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PLAN OF BEIJING FROM THE 17TH THROUGH TO THE 19TH CENTURY, SHOWING IMPERIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDINGS. 01. Forbidden City 02. Ancestral Temple 03. Altars of Soil and Grain 04. Altar of Heaven 05. Altar of Earth 06. Altar of the Sun 07. Altar of the Moon 08. Altar of Agriculture (First Crops) 09. North, Middle, and South Lakes 10. Jing Shan (Coal Hill) 11. Confucian Temple 12.National Academy 13. Prefectural Administrative Offices 14. Yamen (county official residences and courts) 15. Granaries 16. Buddhist Monasteries 17. Daoist Monasteries 18. Mosque 19. Provincial Examination Hall 20. Bell and Drum Towers

PLANNING: FROM MODEL TO MODULES

城市规划:从模式到模块 | Florence Graezer Bideau

China has a long tradition of urban planning evident throughout its 3,500-year history (Shatzman Steinhardt 1990). Chinese Imperial city planning has evolved over time in form but their visual characteristics are still related to the ways in which Chinese rulers govern their territory and its population. The Forbidden City is considered by many as a symbol of China. As the capital of five dynasties, it represents the importance of the past in serving the present in the designing of cities. Built in the 13th century, this Imperial monument still serves as a model of urban planning, even after the foundation of the People's Republic of China. It is comprised of palaces, royal monasteries, mausoleums, shrines, altars, parks, government offices, granaries, workshops, treasuries and libraries, all of which were located according to pre–established multisecular traditions. The capital city's form and architecture are symbols of the Chinese ruler, who is also the guardian of such traditions. Considered as an institution, the Forbidden City's concept and design need to be transmitted to future generations alongside its ideology.

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This chapter aims to demonstrate to what extent the acceleration of urban development in China is based on the evolution of urban forms. It will describe a process that continues across time and space, that of the fundamental role of urban planning. It will discuss the deployment of the strategy throughout Chinese territory, and the gradual experimentation of urban planners in adapting to new settings, as well as social, political and economic changes. The long-term urban planning of Imperial China with its relatively slow change left room for disruptive and revolutionary experimentations in planning that would eventually adapt to the societal transformation of the urban fabric. Economic reforms launched at the end of the 1990s generated a rapid acceleration on all levels across China - from lifestyle to political systems, especially in the design and management of rapid urban development that challenged modes of production, the politics of land and property, the construction of new towns, urban and rural divides and density populations. Taking the example of Shenzhen, this paper will finally raise the question of whether this city has become a new model for China's urban change.



PLAN OF BEIJING IN THE 18TH CENTURY SHOWING THE ORIENTATION OF STREETS, LANES AND ALLEYS TOWARD THE CARDINAL DIRECTIONS.

IMPERIAL CITY AND THE WALLED CITY

Spatial arrangements of the capital city as a model are fully expressed by the plan of Beijing from the 17th to 19th centuries which shows Imperial and administrative buildings (中国建筑简史 zhongquo jianzhu jianshi, fig. 6-12, quoted by Shatzman Steinhardt 1990, 3). Such Imperial plans became uniform and represented the fundamental planning principles to be replicated across the Chinese territories. Principal features included four-sided walled enclosures forming a rectangle-the walled city (cheng). Inside, two or more thinner walls composed smaller rectangles in an embedding principle. Equidistant gates pierced the outer (外城 waicheng) and inner (内城 neicheng) walls usually connected by roads that crossed these rectangles. A major gate was generally built on the southern wall of the city. On the outer walls, defensive positions in the form of large towers or protective battlements housed military troops. Streets were capped by gates. Roads and avenues were designed from north to south and from east to west. This perpendicular grid was then articulated by lanes and alleys (巷 xiang), also called hutong in Beijing, which resulted in a checkerboard design.

The four cardinal directions embodied by the north-south and east-west axes were the main benchmarks for navigation. They also symbolically reflected the boundaries of the Chinese Empire. Indeed, according to the traditional belief of the five elements (五行 *wuxing*) associated with the five cardinal points (four geographical directions and the center), the universe was square-shaped and the son of Heaven, i.e., the Emperor who received from Heaven the mission of governing the Earth, was located in its center, i.e., the Forbidden City. Cosmological alignment was crucial to the location of specific buildings. The south was associated with the summer, fire, the phoenix and vermilion. The Emperor's seat in the Hall of Audiences was oriented south, and every building of the Imperial city had southern exposure. Even today, the north-south axis remains a fundamental feature of Chinese urban planning since it is reminiscent of the Imperial central axis that informed the design of Chinese cities in general.

Starting from the centre of the Imperial city, the vast checkerboard extended over the entire territory of the capital. The microscale structure was applied to the macroscale also, reproducing a system of dividing spaces according to a consistent principal. This dividing of space within the city made population control far easier. Governing the masses was crucial for Chinese rulers due to the relocation of thousands of residents upon the conquering of new territory, and the changing location of the Imperial capital. These controlled areas were inhabited mostly by groups identified by their occupation, religion and ethnic origin. In Beijing this governmentally mandated residential localization persisted until the 20th century.



LOCATIONS OF THE TEN GREAT BUILDINGS AND OTHER MONUMENTS IN BEIJING. 01. Tian Anmen 02. Museum of Chinese History 03. Great Hall of the People 04. Cultural Palace of Nationalities 05. Hotel of Nationalities 06. Military Museum 07. State Guest House 08. Beijing Train Station 09. Palace Museum 10. Beihai Park 11. Coal Hill 12. Beijing Library 13. National Art Gallery 14. Hotel of Overseas Chinese 15. Workers' Stadium 16. Museum of Agriculture 17. Capital Exhibition Hall (former Soviet Union Exhibition Hall) 18. Beijing Olympic Park

MAO PLANNING REVOLUTION:

TO MODERNIZE AND URBANIZE THE COUNTRY

In the early 1950s, Mao Zedong launched a modernization project for cities.¹ The Chinese capital, Beijing, was at the forefront of such initiatives, including the drawing of maps, the inventory of historical monuments and the building of new national symbols. After much hesitation, he finally decided to keep the Forbidden City as a symbol of China's imperial past, but left a revolutionary mark by enlarging the horizontal axis from east to west between the Imperial build-ings and the Qianmen Gate. Chang'an Avenue became the new central axis that provocatively transformed the traditional design of the capital city by adding a horizontal axis that crossed the Imperial north–south axis in the very center of Beijing. This break in urban planning was reinforced with the building of the Tian Anmen square alongside ten buildings erected for the ten years of the People's Republic of China (Wu 2005).

To modernize China meant transforming cities by implementing industries within urban neighborhoods and building new housing facilities for workers and their families, alongside the promotion of a new lifestyle among citizens. To this end, engineers with a technical and architectural education were trained in prestigious universities such as Tsinghua University in Beijing. Students were educated for the purpose of implementing the industrialization process, alongside transport and energy infrastructures and domestic manufacturing facilities, to accelerate the transformation of China. Called the Red Engineers, they were to become a new social class singled out by their technological and ideological expertise (Andreas 2009), who would help China close the development gap in agriculture, mobility, industrial production, science and technology, building, public health, etc.² During the next few decades, political campaigns were launched to speed up the process of improving civil infrastructure and public facilities, including sanitation. These campaigns also sought to purify the CCP of so-called bad elements, who were critical or resistant to Mao's effective implementations.

SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM IN ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN PLANNING:

DESIGNING, EXPERIMENTING, EVALUATING AND REPLICATING

Central to this modernization process were architects and urban planners who followed the Marxist path of scientific socialism—historic forces, mainly economic determinism and class struggles, would help to achieve ideological goals—to perform what was expected of them, i.e., adopting a proletarian worldview and conceiving a design approach suitable for socialist China (Zhu 2009). Educational, productive and professional institutions relating to architecture were restructured, and major institutes of construction, design and planning were established. Influenced by the presence of Soviet experts during the 50s, these professionals were integrated into work–units (単位 *danwei*)

¹ The architect Leon Hoa describes this project in detail in his book *Reconstruire la Chine: 30 ans d'urbanisme 1949–1979* published in Paris in 1980 (Éditions du "Moniteur").

² How China Escaped the Poverty Trap (Ithaca, Cornell University, 2016) from political scientist Yuan Yuan Ang is very enlightening to this perspective.



CAOYANG NEW VILLAGE, THE FIRST WORKERS' NEW VILLAGE IN NEW CHINA.

which favored a uniformed practice characterized by a collectivization process involving teams of architects, designers, engineers and other specialists. In order to reach the productivity and economic efficiency required in this period of massive construction, the building industry was nationalized and integrated in five-years plans. This system transformed the practice of architecture: artistic creation was eliminated and replaced by a generic form of basic construction; the signature of a project was anonymized; overall control of a project was impossible due to the progressive division of tasks, and equal pay was applied.

Large teams of about 50–60 people designed new areas within the city in order to implement the concept of neighborhood units, including industry and manufacturing alongside social housing and public facilities (health, education, groceries, administration, services). The goal was to adopt the model of the work-unit to a larger scale within urban redevelopment projects. Relevant experience enhanced early Chinese socialist planning: for example the *Caoyang New Village* built in Shanghai between 1951 and 1953. Designed as a large village with community facilities within walking distance, the first workers' housing project of Caoyang was intended to host 1,000 households of model workers. Considered an urban pilot for implementing a new village—or in reality regrouping several villages into a single whole—the Caoyang model was designed and expanded throughout major cities where large factories and industries were developed for modernizing China. As a flagship for the CCP, it showcased the new socialist lifestyle and impacted the Chinese urban imaginaries since it reflected Mao's view of transforming consumerist cities into productive cities.

A few years later, under the expertise of Soviet advisors, Chinese work-units took the form of superblocks (大街方 *dajiefang*) composed of four to six apartment blocks organized around public facilities on symmetrical axes with a certain formalism. Typical of such structures is the *Baiwanzhuang* (百万庄) Residential District in Beijing which serves as residence for government officers and a dormitory for the national textile factory. Designed as an "organic component" within the city, these superblocks were also less expensive to build since they were integrated into redevelopment areas and thus benefited from existing infrastructures instead of new development areas in the suburbs.

THE MODEL UNIT OF THE DANWEI AS MICRODISTRICT

After the break in diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, Chinese architects and designers evaluated their previous experiences. They abandoned the superblock form and introduced more flexibility in their planning approach according to economic and topographic issues. The neighborhood unit was transformed in the mid–1950s into the microdistrict, which did not require major changes in the conception of residential planning except for population density and size since the needs of the communities did not evolve much during this period. This basic unit involved a combination of economic activities, civic administration and residences (Lu 2006) and was eventually integrated as a planning norm. This *danwei* (单位) urban model was then replicated and deployed at a larger scale in governmental development projects.











CAOYANG NEW VILLAGE, THE FIRST WORKERS' NEW VILLAGE IN NEW CHINA.

Its implementation was nonetheless challenged by individual work–units that developed their social housing and facilities according to their own wealth and maturation. This urban institution usually started with basic living standards for single workers (dormitories and production structures) surrounded by walls and gates. To meet the needs of its employees, *danwei* evolved to welcome families (apartments, canteens, public baths, groceries and nurseries), educate children (primary schools) and host visitors (guesthouses, restaurants). As the *danwei* gradually developed, it became a semi–autonomous entity that brought work, housing and services into proximity. In the early stages of the market economy, only 10% of urban social housing were municipal government–owned; the majority were owned by work–units. The economic reforms affected the fabric of urban planning and a series of tasks were transferred from governmental institutions to private developers while an array of codes was created to regulate construction of microdistrict models alongside facilities to meet the new lifestyle of Chinese urban citizens (commercial, recreational, dining, administrative, security system, etc).

FROM DANWEI TO XIAOQU:

AN INCREMENTAL MODULE FOR ADAPTING TO SOCIETAL CHANGE? In the 1990s and 2000s, the liberal approach to the economy promoted "socialism with Chinese characteristics," allowing the establishment of the land-lease market, which fostered a rapid urbanization process. Low-acquisition rural lands were gradually transformed into urban areas on a massive scale. Infrastructures and utilities were needed to promote the leases for commercial developers (Hsing 2010). The creation of housing markets produced rapid urbanization and downtown redevelopment. Danwei were renovated and sold, possibly to former danwei workers, at good prices. Others were gathered and converted into new residential communities (小区 xiaoqu) planned and built in accordance with the city's planning and design principles. Tested during the late 1980s, these housing estates constituted a basic structural unit of urban residential district planning, with clear boundaries, medium size, daily facilities and services, inner circulation systems and green spaces. The form and type of these units varied greatly from city to city. This "commodity market" (Liang 2014) transformed the former socialist welfare housing systems into large-scale residential compounds (or gated communities) and introduced property ownership among citizens. Unequal access to property assets further widened the gap between the wealthy and poor, as well as increasing the divide between urban and rural China. The production and consumption of urban housing progressively reflected the new social stratification in China: social classes regrouped in similar neighborhoods, whether rich or common, and each was identified by their distinctive economic and cultural consumption practices (Tomba 2014; Graezer Bideau and Pagani 2019; Pow 2009).

Today, the promotion of economy through land leases and urban planning is an essential tool for local governments. Cities' master plans are used to implement long-term policies that legitimize new modes of developmental governance (creation of Special Economic Zones (SEZ), Central Business Districts (CBD), High-Tech zones, etc). Mainly run by Red Engineers, these new urban





TOP: The 1986 Plan of Shenzhen, encompassing the Shenzhen Economic Zone (SEZ). BOTTOM: The 1996-2010 Plan of Shenzhen, adapted from Shenzhen Urban Planning & Land Administration Bureau (2000) Shenzhen Comprehensive Plan (1996-2010). development plans are presented as scientific, rational and sustainable. They are implemented by detailed plans (详细规划 *xingxi guihua*) which pragmatically control the urban development by incorporating cellular urbanism with mixed functions in order to face head on societal change in China.

PLANIFICATION OF SHENZHEN:

AN EXPERIMENTAL CASE STUDY FROM THE 1980S

Shenzhen was one of the first experimental sites in China's economic reforms. As a pilot project, the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone was initiated to combine technology, modern governance and foreign experience, and was located in a corridor between Hong-Kong and mainland China. Shenzhen is therefore a relevant example of how capitalist urban development practices were adapted to a specific context where land management was highly controlled by central government (Ng and Tang 2004). As Zacharias and Tang demonstrated (2010), Shenzhen experimented with urban planning reform as a vehicle for transforming the management of land resources, and the restructuring of its local economy from fishing villages to high-tech industries, with a low-cost workforce in order to become the major hub for trans-shipping and logistics command in the Pearl River Delta area. The uniqueness of Shenzhen is also due to the rapid growth of its population, rising from 30 thousand to over 10 million inhabitants over the past 40 years. How did this transformation take place? How could the local government put into practice a set of innovative urban planning policies in a transitional economy? And even more importantly, how did Shenzhen succeed in adapting its development to such rapid changes at a political, economic and social level? Local government had to follow the instigator of the reform era, Deng Xiaoping, who claimed: "Central Government has no resources and so you [the SEZs] have to do it on your own to 'find a way out.'" (Shao 1998 quoted by Ng 2003, 431).

Urban growth and spatial development materialized in three waves. The first master plan in 1986, the Shenzhen comprehensive Development Draft plan, included allocations for major infrastructure and a project for city expansion. Local government acquired rural lands through an administrative allocation process, and launched a set of clusters (park, industrial, commercial, residential and port/airport) alongside the central corridor of Shennan Avenue. The design of this plan was to break with the former core-periphery and monocentric morphology of Chinese cities from the Imperial era by implementing a "clustered linear planning principle" (带状组团 dai zhuang zu tuan).

Influenced by former socialist master plans in China, Shennan Avenue became Shenzhen's central axis and a symbol of the economic reforms introduced by Deng Xiaoping, as Chang'an Avenue was the symbol of the new era launched by Mao Zedong in the 1950s. This horizontal axis was gradually flanked by large compounds which recalled the cellular urbanism previously experienced in Beijing and many Chinese cities. Until the 1990s, the development of Shenzhen followed this spatial principle that established a pattern of grids composed of working districts, residential areas and green spaces, incorporating mainly dormitory



accommodation associated with factories to host major waves of immigration. This resulted in rather homogeneous and standardized urban designs with an uncontrolled development of the phenomenon of urban villages—pockets of low rise housing with a high density of poor and transient residents surrounded by skyscrapers and mobility infrastructure—in the core city (Ai 2014).

Later, this linear principle was extended to a larger planning area. The 1996 Comprehensive master plan proposed multiplying such "axis structures" in order to better connect newly developed areas such as Bao'an and Longgang to the central corridor of Shenzhen. This model of city networking was adapted to absorb unplanned developments which basically resulted from inefficient use of land resources and investment funds. New development projects sought to bring diversity to the visual skyline, incorporate cultural facilities (exhibition centers, libraries, opera houses, children's palaces, government buildings, etc.) and shopping malls, and to redefine green areas. Among them, one finds the Shenzhen Civic center, built in the shape of a former Imperial pavilion, which lies at the intersection of the north–south axis and the east–west axis. This over– sized governmental building, surrounded by an area of skyscrapers and a green belt, seeks to demonstrate the modernity of Shenzhen's SEZ. References to Manhattan and the European garden featuring iconic buildings reflect the rapid transformation of rural villages into an international city.

Specific clusters were also built, such as the Overseas Chinese Town (OCT), a theme park based around copies of iconic international buildings, hotels and residential areas. The new Central Business District of Luohuo Center was erected on the site of a former historical town, and a train connection to Hong Kong that comprises commercial, residential and industrial uses. Later on, new urban districts developed in its west, including industrial development projects (high-tech and science parks) and the University of Shenzhen (Futian, Nanshan and Shekou). Its east also saw the addition of tourism-based developments, including beaches, OCT East and a commercial port (Yantian). All these constructions contributed to the development of a diverse array of urban forms, ranging from distant fishing villages to residential high-rises, from traditional markets to contemporary shopping malls, and from traditional work-units to privileged gated-community compounds.

This model of city networking is today considered a first step towards a transition to high-tech industrial development in Shenzhen. Urban planning is an engine for future growth that combines in its design the integration of socioeconomic and spatial planning. This step forward contains the idea of upgrading the city to make Shenzhen an internationally significant locale.

In the 2000s, Shenzhen's comprehensive plan was revised (2007–2020) alongside an urban development strategy (2030) which relied on a polycentric model in order to face decades of rapid urban growth and its related problems (land resources, shortage of water, population growth and environmental issues), and to effectively promote the gradual transition of industry from production and

SHENZHEN 1984-2018 SATELLITE TIMELAPSE: POPULATION GROWTH 1985-2015: 6,040% (1955: 5,000 PEOPLE; 1985: 175,000; 2015: 10.7 MILLION)

SHENZHEN 2018



SHENZHEN 1984



manufacturing to services and high-tech industries. The 2030 strategy seeks to reorganize the entire PRD region into five complementary sub-regions (Shenzhen, Hong Kong, Dongguan, Guangzhou and Huizhou) with local centers that include office buildings, shopping, housing, and transportation interchange facilities. The goal here is to produce a coherent development pattern that comprises inner and outer districts interconnected by mobility infrastructure (road, rail, metro and maritime), alongside the transformation of the Shenzhen social fabric. In this regard, local government has intervened in the development of former industrial zones or urban villages to implement neighborhood regeneration processes in order to fine-tune and adapt the economy's dynamics (Deng, Fu and Sun 2018). This has resulted in multiple-use buildings incorporating apartments, hotels, shops, offices and start-up businesses, accommodating large numbers of people and residents and fostering microscale creative economies. The Vanke Cloud City in Shenzhen is an illustrative example of such urban developments that promote a new lifestyle connected to business opportunities.

Urban villages with communities of farmers and fishermen were more difficult to integrate into the contemporary city, and the collective ownership of their lands posed challenges to the Shenzhen planners (Bach 2010) since local government needed to acquire parcels of land preceding urban development. This coherent urban planning strategy did not prevent social difference being expressed through district location. Indeed, the rapid building process in Shenzhen resulted in relatively homogeneous, good quality housing occupied by middle–class engineers and blue–collars workers that contrasts sharply with urban villages which are mainly inhabited by communities of floating populations, migrant workers and the poor (Eric 2017; O'Donnel, Wong & Bach 2017).

CONCLUSION: A NEW MODULE FOR CHINESE NEW TOWN?

Shenzhen is today considered an urban laboratory for all of China. The main interest of the city has always been the large scale "experimental ground" (Ng 2003: 431). This urban pilot demonstrates that it is now possible to effectively plan such large-scale developments. Shenzhen also demonstrates that not only architectural, technological and digital innovations but also social innovations can be introduced under "socialism with Chinese characteristics." Flexible regulations towards *hukou* ($\dot{P}\Box$) have generated social transformations in the urban fabric where, for instance, farmers were transformed into owners and residents of high-quality housing.

Urban planners also witnessed a change of paradigm: they are no longer considered mere technicians assisting with the planning of economic transitions as they were in the early phases of Shenzhen development during the 1980s. Instead they became the central strategists who masterminded a new vision for Shenzhen as a world-class city (Ng and Tang 2004). These urban experimentations were globally successful and are regarded as models to be reproduced and pursued in other cities with a high potential of innovation, technological and economic development, such as the Chengdu–Chongqing cluster in Western China or the Yangtze Mid–River Delta cluster in Central



SHENZHEN ROOFTOPS AND URBAN VILLAGE. Photo (top): Dennis de Bel West China. But the experience of Shenzhen was not without a measure of failure, mainly due to local constraints such as the underestimation of population growth, and the shortage of land for development. Technical support and new policy-making rules definitively assisted the local government with their constant adaptation of the management of Shenzhen's spatial development, in order to meet the changing needs of the population. This included frequent shifts of housing and neighborhoods, longer commutes due to the expansion of the city, regular use of public spaces for recreational activities or simply shopping and the desire to develop a sense of local community, well-being and quality of life.

In summary, Shenzhen demonstrated a process of local government's incessant negotiation with spatial practices: the rapid transformation of the urban fabric needed to gradually adapt its urban forms and modules to the current situation. The study of a city's urban planning reveals such real-time adjustments. This is particularly true with the informality of urban villages and the urban regeneration process allowing temporary arrangements, and a gradual approach to problem solving (Wang, Wang and Wu 2009). The Shenzhen example reveals a flexible attitude that balanced public and private interests to develop an efficient control mechanism for urban growth. According to a recent article in the South China Morning Post,³ the recent administrative and economic reforms promoting Shenzhen as a "pilot demonstration area of socialism with Chinese characteristics" reflects a pragmatic approach. "Learn as you go" is still the motto for constant adaptation to current conditions to find solutions that work (Schoon 2014). The Greater Bay Area strategy unveiled by Xi Jinping in 2019 aims specifically to achieve high-quality growth focused on innovation development. It officially promotes Shenzhen as a model for the future development of mainland Chinese cities (instead of Hong Kong in the past).

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COMPUTER HARDWARE RESELLERS CHILLING IN HUAQIANGBEI, THE LARGEST ELECTRONICS MARKET IN THE WORLD IN SHENZHEN, CHINA. Photo: Dennis de Bel

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