventions. On the one hand, avant-garde artists and designers made use of the spaces in the urban village to produce artworks, such as painting an old factory's façade or creating installations on a public square or inside peasant houses. These were actions that added aesthetic values to normal living spaces and indicated Yuppies' preferences for a sense of authentic urban village life. In most cases, they would abide by the professional standards formed in their intellectual realm, and their positions as experts would endow them the power to decide what is beauty.

On the other, the design company, as the main curator, played a role as planners, trying to engage bottom-up participation in the curation process. They held consultation workshops, inviting indigenous villagers, migrant tenants such as doctors in the local clinic, shoe repairmen, the dessert store's owner, and grocery stall owners to share their stories inside the village.[94] When designing the renovation of some stores to be part of the exhibition, URBANUS architects also discussed designs with the tenant owners to figure out their detailed needs:

> When making the renovation design for a shop selling tofu, we communicated a lot with the owner. We not only redesigned the place for her but also provided a plan for her future

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[94] URBANUS, "CGD LAB," URBANUS, accessed April 27, 2021, http://www.urbanus.com.cn/uabb/uabb2017/curatorial-process/cgd-lab/?lang=en.

operation to better adjust to the changing village. We believe our design would not only

make the built environment appear good-looking but also let the tenants live a better life.

<div align="right">Interview with the project manager at URBANUS, Jan 2020</div>

Fig 3-6 (left). The Renovated Tofu Store during UABB, 2017[95]

Fig 3-7 (right). The Tofu Store Changed to a Cloth Store after UABB, 2020

However, the improvement did not last long after the biennale finished. Several public

spaces designed for the biennale, though with the purpose of serving the residents at the same

time, were abandoned afterward. The tofu storefront also changed back to what it used to be as a

normal store without any showcase purpose. (fig 3-6, 3-7) Within the limitation of the short

biennale period, designers only treated migrant tenants and business owners' activities in the site

as the image of authenticity and vernacularity. The Nantou Ancient City, therefore, became a

"stage" transferring the messy, informal characteristics in the urban village into art pieces for

admiration and experience.[96]

Yuppies' narratives brought middle-class aesthetics to Nantou, and it has continued as an

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[95] Source: "The Magical Change Gave New Life to a 1,700-year-old Ancient City," Southern Metropolis Daily, December 9, 2017, https://www.163.com/dy/article/D58I5CBQ05129QAF.html.

[96] Yanhan Zhang, "Towards the Inaccessible Public: The Urban Village On, Behind and As a 'Stage' in China, 2017 Shenzhen/Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture as Case Study" (Harvard University Graduate School of Design, 2018).

instrument for beautification in the later regeneration project. Behind this transformation was Bourdieu's idea about the politics of taste. The differentiated habitus, including the taste of culture, is the result of the differentiation of class. The social capital people possess influences their preferences and choices.[97] Though trying to bring the grassroots stories to the public's attention, Yuppies' interventions in the village were still producing "high culture," treating the village as a source for admirable art and landscapes. The design company for the regeneration continued to use this strategy to create a place branded as an "internet-famous site" to attract the city's middle class, especially the young middle class, including university students, white-collar workers, the creative group serving in the rising tech industries, etc. Yuppies' narratives in presenting the value of the urban village ended up as the catalyst for the consumption of place.

THE PARTICIPATION MYTH

Planning, in the discourse of narrative, acts as a rhetorical activity performed not only in the form of documents and tangible environment but also processes.[98] In the official narrative, the regeneration process in Nantou "engaged residents' participation" and "integrated multiple stakeholders' interest."[99] However, I would claim that these are constructed narratives to justify the planning process, and what the government and developer branded as an achievement just showed that public participation was a myth.

The main stakeholders that participated in this regeneration included the government, the real estate company, and the village collective, while the migrant tenants that are the actual residents living there were excluded from the interest alliance. The alliance was constructed from the stakeholders' power relations. The Shenzhen Construction Department, which is affiliated to the city municipality, was the client of the regeneration project and acted as the government's

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[97] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986).

[98] Ameel, *The Narrative Turn in Urban Planning*.

[99] Nanshan District Government, "The Nantou Ancient City Starting Exhibition," 2020.

agent. In this case, the municipal government was the "leader," as it narrated, controlling the overall direction because it had the power to monitor and approve projects. The Vanke Group took the role of investor and project manager, in charge of the design, construction, and operation of the whole project under the direction raised by the government. The district government also provided some supportive policies to make the regeneration process go smoothly. The way that the company collaborated with the village collective was not by land requisition, but by signing a 20-year leasing contract with the property-owners. In this case, the village collective had a negotiation power to maximize their profits from transferring their houses' use rights to the company, which was an alternative to leasing to the migrant tenants. (fig 3-8)
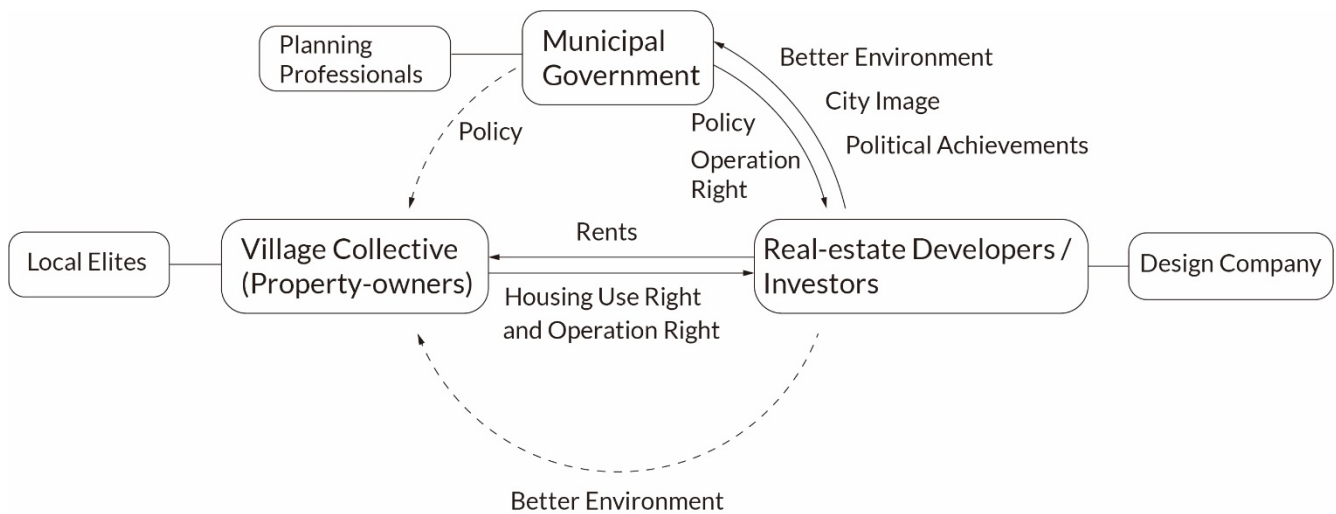
Fig 3-8. The Benefit Coalition in the Regeneration

The negotiation power of property-owners, or the members of the village collective, was also related to their status inside the village. As Fei Xiaotong wrote in his book *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society*, the squires, or the local elites in the village, functioned as a form of authority and had the power to govern and influence others in Chinese traditional rural society.[100] These people possessed an advantage in terms of political, economic, or educational

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[100] Xiaotong Fei, *Xiang Tu Zhongguo (From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society)* (Beijing: Beijing:

status and were powerful in the geographical "field" of the village. In Jiujie, there were also collective members who acted as the role of local elites, having a larger voice when negotiating with the developer. A property-owner living on the main South Zhongshan Street, who claimed that his family members were doing substantial business in Hong Kong and overseas, expressed his hardline stance faced with the regeneration:

> The developer agreed that my house would not be renovated. We spent hundreds of thousands of yuan asking a feng shui master to design this gate for our house, and we would not allow any change on it.
>
> Interview with a homeowner living on South Zhongshan Street, Jan 2020

Therefore, the notion of "residents' participation" applied only to the members of the village collective or the property-owners. Migrant tenants did not have the negotiation power at all under the profit coalition, and their interests were not considered. Without property rights, tenants had no voice in the regeneration. They were easily driven away if houses needed to be renovated, even they had been living in the place for decades. The owner of Xuqixiu Herbal Tea Shop is the case of a tenant running a business in the village for 14 years and asked to leave. In addition, it would be almost impossible for tenant business-owners who left to return after the regeneration. The Jiujie Dessert Store is the only shop on the main street that was retained, according to the interview with its owner. The rent for the store was raised from 500 dollars per month to 2500 dollars after the regeneration, which was not affordable for most small business owners selling food and daily necessities.

What happened in Jiujie village was what Herzfeld has discussed as "spatial cleansing."[101] The speed of cleansing the migrant tenants was even faster than the traditional demolition projects since it took much less time for the developer to negotiate a leasing contract than reaching a compensation agreement. In terms of the branding of public participation, the official

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People's Publishing House, 2012).

[101] Michael Herzfeld, "Spatial Cleansing: Monumental Vacuity and the Idea of the West," *Journal of Material Culture* 11, no. 1–2 (2006): 127–49, https://doi.org/10.1177/1359183506063016.

narrative differentiated residents into local village collective members and floating populations, publicizing involving the former and displacing the latter as both successes. The government did not regard spatial cleansing as a problematic process. Rather, they took it as a strategy for and natural progress in a place's upgrading and transformation, and even described the process as "overcoming difficulties." In the exhibition displaying the regeneration process of Nantou[102], driving away tenants in a short period became part of the commendable achievement of the government's work to show their efficiency. It narrates:

> In March 2020, the Nanshan District Government issued the "No.1 Task Order" and successfully completed negotiating the contract lease of 88 buildings located at the example section in 10 days.
> In July 2020, the tenant-clearing work of 111 shops in east and west main streets was completed.[103]

In short, the policy, process, and actions of the regeneration have been dominated by the embedded political will of creating an image of national unity and the economic purpose of profit-making. The grassroots tenants, who constituted the main residents' group, had little voice in the narratives *in* placemaking. Even though the grassroots stories were told, they were narrated by the upper-class Yuppies rather than by the tenants themselves, and the stories were utilized to fabricate a sense of authenticity. Moreover, the branding of stakeholders' participation was just a shell covering the fact that migrants were not empowered the negotiation rights in the whole process.

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[102] Nanshan District Government, "The Nantou Ancient City Starting Exhibition."

[103] This process happened during the global pandemic of covid-19.

Chapter 4 Narratives *for* Placemaking – The Fabricated New Identity

A PLACE FOR CONSUMPTION AND TOURISM

This section is about how the narratives *for* placemaking are about branding the identity by media and new localized stories, therefore becoming a stimulus for consumption, tourism, and inclusion of the new social groups. The regeneration constructed a sense of "authenticity," catering to people's nostalgic emotions, promoting the experience economy. According to Gilmore and Pine, "people tend to perceive as authentic that which refers to some other context, drawing inspiration from human history, and tapping into our shared memories and longings."[104] This is why the Jiujie Dessert Store, which is branded as a "special dessert originated in Jiujie since 1995"[105], was asked to stay by the government and has been quite busy with customers from elsewhere after the regeneration. Consumers prefer to pay for what they believe is authentic since authenticity is about "purchasing on the basis of conforming to *self-image*."[106] When interviewing tourists, I found that they were satisfied with the place because "it is hard to find a place of the old style in Shenzhen," and "the Nantou Ancient City is such as place full of history and memories,"[107] despite that the "old" elements were just fake, constructed images.

The displayed historic elements, antique-style façades, and bustling streets built in the Nantou Ancient City are the rendered authenticity serving what Urry coined as the "tourist gaze."[108] It is about the construction of a particular physical "place" in the context of

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[104] James H. Gilmore and B. Joseph Pine II, *Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2007), 50.

[105] Quoted from the advertisement of Jiujie Dessert Store.

[106] Gilmore and Pine II, *Authenticity*, 87.

[107] Quoted from an interview with a tourist from another community in Shenzhen, Jan 2020.

[108] John Urry, *Consuming Places*, International Library of Sociology (London ; New York: Routledge, 1995).

globalization and "time-space compression" that suppresses differences between places.[109] This

phenomenon is highly connected to modern consumption practices, for which places became

sources "providing the context within which goods and services are compared, evaluated,

purchased and used."[110]

The replacement of the stores on the main streets is the case that the true locality of place is

undermined by the attempt to fabricate a sense of authenticity and to respond to a global trend of

middle-class taste (fig 4-1). After the regeneration, the previous diverse individual-operated

caterings have been largely replaced by company-operated high-end restaurants of Canton,

Hongkong or Macau style, and even other global famous brands. This action embodies the

"heritagization" of local foods that "render them both expensive and locally unfamiliar."[111] The

target customers are no longer the local residents but have changed to tourists. As Gilmore and

Pine suggested, "nothing from business is really authentic."[112] The so-called local foods only

end up with fake authenticity that is just to create a sense of originality catering to consumers'

preferences. Meanwhile, most of the other stores invited by the developer are western-style salad

bars, coffee shops, and fashion boutiques selling high-end products (fig 4-2). Both the commerce

and the built environment and target the middle-class group's taste and have nothing to do with

the previous local community.

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[109] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry Into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Blackwell, 1989).

[110] Urry, *Consuming Places*, 1.

[111] Michael Herzfeld, "Brulotte, Ronda L. & Michael A. Di Giovine (Eds). Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage. Xiii, 237 Pp., Illus., Bibliogrs. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2014. £70.00 (Cloth)," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 23, no. 1 (2017): 197–98, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12560.

[112] Gilmore and Pine II, *Authenticity*, 87.

Fig 4-1. Catering Commerce after Regeneration, 2021

Fig 4-2. A Wuhan Noodle Restaurant Changed to Miffy Store (left: 2019; right: 2020)[113]

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[113] Zhang Chao, "Vanke Nantou Urban Renewal by Bowan Architecture," ArchDaily, October 9, 2020,

The separation of the tourists' activities and the vernacular community demonstrated a "front-back polarity" of social life. MacCannell has pointed out a dichotomy between the "front region," which referred to the space of "staged authenticity," and the "back region," which was the social space bearing activities behind the performances.[114] In Nantou's case, the spaces shown for tourists (front region) have been intentionally designed to be attractive while the spaces that residents really live in (back region) have been neglected. These two categories of spaces are geographically adjacent but socially divided. Tourists crowding on the main streets to go shopping and take photos barely step into other lanes, while residents' daily activities happen almost entirely in the lanes where they move around, run small businesses, and get affordable food and necessities.
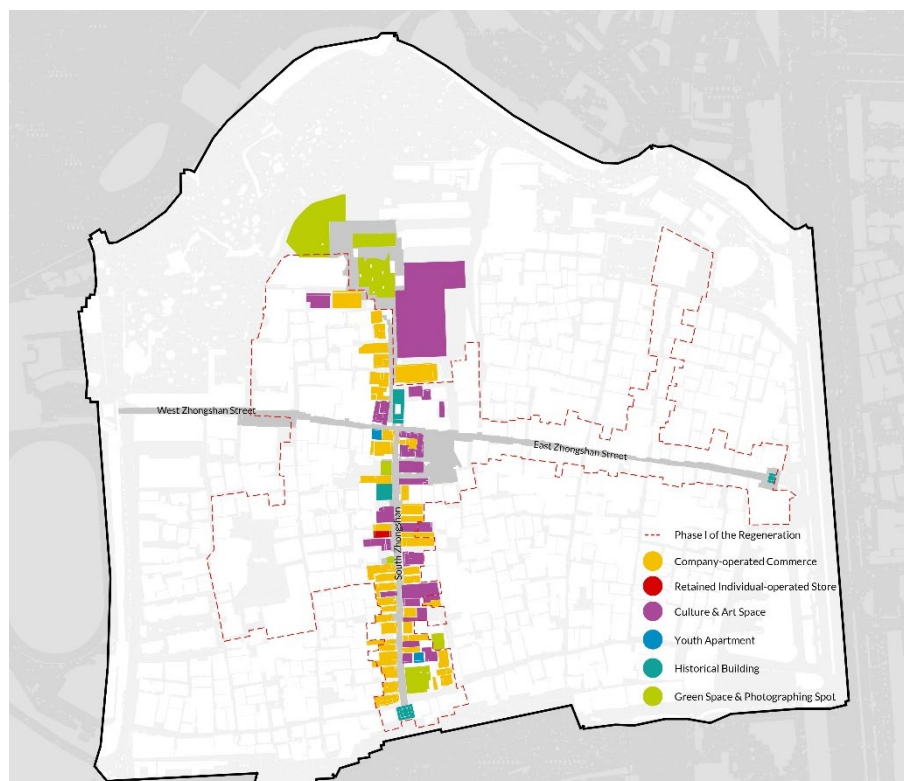
Fig 4-3. Creating the "Front Region" on the Main Street, 2021

https://www.archdaily.cn/cn/949185/nan-tou-gu-cheng-huo-hua-yu-li-yong-xiang-mu-bo-mo-jian-zhu.

[114] Dean MacCannell, "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings," *American Journal of Sociology* 79, no. 3 (1973): 589–603.

Fig 4-4. The "Front Region" after Regeneration, 2020[115]

Fig 4-5. The "Back Region" without Regeneration, 2020

The narratives for Nantou Ancient City are spatial metaphors existing in what William

Gibson referred to as "cyberspace," marking a new form of time-space compression in the digital

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[115] Zhang, "Vanke Nantou Urban Renewal by Bowan Architecture."

era. By branding it as a place rich in history and humanistic culture in public media, Vanke publicized Nantou Ancient City as an internet-famous site where people would like to take a snapshot and share it on their online social networks. The narratives widely spreading on the internet strengthened its identity as a showcase place. The social media platform Weibo is a way to observe a place's branded identity since most of the posters tagging or mentioning a place are visitors. I scraped the keywords in posts tagging "Nantou Ancient City" in the past five years and divided them into three periods: before interventions, during the UABB biennale, and during the Vanke Regeneration. (fig 4-6)

The changes in word frequency reflect the changes in media narratives created by placemaking interventions. Before the biennale, this place is often mentioned together with the near Zhongshan Park and Netherland Flower Town, which means it used to be a normal scenic spot without specific brandings that people may look at when visiting the other two attractions. During the biennale, the issues of "city" and "urban village" were put into public discussions due to the planning and design professionals' values. After Vanke's regeneration, the number of posts mentioning "Nantou Ancient City" has increased fast, and the frequency of mentioning the keywords "culture" and "history" is prominently higher than the other words. The word "snapshot" ranks third, reflecting its new identity as an internet-famous spot. The changes in media narratives have proved the power of placemaking in fabricating different brandings for desired outcomes.

Fig 4-6. The Change of Key Word Frequency in Weibo Posts that included "Nantou Ancient City" (2015-2021)
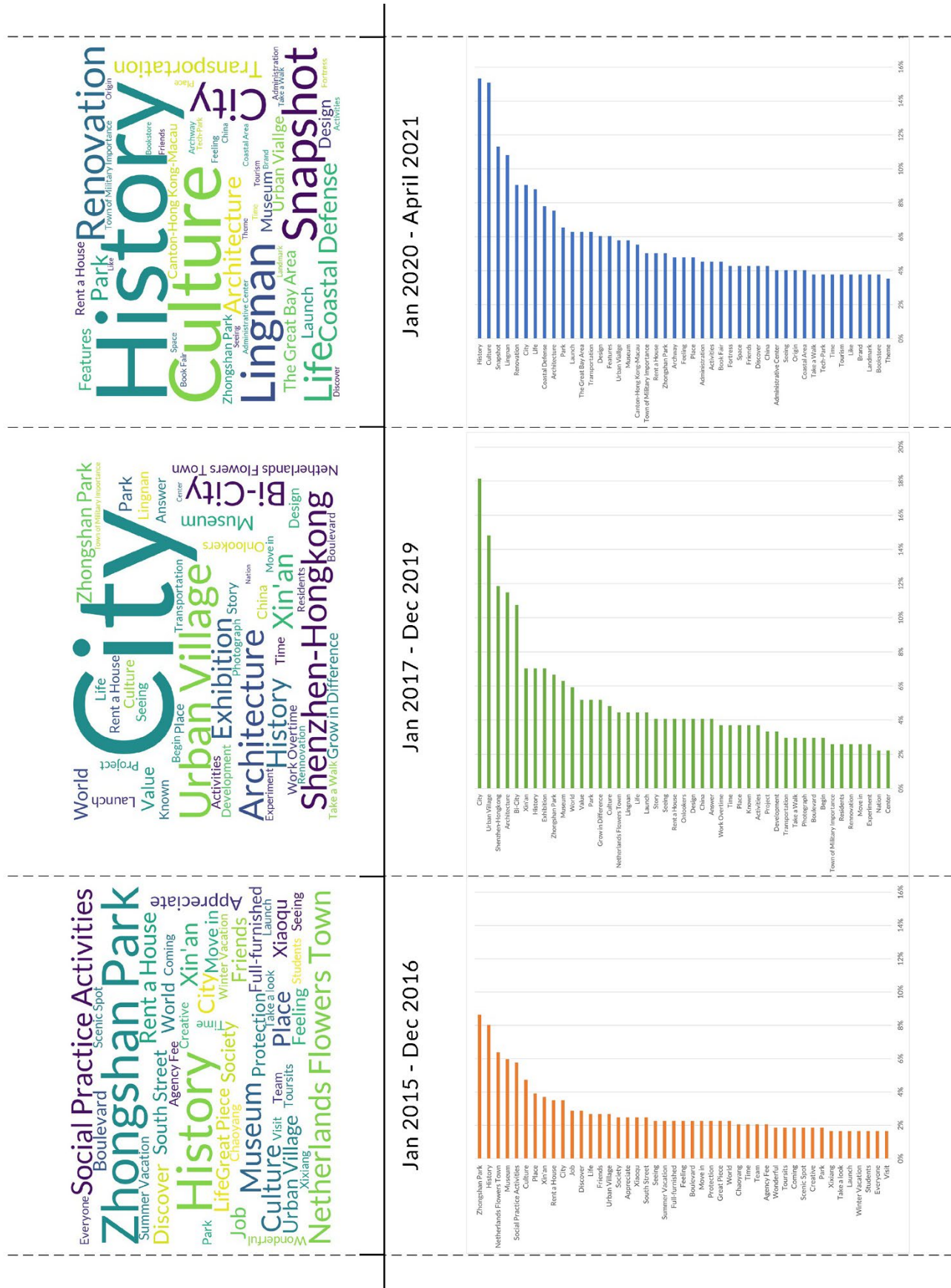
"FUTURE HERITAGE" FOR WHOM?

In Koolhas's *Preservation is Overtaking Us*, he argued that "everything we inhabit is potentially susceptible to preservation."[116] It is similar to the argument that urban villages are "the world heritage from the future."[117] Yuxing Zhang, the initiator of the 2017 Shenzhen-Hongkong Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture, claimed that the core value of urban villages lay in their "futurism," referring to the social structure formed by "unit person," which is a concept divided from the traditional "clan person" and "family person."[118] The features of the social space for the future unit person modality, he believed, are close to what urban village possess: compact personal space, individual economy, and production space, high level of sharing and clustering, mixed functions, the disintegration of human-place relation, etc.[119]

Nevertheless, the regeneration project of Nantou was not about retaining the social structure as Zhang imagined, though the village's permanent exhibition also narrated that the project created a "pluralistic and inclusive community." In fact, it marginalized the existing migrant tenants, who formed the main social group of this unit-person society, and intended to introduce the rising creative class from the city's tech sector as an alternative. After leasing the peasant houses, Vanke renovated them into well-designed apartments subleasing to the white-collar class with rents more than doubled. In just one year, 80 out of 1,000 peasant houses were transformed into these rental apartment buildings, and the number will reach 200 in the next stage. (fig 4-7) In this case, Nantou is "inclusive" only for the desirable groups while excluding those who cannot afford the future life in this place. The regeneration ended up with an interruption of the existing social network and profound district gentrification.

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[116] Rem Koolhaas, *Preservation Is Overtaking Us*, GSAPP Transcripts (New York, NY: GSAPP Books, 2014), 1.

[117] Yuxing Zhang, "城中村是来自未来的世界遗产 (Urban Villages are the World Heritage from the Future)," *Urban Environment Design, In Chinese*, no. 01 (2020): 277–80.
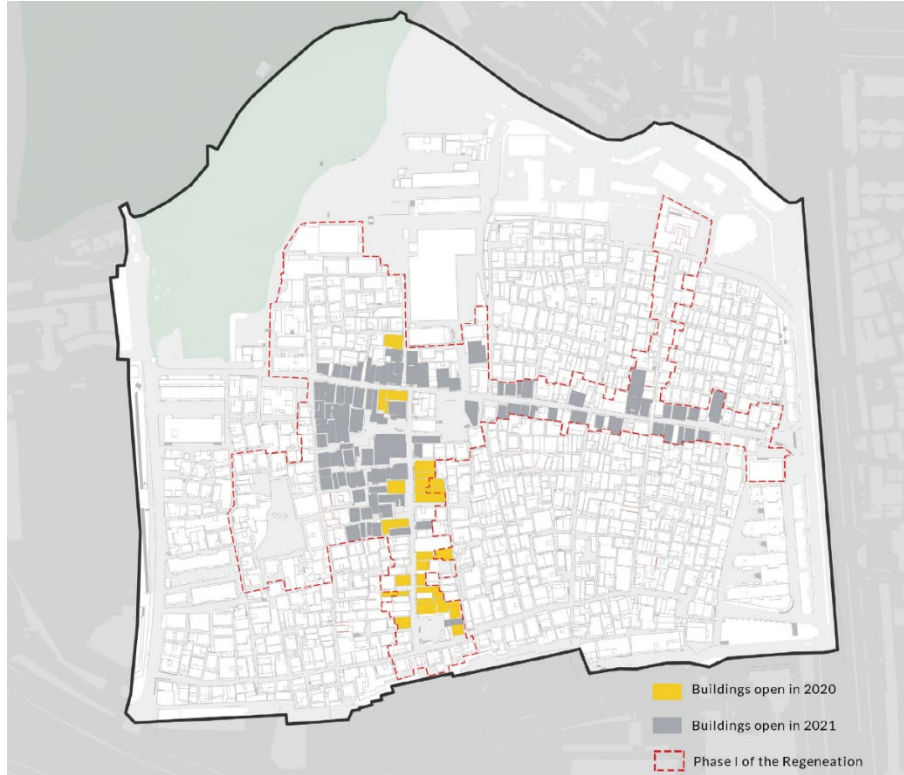
[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid.

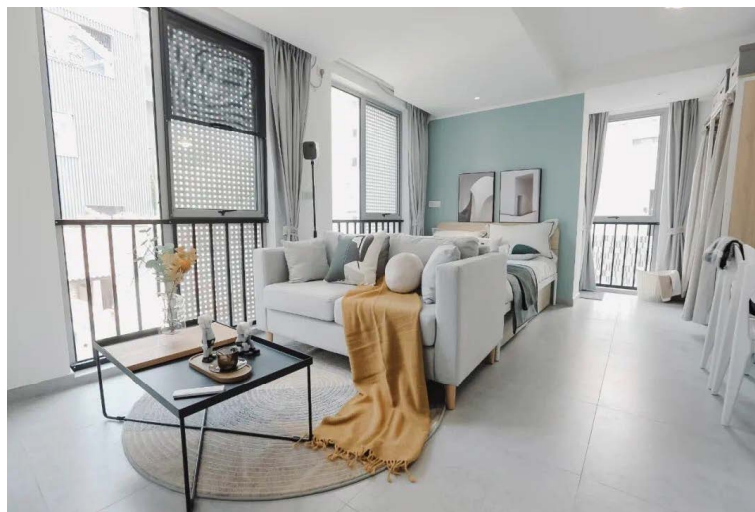Fig 4-7. Vanke's Plan of "Boyu" Long-Term Rental Apartment

Fig 4-8. Peasant Houses Renovated to White-Collar Apartments[120]

Hence, I would argue that the regeneration embodied an incorrect understanding of

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[120] Source: "Boyu" Rental Housing, December 4, 2020, https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/-DbjwKEDlzOFntn0ypl35Q.

preservation for its focus on the spatial fabric, and it could not be sustainable without considering the existed social fabric. The only infatuation in preserving the physical form of the urban village will only lead to what Banham referred to as an "embalmed city" since it paid little attention to the actual function of this neighborhood.[121] The motivations of the regeneration were not for the current social groups of migrant tenants, thus only preserving a "shell" of the urban village but losing its "spirit." The "regeneration," in the end, resulted in the destruction of the continuity of the local community. The past demotic stories, the migrants' struggle, the previous main streets full of small businesses, the busy wet market, and so on have been replaced by white-collar apartments, live street shows, art events, and exhibitions. There still exists a bustling atmosphere, but only for weekends and nights, when young Shenzhener's could escape from weekdays' overtime work. The daily vitality of a grassroots community has gradually gone, and what would be established is still under question.

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[121] Reyner Banham, "The Embalmed City," *New Statesman* 65 (1963): 528–30.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

"CULTURE" AS AN AGENT

In Nantou's regeneration, "culture" acts as an agent for the dominant narrators to construct their desirable narratives to manipulate the outcomes in the top-down approach. (fig 5-1) The agency nature of "culture" could be understood in several aspects.

First, "culture" is used as a branding word to display historical connotations. The district government and developer extracted and selected the place's history from past official historic documents and interpreted them into tangible elements by conservation actions, packing the place as an ancient city of rich history. It serves the city image that refutes the criticism of Shenzhen as a cultural desert and the patriotic narratives for national unity. Second, "culture" acts as an agent for promoting economic growth by tourism and consumption. The developer introduced cultural industries, held cultural events and exhibitions, and fabricated a sense of cultural authenticity in the built environment to attract tourists and new residents. Third, "culture" acts as an agent justifying the spatial cleansing of migrants and lower-end industries and the inclusion of the middle-class group. Under the policy mask of protecting the urban village's culture, the government and developer took the displacing of migrant tenants even more granted when they retain the physical form.

From the narratives *in* placemaking, we could know that this top-down approach is primarily controlled by the political power and driven by the real estate market, lacking the attention to migrants' contribution to the complexity and vitality of the place's cultural identity. Although design and planning professionals had attempted to engage migrants' storytelling, the absence of empowerment to raise voices in participation could not lead to a community-centered solution.
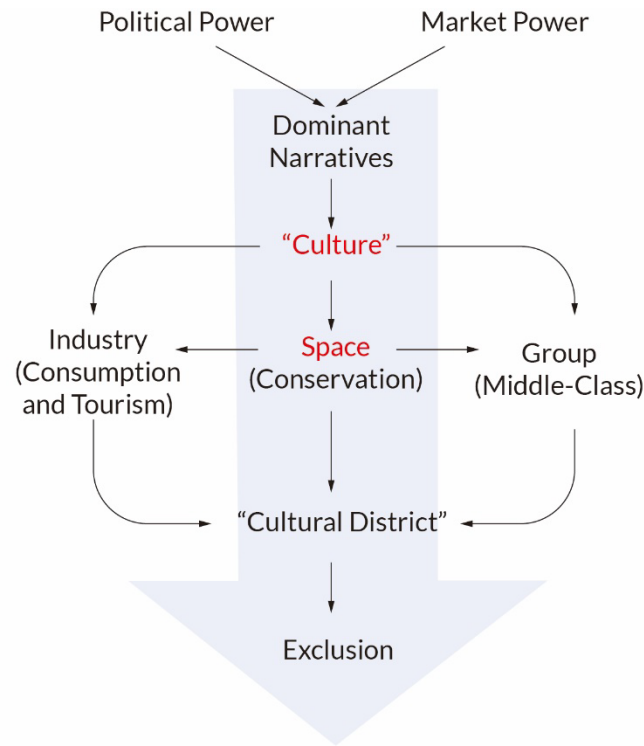
Fig 5-1. "Culture" as an Agent in the Top-down Approach

AN ALTERNATIVE REGENERATION

To reflect on the regeneration model, the meaning of "culture" should be reexamined. The selection or designation of cultural identity is essentially about whether the social groups that it represents are valued or not. Therefore, the emphasis on a certain type of identity while undermining the others would exclude some groups from the place. It is important to understand that culture does not merely exist in historical narratives and elements, the aesthetics of the built environment, or the fashion goods, which are the products of high culture. Migrants' lives, such as food, businesses, and daily activities, also formed their own culture. There is no one culture better than the other, and it is all about choice.

Therefore, I would raise an alternative regeneration that fully recognizes the meaning of

migrants' cultural identity. (fig 5-2) It is a bottom-up approach that centers the community's actual needs, lets the community drive the process, thus promoting the inclusion of the key stakeholders. It seeks to retain the social fabric of the current community rather than only focusing on spatial preservation. In this sense, culture is no longer the agent utilized for branding or fabrication but becomes a natural process actively interacting with the community dynamics.
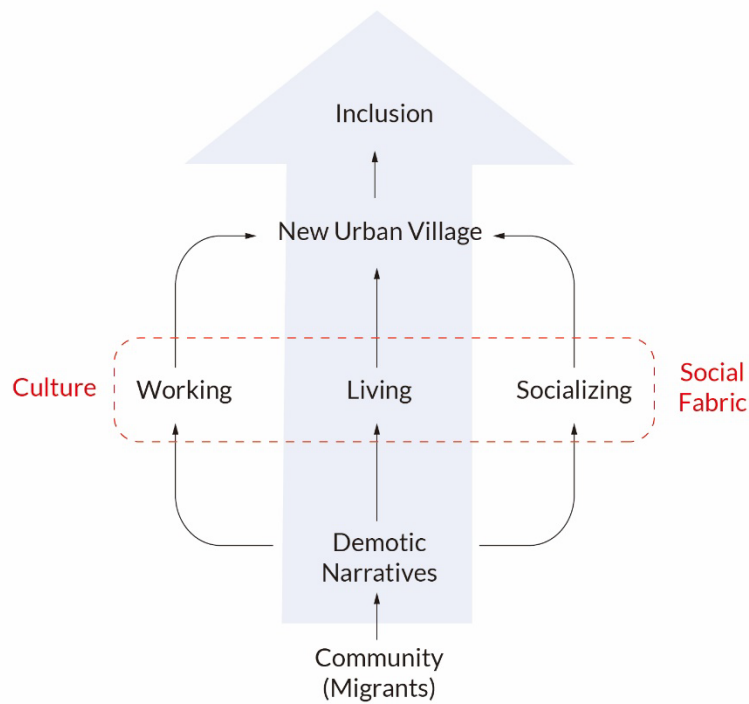

Fig 5-2. Rethinking Culture as an Agent in the Bottom-up Approach for an Alternative Regeneration

Illustrations

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