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"Public Space and the Urban Village: How People Weave Together the Urban Village and the Surrounding Urban City"

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Abstract

Urban villages (chengzhongcun) are unique to China and are a result of the country's rapid urbanization. There has been much research and analysis done in trying to understand the nuances of the redevelopment process and how to appropriately revamp this process in order for it to mutually benefit all involved stakeholders. Also, there has been much research done on the public space in the urban village, but this research is often confined to the bubble of the urban village. It seems there is little interest in analyzing the overlap between urban village and the surrounding metropolis. Heavily overlooked is the interaction between the outside urban residents and the urban village residents. The urban village is the space within the city, but it is not detached from that city, it is seemingly integrated. By understanding the ways that people move in between these spaces, and how they interact within these spaces, it will provide evidence for community building and the value of the urban village not just to the urban village residents but also to the outside urban residents.Studies focus on the quality of public space and how that affects the people in these spaces, but little attention is paid to the people themselves who occupy these spaces and interact in these spaces despite the questionable quality of such spaces. The purpose of this thesis is to explore how the public space of the urban village influences the community and interaction between the residents of the urban village, and the interaction between the residents of the urban villages and the outside urban residents. I argue that the public space of the urban village facilitates community building between the different people who occupy that space, as well as functioning to integrate new residents and the urban village itself more cohesively with the fabric of the greater urban sprawl. I have found that the urban village's public space actively works to integrate the residents of the urban village into the larger framework of the city through the interactions it facilitates between people of different backgrounds and people who exist within the boundaries of the surrounding urban city.

Key words: urban village, China, public space, community building, people, Pearl River Delta

Introduction

The Chinese urban village, known as chengzhongcun or villages in the city, are a result of rapid urbanization and modernization (Campanella 2008, Al 2014, Song et al. 2016). They can be found in every big city in China, as individual cityscapes expand to consume more of the surrounding land and agricultural villages (Al 2014). The urban villages are an interesting occurrence, and constantly changing as the village takes on new identities as it adapts to the urban landscape which encloses it.

The village no longer is home to only the indigenous villagers, and now the urban village has become a space for a multitude of different backgrounds. Not only the original indengous villagers, but also: local residents, rural migrants, white collar workers, workers from the service industry, and even students. The commercial breakdown of the urban village caters to these demographics, and also to any surrounding urban residents who come into the urban village (Al 2014).

Urban villages are, by definition, specific to China. Urban villages were agricultural villages that have been surrounded by a city (Campanella 2008, Al 2014, Song et al. 2016). They are the result of the rapid urbanization of China, and different factors such as land reform in China, a specific dual and rural land ownership and management system, and a large migratory population which has to deal with the economics of moving into the city (Al 2014, Li et al. 2014, Song et al. 2016). It is important to understand the layout and form of these villages. Local villagers needing a source of income are able to build up their homes since they are not restricted by city building laws, and add multiple stories (Al 2014). Because these homes were built up from the original zoning of the village, the result is now narrow streets and buildings so close to each other that neighbors could shake hands. Due to this urban layout, public space is found in

whatever open space is available, such as small squares, basketball courts, and the main streets is often the widest and therefore the most likely to have spaces of gathering (Kochan 2015, Song et al. 2016).

As with any other instances of people gathering in one space, the urban village is no outlier in regard to valuing and developing its own public space. Though there may not be formal grids of sidewalk running throughout the urban village, the street functions just as well in orienting social interaction and becoming a public space in and of itself (Whyte 1980, Francis et al. 2012, Song et al. 2016). The limited space of the urban village produces public space specific to the urban village, but also that functions in ways that are the same as any other standard of public space. In relation to this thesis, looking at the urban village has to be taken into consideration in light off its Chinese context, but it is important to acknowledge that across different cultures and their spaces, there are things which remain consistent.

Public space in the urban village is essential in regard to the lack of large individual private spaces to begin with. Seniors need space for social interaction and gathering, children cannot be cooped up in small apartments, and younger people will thrive with more opportunities to gather with other young people (Francis et al. 2012, Li et al. 2014, Mehta 2014). Even from the outside perspective from urban residents in surrounding areas, the use of the urban village as a public space for outer urban residents is integral to the process of acclimating newcomers to city life. The urban village is also a space where outer urban residents spent time and money enjoying food and cheap goods (Zacharias et al. 2013, Al 2014, Li et al. 2014, Song et al. 2016).

The urban village's public space is in theory where most community building happens within the urban village, but also within the wider urban cityscape. There is a disconnect between local villagers and rural migrants, because despite social overlap and existing within the

same space of the urban village, building a sense of community between these two groups is difficult and leaves much to be wanted (Li et al. 2014, He 2015, Song et al. 2016, Li & Liu 2019). Arguably, one variable which could factor into aiding these two groups find community, as the addition of the outer urban residents who are another social groups which factors into creating interactions between themselves and others.

The specific topic of investigation that is being explored by this thesis and literature review is the topic of public space and the urban village. More specific research questions are: 1) How does the urban village become a public space? 2) What is the use and importance of public space in the urban village? 3) Does the availability of public space in the village, as well as the village itself as a public space, affect the people who occupy said space? 4) What is the role of the urban village as a public space? 5) Does the urban village's use as a public space contribute to its value in the community? 6) How does the public space and the urban village help create community?

By exploring this topic of the urban village as valuable public space, I think it is an interesting appeal to the reformation of the total development of the urban village. By losing what is valuable public space in a city, a unique public space, to replace it with a mall and another Louis Vuitton or Fendi store or high rise just contributes to the destruction of culture and a homogenization of Chinese cities (Gaubatz 2008, Al 2014).

In reviewing the literature and evidence in regards to this topic, critical analysis of the case studies presented and final conclusions drawn from the specific sources I have found will be what I use in regard to this thesis. Documentary analysis will be the core of my research methods. My methodology stems from what I know of William H. Whyte's writing in *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. I expect my conclusions to follow along with my own interest in this

topic. There is value in urban villages in consideration of its use as a public space both for those who live in the urban villages and those who live in the surrounding true urban space. My conclusion will support the idea that finding a better way to redevelop these spaces will help preserve the function and the uniqueness of the different urban villages throughout China.

This paper's goal is to outline what research has been done and discovered into the consideration and use of public space in regard to the urban village, and how those spaces facilitate social interaction and community building and why those things are important or not important.

Methodology

In my thesis I explore questions about the role of public space within the urban village. I did research in order to find out how the urban village itself functions as a public space, and also how public space functions within the urban village and how that contributes to the way people build community in these spaces. I wanted to see if the Chinese urban village could fall under the same categorization of public space as other Western cities as outlined by theories of urbanism. Most of the analysis I produced comes from utilizing quantitative data methods, such as documentary analysis of specific areas and studies from China's Pearl River Delta region. I am mostly focused on doing analysis through principles laid out by William H. Whyte in regard to public space and communal gathering. William H. Whyte has a specific set of principles he uses to identify what are the important elements of public spaces, and what works and what does not work. As well as his analysis of how people like spaces where there are other people.

I wanted to address something I felt was lacking in more specific areas of research in the urban village. It is easy to find content on the different stakeholders and processes of urban

village redevelopment. Yet, what seemed more interesting is the existence of the urban village pre-redevelopment, and to see the importance of the way relationships and public space in the urban village make the urban village more integral to its larger urban framework.

The use of documentary analysis and case studies of specific areas are the most useful to this thesis as it allows for more interdisciplinary methodological development, and involves looking into the different motivations for analyzing the social scope of the urban village. I have used existing data from various case studies and research journal in order to develop and appropriate analysis. I looked for relevant sources relating to urban villages and public space within the context of the Pearl River Delta, but also more generally in terms of the use of public space in urban villages and the response to those spaces. Thematic analysis and discourse analysis was what I used in regard to the sources and reading the sources.

I chose these specific methods because there has been little research done in the scope of my thesis questions, and it is necessary to explore what has been researched to figure out holes and parameters for the future of the research.

Limitations

In regards to the limitations of my thesis, there are a few. One of the limitations I feel could have affected my study was my inability to use Chinese primary sources, due to a lack of ability to do my own accurate translations. Accessing these sources could have given me a better insight into Chinese perspectives on the case of the urban village, and the opportunity to include a more well-rounded argument to make my points.

One of my main concerns is also the validity of using Western theories of urbanism and socialized public space to apply in this Chinese space. If applying these Western theories is

justified, what is the use of them to those involved in the scope of the urban village and the redevelopment process? I was unable to delve too deeply into the understanding of foundational Chinese urbanism. If able to more aptly do research into the philosophies behind Chinese urbanism, it might provide more insight into how people living in these spaces navigate communal activities and understand the spaces which they occupy and their function.

Importantly, I have placed a heavy emphasis on researching the public space of China and the role it plays, as it is important to acknowledge that I do not have a presence in these spaces enough to the point where I am comfortable enough to make my own generalized observations. In public space in the United States, I am familiar enough to be able to do a firsthand analysis of observation, but I need documentary analysis of articles and histories of Chinese public space to present my argument for this thesis.

Theoretical Framework

Urban villages in China all face the same end, which is the complete demolition and redevelopment of the urban village (Al 2014). This solution is combated by studies which outline that a stronger involvement from stakeholders of the urban village and a bottom up redevelopment process can lead to better resident satisfaction and more effective urban policy (Ling Hin Li et al. 2014, Wu 2018, Tan 2019). This thesis approaches the question of the value of the urban village differently. The value of the urban village is explored through ideas of public space.

It is important to define public space. Public space takes on many definitions, but in the case of this thesis it can be understood as defined by Vikas Mehta. Mehta, in his defining of public space, considers it as such:

"Public space as the space that is open to the general public, which generates public use and active or passive social behavior, and where people are subject to the general regulations that govern the use of the space" (Mehta 2014, p. 54).

Mehta also limits his definition by focusing on public open space such as streets, plazas, and urban parks, as well as the spaces between buildings and what defines the physical boundaries of the spaces (Mehta 2014). This definition of public space informs the use of it within this thesis.

The conclusions of three foundational studies inform the basis of my assumptions on public space and the urban village, and the lenses through which I explore further research.

The oldest text being used in the exploration of my case studies is William H. Whyte's *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. His analysis comes from his street life project, and he establishes specific necessities for a successful public space including food, sitting space, and other people (Whyte 1980). He concludes that the street is what makes the life of a city, and that has influenced the development of my thesis (Whyte 1980). The main takeaways from his writing which influences this thesis are the value of food, seating areas, and other people in the creation of a public space which facilitates conversation and positive contact with other people (Whyte 1980).

Jacinta Francis et al. does a study specifically looking into the role of public space in creating a sense of community (Francis et al. 2012). Their findings influence my analysis and case studies. Their article discusses the ways in which public space, and quality of public space facilitate community sentiments for people who interact in those spaces. One of their reasonings is that "public space quality is an equally, if not more important, correlate of sense of community than public space size and number" (Francis et al. 2012). This is helpful in analyzing the urban

village, because it helps posit that despite the small size and limited public space, the development of a quality public space is more important. Their conclusion is open-ended as the influences of sense of community has multiple variables, yet this conclusion is helpful in indicating the possibility of how different aspects of public space influence community building and the opportunity for further research.

It is Dror Kochan's conceptual exploration of the urban village which helps to provide a more philosophical approach to ideas of public space and perspectives on the urban village (Kochan 2015). He directly proposes a spatial perspective which "influences migrants' urban practices and can inform alternative development models" (Kochan 2015, p. 928). HIs theories on the urban village produce an alternative understanding of the "urban villages' unique spatial attributes and social roles" (Kochan 2015, p. 929). K His proposed theories of thinking through space and the urban village help to reveal the value and use of the urban village as a space. ochan also explores the migrant problem, and addresses their wellbeing which is something other studies lack. He offers the insight that urban villages allow migrants to "acquire much-needed social, cultural and economic capital in order to eventually challenge their stigmatization and seclusion" (Kochan 2015, p. 945). His evidence influences the idea that the urban village as public space helps acclimate migrants, and influences community building.

These conclusions makeup the main foundation upon which my thesis and research sits.

Literature Review

There are a number of studies done on the urban village regarding the specifics of the formation of the urban village and the method and process of the redevelopment of the urban village. This literature review will not be going into detail on these other studies, unless

necessary for the contextualization of a point or definition. The literature found on the topic in question relates to the role and importance of public space in the context of urban China and the urban village.

To build the foundation of this thesis, it was important to understand the definition of an urban village and what that looks like in the eyes of urban design and urbanism. Editor Stefan Al, in the book *Villages in the City: A Guide to South China's Informal Settlements*, has assembled a list of essays and images relating to these topics in the area of South China (Al 2014). The writers do a good job of breaking down the circumstances which led to the creation of urban villages, the current status of them in terms of the redevelopment process, and critically analyzing the specific individual villages. Al considers the specific circumstances and uniqueness of each village and includes short interview questions involving occupants of the urban village periodically through his book (Al 2014). Maps of the villages are included in the individual analyses, and some of the specifics of public and commercial shops are labelled to give a good idea of what is actually available and thriving in these villages. Al emphasizes the cultural nuances and humanity of these spaces by outlining the positives of the urban village. Al not only details what is within the village, but what spaces surround the village. For example, there is Bitang Village in Foshan whose main street of shops borders the Foshan University (Al 2014, p. 163). This is helpful because it definitely tells you that many of those university students come into Bitang Village's main commercial area to shop, eat, and some may even live in the village.

The main premise of this collection of essays and maps and outlines is that despite any negative connotations that urban villages might hold, the reality of them is that they are integral parts of Chinese cities, and any poor conditions should not result in a total demolition and

redevelopment program. The urban urban village provides an appropriate level entry point for migrants into the city and helps to add a certain specialness to the fast-paced and homogenous newness of the growing city. Al concludes that the default option of total demolition, and the shuffling of villagers to the outskirts of cities into affordable housing units will do nothing but create ghettos (Al 2014). The example Al uses is the ghost mall, like South China mall in Dongguan that has a seventy percent vacancy rate and is what could be built in place of where an urban village once stood (Al 2014). The aim of this collection of case studies, through different disciplinary lenses and methodologies such as economics and photography, is to show all the different components which make up a good city in an urban village. *Villages in the City* is a very thorough exploration off the positives of the urban village. Although there is a potential that any negative explanation would act as a refutement to the book, that is one area which I find missing in terms of an alternative critical presentation.

Due to my use of a methodology of urbanism utilizing sources which are based on models found in Western societies, it was important to research if the same models and structured arguments could be applied to public space in China. Maozhu Mao, in his dissertation on "The Use of Public Plazas in China and the United States: Measuring the Differences Using Direct Observation in Boston and Chongqing", explores the differences between public plazas (an example of public space) and if William H. Whyte's seven elements apply to China (Mao 2017). This dissertation is essential in supporting if it is appropriate to apply these base urbanism theories to public spaces in China, and to support my methodology in the analysis of the urban village. Mao provides contextualization of Chinese urban developments and public space, and helps to provide additional sources for exploring the defining elements of the city and public

space. Mao uses methodology as related to urbanism, not unlike Stefan Al's urbanist and urban design methodology.

Despite the fact that the Chinese city used in this study is centrally located and the study does not feature the exploration of an urban village, which are inconsistencies in regard to my topic, the data and conclusion are relevant. The observational data used is important in indicating cultural differences in and use of public space between China and the United States. This observational case study is helpful, but there are many inconsistencies to take into account when comparing and analyzing in regard to the urban village as a public space. The public plaza used to gather observational data is a very different kind of public space than the urban village, whose public space is defined by its streets and smaller squares of space availability like a basketball court. Not only this but also the type of people using these public spaces. In a Chinese city's public plaza, older people are using public plazas for things like tai chi and sword dance, whereas in the urban village a very mixed group of people are using the public space to gather for various activities (Mao 2017).

An article by Piper Gaubatz on "New Public Space in Urban China", continues in laying the foundational knowledge and contextualization of public space in China (Gaubatz 2008). Gaubatz's article provides an examination of the development of Chinese public space and looks at five types of new public spaces. The discussion of the different types of public space found in China lead to the analytical conclusion that the public space of the urban village for urban villagers functions as a multi-use space that works within all the understandings of what a public space is. This idea will need to be explored with further reading.

Gaubatz also considers the idea of the commercialization of public space, when looking at shopping malls. Shopping malls have become a shining example of China's rapid urbanization

and growing economy. Yet, the shopping mall holds within itself a strange juxtaposition of the shopping mall as a public space (street) and also one that can often be what is known as a ghost mall as referred to earlier in the literature review of *Villages in the City*, but Gaubatz appropriately combats this juxtaposition by using the example of Xintiandi, a redeveloped older district off Shanghai (Gaubatz 2008). Gaubatz concludes her article in a discussion of new public space of global cities, of public transportation and how new public space cannot be "devalued by capitalism (Gaubatz 2008).

A journal article from *Habitat International* on nightlife and public space in urban villages provides an appropriate analysis off the specific public spaces and uses of the urban villages (Song et al. 2016). What is beneficial is that these public spaces are differentiated between day and night use, and the observational data is useful for my thesis and analysis. The authors find that there are seven types of public space in urban villages, and interviews are concluded with three sides of stakeholders which is important in taking into account public sentiments towards the use of public space (Song et al. 2016). Importantly, this article states the positions of previous research done on the topic of urban villages and emphasizes the lack of focus on the use of public space of the urban village by different stakeholders. They even go on to cite William H. Whyte, whose writing I am using as a foundation to the methodology of this thesis. The authors use case studies, observation, and data analysis, and interviews in a thorough exploration of public space and nighttime activities of the Pearl River Delta. Even the location off the study falls within the parameters of my thesis.

The authors of this article conclude with the observations that there few provided public spaces, yet commercial facilities are well-equipped to deal with such use of nighttime activities (Song et al. 2016). Even though this conclusion tells that there is a lack of provided public

spaces, this seems to be an assertion that there is a lack of officially provided public space, not necessarily created public space such as the main streets and corners. The people they have focused on utilizing these spaces are local villagers, governments, and tenants (assumed majority migrants), but no mention of people from the surrounding urban area. This presents kind of a disconnect from the interaction between urban village and urban city.

Author Dror Kochan is another person analyzing the spaciality of the urban village to provide a solid argument against the aggressive redevelopment policies regarding urban villages (Kochan 2015). He produces three different interpretations of the urban village as an everyday space, a liminal space, and a neighborhood. Kochan's framework is conceptual and involves observational data and documentary analysis. His methodology comes from his discipling of urban planning and he considers different definitions of place and non-place. Non-place refers to French anthropologist Marc Auge which refers to non-transitory places where people only pass through, and are not special enough to retain more of an identity as a space (Auge1995). This analysis helps in developing more interpretations of what a public space is. Kochan reinforces what many of these other articles state in relation to redevelopment, that in order to create an appropriate proposal for the future of the urban village, it is important to recognize the relevance and value of the urban village within its own context (Kochan 2015).

Kochan brings up Juan Du, who states that while some have tried to help the urban village by separating it from the surrounding urban area, it is important to reincorporate it into the city as an essential component (Kochan 2015). This feeds into my theorizing that there is an important interaction between the urban village and surrounding space in regard to public space and the people who move between the two. Kochan concludes by referring to the people who exist within the space of the urban village, specifically migrants and their exclusion from the

redevelopment process (Kochan 2015). Kochan's final argument states the importance of migrant involvement due to a developing urban identity, and how migrant participation can be used to challenge the current process of redevelopment (Kochan 2015).

An article from the *Journal of Sustainable Development* on public space and quality of life in Baishizhou, Shenzhen, explores the effects of positive or negative public space on social and mental health within the urban village (Li et al. 2014). The authors use observational data and interviews to produce their analysis. Their analysis comes through the lens of architecture and environmental psychology. The authors seek to provide appropriate suggestions for the betterment of public space and therefore mental health. What is difficult about this study is that it is in conflict with another study. In an earlier study on nightlife in the Pearl River Delta, the authors found that there was an abundant nightlife despite no official provision of public space (Song et al. 2016). Whereas in this journal article, the authors state that there is a low scope of activity, and the issue of public space on the street is potentially due to lack of illumination and a gray color tone (Li et al. 2014). The only conclusion which is arguably very true and agreed across the board is that accessibility is quite bad within the urban village (Li et al. 2014, Song et al. 2016).

This study may be of little use as it focuses more on the emotional sentiments off the public space versus its usage. The aesthetic analysis may be useful in some regards, but in terms of actual function it is irrelevant. Some of the authors suggestions to the improvements of space seem overly ambitious and would be more relevant in implementation after a reformed redevelopment process. Instead of taking what is given of the public space and analyzing it as is, they have looked at what is wrong with it and are trying to manipulate it in a way that is unrealistic to the realities of the urban village.

All of the presented literature in some way is relevant to the topic of public space in urban villages. The majority of it relates to the bubble of the urban village. The studies specifically refers to the use of the streets as public space, and few open areas as public space, and the interaction of people such as migrant tenants, local villagers, and other stakeholders within those spaces (Li et al. 2014, He 2015, Song et al. 2016). What the studies often conclude with is the importance of recognizing the urban village as useful through the ways people interact within its public space (Zacharias 2013, Li et al. 2014, Kochan 2015, Li & Liu 2019). They use this usefulness as a validation of the present of the urban village and reinforce the need for there to be a redevelopment reform.

The current state of literature is very diverse, but within a certain specificity. Each of these articles refers to a different aspect of public space and its effect on the urban village or urban villagers. What is severely lacking throughout these studies is a specific analysis of the interaction of surrounding urban people within the urban village. In the book edited by Stefan Al, there are passages which directly refer to those who live and work outside the urban village, entering the urban village to use its public space (Al 2014). Other case studies completely overlook this interesting interaction. This idea that there is a movement of people in and out of this space is in direct support of the cohesiveness and place of the urban village within a city (Du 2009). What many of these studies could also benefit from, honestly, is pictorial reference and evidence. It would be an appropriate supporter for any observational data, and also any design reference. Again, this is something that Stefan Al appropriately utilizes in support for the arguments and evidence in his book (Al 2014). There is also lacking an aspect of community within these studies. No mention of community or community building in public space is

present. This might be something that could be discovered through more urbanism methodology, but maybe also a sociological methodology.

The varied aspects researched on public space can help fill gaps in understanding and evaluating its use through my thesis topic. Appropriate analysis and strong arguments linking the different arguments can help to form a complete and thorough exploration off my own into the role public space plays within the urban village, and within the greater urban area.

Case Studies

The two case studies I explore in this section help provide information on how the public space in and of the urban village functions in community building and weaving the urban village into the fabric of the city.

The focus of my case study will be urban villages in the cities Shenzhen and Guangzhou in the Pearl River Delta area of southern China. They present an interesting case as they are competitors in development and the goal to become the top city in the Pearl River Delta (Xu and Yeh 2003). Guangzhou is one of the oldest cities in Lingnan, an ancient civilized city with a long history (Xu and Yeh 2003). Shenzhen, is the opposite, and is actually named for the deep drains in paddy fields (Ng 2003). Its city development really did not begin in earnest until 1979, when it was designated as a Special Economic Zone (Ng 2003). These two cities present opposites to each other in terms of urban space development. Guangzhou, being an established city, faces issues of development in terms of land-use, and internally rearranges land as well as expanding outward. Shenzhen urban development, as it began as an agricultural area, deals more with the conversion of cropland to residential land (Ng 2003). They present opposite processes of urban development, with each facing the issue of dealing with the urban village in the continuing

modernization and expansion of the cities. They are both considered Special Economic Zones, and are experiencing rapid urbanization as China modernizes and develops its economy. Because of this rapid urbanization, these two cities are home to hundreds of urban villages nestled in the urban sprawl. Cities in Shenzhen and Guangzhou have the tallest buildings of these urban villages, as they were the first to be urbanized (Al 2014).

The urban village (chengzhongcun) develops as an effect of a management system of dual and rural land ownership, land reform, and the need for new income source for the original villagers. One-story homes become multi-story buildings, created by illegal layers of units which are unregulated because of the way the land area falls outside of the rules and regulations for the rest of the city (Al 2014). These units mostly house the floating population of rural migrants coming into the city looking for work opportunities, and are built up so close together they are known as "handshake houses" or "kissing buildings" (Al 2014).

Despite the fact that urban villages provide the useful function of low-income housing to these new migrant groups, the urban villages bear a negative stigma (Hao 2012). Press coverage of the urban villages identifies them as being unsanitary spaces in which drugs, prostitution, and crime occurs (Al 2014). They are often considered scars or eyesores in regard to the surrounding homogenized cityscapes.

The goal of this paper is to overlook these negative stigmas to show that instead of being eyesores of the city, the urban village is much more integrated into the surrounding urban sprawl. Using documentary analysis of various studies of Shenzhen and Guangzhou urban villages, the two case studies that follow will provide evidence of public space in the urban village, and the urban village as public space in contributing to building community and helping urban village residents integrate into the surrounding urban landscape.

Public space in the urban village is defined by 7 types of public spaces, which are as follows: 1) streets, 2) lanes, 3) markets, 4) pocket spaces, 5) external public spaces, 6) leisure and culture venues, and 7) ancestral halls (Song et al. 2016). These case studies will mainly focus on public spaces as connected to street spaces, as in the main streets of the urban villages where markets, shops, and other semi-private spaces can be found, and the connection to external public spaces such as gateways and transportation stops close by to the urban village.

Space in the urban village is scarce, and every part of the buildings and layout is appropriately used and without waste (Al 2014). The utilization of space is important within the urban village, so public space often has multiple functions such as commerce, business, transportation, entertainment, recreation, and social communication, all of which is essential to allowing an escape from stressors which residents may suffer from (Hao 2012, Song et al. 2016). Public space in the urban village, falls within the parameters of Mehta's outline of public space, and is found on the streets of the urban village (Mehta 2014). The streets of the urban village are the public spaces which are accessible by both the urban village residents and the outside urban citizens.

External public spaces such as entrances to the urban village and nearby traffic nodes are important as well, as these are representative spaces where the urban village and the surrounding city blur together. Most urban villages border at least one large, main road, or are close by to heavily trafficked areas such as business districts or downtowns (Zacharias 2010, Al 2014, Li et al. 2014). Other public spaces within the urban village such as the smaller lanes between the buildings, pocket spaces, and ancestral halls and temples remain private space in the way that these public spaces are occupied only by the urban village residents, and not outer urban city residents. For a more specific example, pocket spaces are in more niche locations of the urban

village, and usually attract local children and residents close enough to move their own sitting furniture to more comfortably chat and do recreational activities (Song et al. 2016).

Urban villages house large numbers of rural migrants, as well as older groups off local villagers (Wu 2016). Since many of these urban villages develop nearby to Central Business Districts, white collar workers also frequently reside in these spaces since they are close to the workplace (Al 2014). Students are popular tenants, particularly in villages which are close to universities, as they have accessible low rents (He 2014). These people who exist within the urban village use the public space of the urban village in instances of everyday interaction with each other.

The Social Public Space

Much of urbanism is related to reconciling the function of a cityscape with the function of the social. If proper planning is allowed, urbanism and urban design can take part in the way social function is organized around city spaces, but in the case of the urban village the design was not created with the intention to include created spaces in which to facilitate public and social interaction. Public space is a part of the built environment that can develop a sense of community through the facilitation of chance encounters between neighbors (Francis et al. 2012). Public spaces relevant to the consideration of the urban village includes parks, plazas, sidewalks, and shops. Shops are what make up a majority of commercial street space in the urban village (Al 2014). Quality shops are directly related to the sense of community, as shops are meeting and gathering places which provide opportunities for proximity to others, passive social interactions, and casual interactions (Francis et al. 2012).

The importance of public space within a city relates to how it becomes a stage where daily activities and communication unite people into a greater social framework (Li et al. 2014). It is also established that appropriate public space is in direct relation to physical and psychological health, rate of socialization, criminal activity, and property value (Li et al. 2014). To repeat and emphasize, it is a public space which provides the platform for socializing and therefore is an essential player in the creation of a sense of community and the strengthening of neighborhood social ties (Song et al. 2016).

Public space is critical in that the occurrences of active and passive social contact in public space provides the opportunity for the "learning of cosmopolitanism", and this engagement and learning of diversity is integral for the development of social functions and personal growth (Mehta 2014, p. 56).

Shenzhen

This case study will focus on the urban villages within Shenzhen such as Baishizhou, Xiasha Village, and Gangxia Village.

Within Shenzhen there are many examples of place making within the urban village. Xiasha Village in Shenzhen has two large roads which surround it, and has drawn a lot of attention for its once popular clothing industry, and its record breaking pan cai feast during the Chinese New Year on one of its main plazas (Al 2014). This main plaza provides enough space for a multitude of activities to occur at the same time, and also functions as a gathering space for different groups of people. Another street within this village, called Xiasha street, connects to a main road and is a hub for commercial storefronts such as hair salons, fashion boutiques, restaurants, and more.

Gangxia Village is located within the Central Business District of Shenzhen, and sits in the crossing of four large roads (Al 2014). Its surrounding is made up of large office buildings and skyscrapers whose workers live with the village, within walking distance of their workplaces (Al 2014). Many urban villages have a main gateway entrance, and Gangxia's Main Street is located right by this strategic location as well as right by large office buildings. The Main Street has many food stalls with outdoor tables, and the commercial stores on the ground floors are often open to the street (Al 2014).

One of Shenzhen's most well-known urban villages is Baishizhou. As of 2019, it is in the process of evicting residents and preparing for redevelopment (Zhang 2019). There are many studies done on Baishizhou, as it is the largest urban village in Shenzhen, and is a standard example of an urban village (Song et al. 2016). It has both the largest number of buildings and the highest density of residential population (Li et al. 2014). Baishizhou also has popular routes of transportation running through the city such as Shenzhen Metro Line 1 and various bus routes (Li et al. 2014).

Baishizhou is in a prime location within Shenzhen, as it is found next to Shennan Road, a fine housing community, and three theme parks (Song et al. 2016). Baishizhou's main street is called Shahe street, and runs the length of the village. Shahe street and the external public space, such as that which borders Shennan Road is known for activities off shopping, eating, walking, looking on, and chatting (Song et al. 2016). Baishizhou's commercial streets are densely packed with a variety of vendors, at which multitudes of customers shop. The variety of shops and temporary vendors which occupy these streets are likely to attract many people because of low pricing and unique fare (Li et al. 2014). At night, this street's most densely populated sections are the ones which are illegally occupied with tables and chairs from restaurants, as well as

vendor and stall sections (Song et al. 2016). As referred to before, in regards to the wellness of residents, the low-end commercial venues satisfy the needs of the residents in the urban village, while fulfilling the function of public space and blurring the distinction between public and private space (Song et al. 2016).

Parts of this public space is manipulated by residents to function more properly as space for gathering. There is no officially provided areas for seating save for stone blocks, roadsides, and stairs, and as a result many middle aged and senior people bring their own stools and old furniture to create an appropriate space for chatting (Li et al. 2014, Song et al. 2016). Residents of the urban village will often facilitate their own creation of public space, by bringing their own chairs, vendors who bring their own light sources for nighttime selling, and children who bring their own toys and sports equipment for playing (Song et al. 2016).

Guangzhou

Within the city of Guangzhou, it is Shipai Village which is the most rigorously developed (Zacharias et al. 2013). Despite this rigorous development, it retains its historical roots and has preserved its ancestral halls and temples, and even its street layout dates to before the start of the Qing dynasty (Zacharias et al. 2013). This street layout which was once useful for conveniently accessing different agricultural areas, is now the perfect layout for directing pedestrian movement through the urban village (Zacharias et al. 2013). It is one of many urban villages with its own internal transportation network, but also has Line 3 of Guangzhou Metro running through it (Song et al. 2016). The Gangding bus station has two major entry points which line up with two major entry points of Shipai Village (Zacharias et al. 2013). The heavy pedestrian flow

above Shipai village is thanks to this area being a public transport hub, but is also thanks to the village itself and its activities (Zacharias et al. 2013).

Shipai Village in Guangzhou is a prime example of the economic contributions of an urban village within a city. It is the "biggest IT sales center in the south of China" (Al 2014). Not to mention that it sits in the center of one of Guangzhou's most prosperous districts, Tianhe district (Song et al. 2016). The main roads which surround Shipai village are connected to core entrances of the urban village, for example Shipai East road has a large variety of commercial spaces including hotels, banks, groceries, and restaurants (Al 2014). Many students enjoy shopping and spending time here because of low prices (Al 2014).

Sanyuanli Village is another historically relevant part of Guangzhou, as it is famous for its "role in the fight against the British in the Opium War," and many of its ancient and ancestral buildings have been well preserved by the villagers (Al 2014). "Sanyuanli Main Street is the most important road in the village," and it is occupied by most shops which "satisfy the villagers daily needs," where many of the locals pass through to take a walk or enjoy a chat with neighbors (Al 2014). The predominant local business in Sanyuanli Village is hair salons, and this is reflected by their Main Street which is mainly beauty and health spaces, followed by restaurants (Al 2014). With such a large number of hair salons present in the village, it mostly caters to locals, as well as outer residents.

An interesting case in the cityscape of Guangzhou is that of Xiaozhou village, which has become a site for an artist enclave, not unlike Dafen Village of Shenzhen (Li & Liu 2019). Art and the events which come with the artist bring artists and residents closer (Li & Liu 2019). Artists have successfully become a part of the community by engaging village families, art

spaces, and other tenants through art programs (Li & Liu 2019). This case is an example of creative placemaking, and provides a unique value to this specific urban village.

The Orientation of the Urban Village

These case studies are all focused on what the urban village has, or what it provides, and the public spaces in which these places exist. The urban village is, generally speaking, found in a highly trafficked part of larger cities, adjacent to large streets, good housing developments, and public transportation nodes. The public spaces found within the urban village caters to the outside urban presence, as well as the inside urban presence. What is seen in the following analysis, will be the value of social transactions which exist in those spaces.

Analysis

The urban villages in Shenzhen and Guangzhou present an interesting picture. Urban villages can cater to a diverse demographic of people, host a variety of commercial shops, specialize in a singular type of trade, and are a unique stitch in the urban fabric of Chinese cities. It is important to recognize the alternative public space which is occupied within the urban village, and which the urban village embodies (Kochan 2015).

Urban villages are perfectly located to facilitate social interaction between different social groups. Transportation and commercial public space oriented around the demographic consumers are the core of what influences the choice people make to move through the urban village space. Shenzhen and Guangzhou urban villages have major Metro lines running through them, as well as bus transport moving through them. The entrances, exits, and hop on hop off points are located near the major entrances of the urban villages. Urban villages are also surrounded by major roads and avenues which contributes to the popularity of having public

transportation routes going through and around them. This public transportation puts people in direct contact with the urban village, and the urban villagers moving in and out of the village.

The transportation system of Guangzhou heavily influences the economics and people flow through the urban village of Shipai. Shipai Village is bordered by Shipai West and Shipai East road, and these count as external public spaces where most of the interaction between urban village residents and urban citizens occur. Shipai West road is connected to one of the main entrances of Shipai Village, and many restaurants from varying Chinese locales cater to workers from the nearby Central Business District.

Urban villages are often located in downtown districts and business districts, as well as near centrally located housing developments, and busy transportation nodes. Therefore, there is a high number of pedestrians moving through these spaces at any given time, including the urban villagers themselves. The people moving through the urban village streets and external areas partake of the public space provided. The street markets, shops, restaurants, and maybe even some table games are spaces for people to take part in. If people take part in public space, more people will come because people attract other people (Whyte 1980). The specific urbanisms of the urban villages and narrow streets prevent too much vehicular interruption, leading to a highly pedestrian atmosphere and allowing for the public space as a sidewalk to flourish. The street becomes an arena by which diverse interactions can provide opportunities for knowledge development and experiences which shape identity (Kochan 2015).

Working from the outside in, external public spaces are where the lines between outer urban city and urban village blur. External spaces are the prime areas of interaction between different groups, and they follow appropriately in the identification of a public space in regards to spaces to sit, people attracted to other people, food, and stimulus. These are also the spaces

closest to outside transport hubs where vendors and hawkers gather, and can often draw non-locals into the inner urban village. Groups of street performers, small traders, and other hawkers wait during peak periods of travel, and they are an obvious representation of what Whyte would call a stimulus (Whyte 1980). Vendors will typically have tables set up for people to site and eat, and these places very often attract people to eat after work or class. White collar workers who come from office buildings eat and hang out in the urban village, as well as the white collar workers who themselves live in the urban village. The urban villages which are located near universities or schools become areas popular during lunch breaks. It is particularly noticeable in these external public spaces of the urban village that not only urban village residents are partaking of this space, but also those who live nearby or are passerby.

External spaces and entrance gates to main streets which are found on main roads draw people into the urban village who do not live there. The main streets of the urban village cater to the residents of the urban village, but are also available for outside urban city residents to partake in. These spaces are set up in ways that would facilitate conversation between people who are together, but even between those people who are strangers to one another.

The internal public space of the urban village, centers on the main streets running from the key entrance points to the village and which often connect to the larger avenues and roads which border the urban village. These main streets of the urban village consist of a variety of commercial shops which function as a public space, such as market stalls and open restaurants. The street itself also is a public space, as people stroll along it and interact with familiar faces and even strangers. The urban villages which are known for specific trades, like Sanyuanli Village's numerous hair salons and Shipai's electronics shops both of which makeup the majority of the commercial shop type on their respective main streets, posit an implication. That

implication is that due to the specialized trades of these villages, urban city residents likely come into these urban villages to take advantage of the specific skills which these villages are known for. This analysis partially answers the question of whether urban city residents partake in the public space of the urban village or not.

The internal public space caters to the necessary needs of the urban village residents. There are food markets, restaurants, and other shops which are essential to living in a neighborhood for example: barbershops, recreational spaces such as billiards spots, and hardware stores. The public space of the urban village also caters to urban city residents, for example: restaurants which are popular with students, and numerous IT shops for fixing various electronics. The people who spend the most time and money in the public space of the urban village will shape it and change it just like many other parts of the city.

The people found moving through and existing in these public spaces are a diverse group. There are urban city dwellers who come into the urban village and use transportation that moves through the urban village. These urban city dwellers I refer to are the white collar workers who work and sometimes live within the urban village, students from nearby schools, residents from neighboring residential areas, and people looking for specific goods from the urban village. The urban village residents are made up of the local urban villagers, the rural migrant population, and the various other extras such as students, artists, and those seeking to live close to downtown areas and want to live in cheaper housing. There are even tourists using the public space of the urban village, like in Dafen Village or Xiaozhou Village which have a large number of art displayed that caters to tourists.

The segregation of these groups is often documented in studies on the process of redevelopment, as it is well researched that during the process the migrant worker groups are

seldom taken into account (Li, Ling Hin 2014). It is easy to acknowledge the lack of harmoniousness within the class stratification, yet, the hierarchies are "mediated by the spatial cohesiveness that is imposed by the village's spatial morphology," (Kochan 2015, p. 934). The transitional space of the urban village is what allows for a level of spatial equality and a blurring of the lines between the identity hierarchies which separate us from one another. The urban village public space allows all the different people listed in the last paragraph to exist within it, and in doing so attempts to create a place where they can all exist that is a host for nonhierarchical exchange.

Public space in the urban village provides a venue within which group interaction occurs between different people who live within the urban village. Establishing a communal space for interaction allows the different people who live in the urban village to better connect to one another and to find attachment and place value in the space with which they live. This also applies to the people who do not live in the urban village, but whose interaction in the urban village contributes to placemaking.

The urban village as public space creates opportunities for urban citizens to escape from the larger surrounding urban cityscape, and enjoy a space within which there are unique things to partake in. It also allows urban citizens to find value in the urban village, as it provides a space in which to find unique foods, cheap goods, and to have new social interactions with those of different demographics. All of these people may eat at the same restaurant in a close space, leading to a space within which a social interaction between strangers can occur.

Through this interaction within the public space of the urban village between the urban villagers and the urban citizens, a sense of community is created. The mixing of people from different areas in the space of the urban village creates new social interactions. Urban villagers,

specifically rural migrants, can gradually acclimate to the new urban experience through their interactions with people in the public space of the urban village, and through their experience with people from outside the urban village within a comfortable confine of a semi-familiar space.

All of these variables contribute to a mixed social experience of people from varying backgrounds. This rubbing of shoulders between those who typically would not be found in the same spaces is an essential exposure facilitated by public space. In an increasingly globalized world, the more exposure and adjustment to facing things which are unfamiliar to you potentially allows for a higher tolerance for difference. This increased exposure to different groups of people, may also be an aid in promoting a sense of community between rural migrants and their indigenous villager landlords.

Relationship ties and a sense of community are important in good mental health and creating incentives to continue to create and improve spaces. Sense of community can help to reduce loneliness, and incentivize people to help their neighbors. It also incentivizes people to lay claim to their local environment. Forming connections to these spaces will help the urban village continue to grow local economy. Connection and valuing of public space lends itself to a desire for an improved and appropriate public space. These improved spaces draw attention from different people where they will spend money in local businesses. An increased presence of non-urban village residents within the urban village has the potential to prove the worth of the space through the use of its public space. Through outlining the spaces within the urban village and those that surround the urban village, we come to an important conclusion. The commercial, public spaces cater to those who exist outside the urban village just as much as they cater to those who exist within the urban village. Being able to place outside urban residents inside the

urban village and surrounding external areas partaking in the commercial, public space is evidence towards proving the integration of the urban village with its urban surroundings.

Conclusion

The people who exist in the urban village and who utilize its public space are responsible for weaving it into the fabric of the urban city. The people are the urban village residents and urban city residents, and the public spaces are the streets of the urban village. Different people from different backgrounds are exposed to each other in the public space of the urban village as they take part in the offerings of that public space. The urban village survives as any other neighborhood in a city, by changing and adapting to its residents and surroundings, while still retaining a uniqueness in deference to the increasing homogeneity of the modern city. The urban village resident demographic and the variety of people who move through the village help contribute to creating a diversity in community which is a part of that uniqueness.

The urban village of Shenzhen and Guangzhou both present diverse street makeups and individual traits and characteristics. The transportation running through them, and the transportation nodes which surround them are huge components in pedestrian traffic in and around the urban village. This detail of transportation and high pedestrian traffic are the primary component for human movement in the urban village. Urban city residents are drawn to convenient external street spaces and cheap goods offered in internal street spaces, while urban village residents most convenient public spaces are those street spaces. The coming together of these two different groups within the public street space of the urban village implies the potential for both passive and active social interaction between a mixed social group of people.

The interactions of the variety of social groups allows for increased exposure to different ways of living and thinking. This exposure can facilitate a breakdown of stigma and lead to building relationship ties and community. Sense of community helps reduce loneliness and social deprivation. A strong sense of community results in a more incentivized group of people who want to exist within quality spaces. These quality spaces and strong community ties promote local economic growth. All of these ideas and results are important to the urban village and its role within the fabric of the larger city. Emphasizing how the urban village has the foundation for these occurrences helps to destigmatize the space and provide incentives for city government to approach redevelopment with an alternative solution to complete demolition and relocation.

This thesis provides the beginnings of a greater area of study in regard to the urban village. Looking into the role that the urban city residents play in the circumstances of the urban village addresses a gap in research on the urban village. Especially in that public space serves people, and acknowledging all the people who exist within a space informs the process of urban development. This study would have been bettered with the use of visual aids, such as line maps and breakdowns of commercial public space use on main streets in the urban village. This is one way to expand on this study. Other ways to build on this study would be to look at the role gentrification could possibly play in the process of redevelopment of the urban village.

Doing research, developing arguments, and forming further research questions on the topic of urban villages is relevant. Research like this thesis that concludes with the result that the redevelopment process of urban villages needs to change is part of finding better solutions to inner city development. Finding value in the urban village and outlining reasons why the redevelopment process currently adopted is a poor solution helps to displace a social hierarchy. This social hierarchy is what continues to allow people to see rural migrants as lesser value

residents, even though it is the desired modernization which creates an incentive for people to move into cities from the countryside. The urban village in a city presents itself as a point of access for those looking for better opportunities in the city. Without points of access like the urban village, the city itself continues to homogenize and fails to retain any sort of identity.

      The diversity of communities in a city are what give it identity. Innovation thrives not through an unvaried experience, but where there is a difference. These are core concepts to the longevity of a city, alongside good public space. Public space is where you find people experiencing their differences. On the streets, parks, plazas, restaurants, and transportation. People create and value spaces. Respecting those spaces is part of respecting other people. That is one particular reason that there is value in the urban village. It is where people can learn to think of one another.

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