

## *The Exploration of Spatial Strategies on Social Construction in Shenzhen*

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### **Abstract**

Shenzhen is a unique city in China where 70% of people come from outside of the city. In fewer than three decades, Shenzhen has gone from a no-name town of tens of thousands to a prototypical fast-growth city of millions of people. Rapid urbanization has brought out rapid economic development; however, social development has been ignored and is lagging far away behind economic development. This paper explored the social problems of Shenzhen, such as: uneven distribution of public facilities, lack of intensive utilization of resources; lack of urban distinction, and an immature social management system. According to the social problems in Shenzhen, this paper researched successful social sustainable cases of the San Francisco Bay Area, Hong Kong and Singapore, etc., and proposed spatial development goals of social construction in Shenzhen: "Promoting the coordinated economic, cultural, social, and ecological development, and building a harmonious city so that a variety of people from everywhere can live a happy life here." Furthermore, this paper suggested several development strategies, including "offering a variety of different spaces and services for various people," "activating stock spaces," "focusing on the community level," and "innovating institutional mechanisms." This is a turning point in the planning and social field; urban planning used to only focus on space planning but has evolved into also focusing on social issues. Moreover, this paper brought in social ecology research methods and explored the establishment of social and ecological assessment systems for urban planning. For example, besides the Environmental Impact Assessment, the Social Impact Assessment of urban renewal should be also considered; this would, for example, explore how demolition reconstruction could lead to fragmentation of social networks in an area.

Keywords: Shenzhen, Social Development, Spatial Strategies, Social Impact Assessment

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## Introduction

Located in the south of Guangdong Province along the coast of the South China Sea, it is part of the Pearl River Delta Region, in between Guangzhou and Hong Kong. Its progress in the past twenty years has been astounding. Shenzhen once was a small town with a population less than 30,000, but now is a modern city with a population that exceeds 15 million. In less than 30 years, Shenzhen has made significant progress that many cities would had made in several hundred years, which is a typical example of fast growing cities .

Shenzhen's GDP is the third highest in China. Shenzhen's GDP totaled CNY 820.1 billion in 2009, with its GDP per capita reached to US\$13800, which is the first city of mainland China to have its GDP per capita surpassed US\$10,000. It holds on as China's top export city for 17th year. In 2008, the city's financial income has risen to more than 80 billion, the third highest in China.

The city's population density is the highest in China. Shenzhen's population has grown significantly, and the city's population density is the highest in China. By 2009 the resident population reached to 89.1 million (total amount would be more than 140 million when including mobile population ), with household population of 23 million, consisting only 26% of the resident population.

Shenzhen is a unique city in China where 70% of people come from outside of the city. Rapid urbanization has brought out rapid economic development; however, social development has been ignored and is lagging far away behind economic development.

The 18th CPC national congress and the third plenary session of the 18<sup>th</sup> central committee of the communist party of China have committed important work arrangement to improve people's wellbeing, reaching a consensus to coordinating development of the economy and society. Strengthening the Construction of Society is an important Goal and Requirement of the 18th Chinese Communist Party and The Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, is the country to promote the "people oriented" new urbanization and the implementation of the depth of urbanization in Shenzhen. Shenzhen is also facing the social transformation and urban transformation, to achieve "a stable growth of quality, sustainable and comprehensive development" of the basic guarantee. Social construction must be based on urban space as the basic carrier; space development should also include social construction as the goal and important content. How to find the combination of social construction and spatial planning to ensure that the city's social construction polices and measures to be implemented, is the problem need to seriously explore and solve.

Social construction relatively lags behind economic growth after 30 years' rapid economic development of Shenzhen. The gather of massive floating population brings up problems such as the shortage of infrastructure, social contradictions increasingly prominent. Consequently, we commence on "study on spatial strategy of Shenzhen social construction" project in order to make urban planning function better, and to improve the spatial resource allocation of social construction. Shenzhen experienced more than 30 years of rapid economic development, social construction is lagging behind in economic development, a large number of floating populations, bringing

problems like the relative shortage of public infrastructure, social contradictions have become increasingly prominent.

## **Contents**

Firstly, we analyze the social construction from three aspects: theoretical perspective, policy perspective and case study perspective. We category social construction into two groups: one is referring to space, the other group is not.

Then, we choose the space concerning social construction as our study object. From the theoretical interpretation—the connotation of social construction differs greatly in different institutional systems and stages of development. Social construction include expand employment opportunities, urban environment and urban features and social security, Science and technology, Culture and education, Building a social safety net, Protection of disadvantaged groups, Health, Clean, Efficiency and energy conservation, and Enhanced accountability to service providers.

From Policy Interpretation—Strengthening the Social Construction in Improving People’s Livelihood and Managing Innovation. Social construction includes employment (increase income, public security prevention and control system, social security system), science education and career, housing security, social assistance for special groups, urban and rural community construction and social management.

From Case Study—Urban development is to allow the public to be fair, inclusive, happy to live in the city. 《New York Planning》 Committed to equity – creating opportunities for all; 《The Spatial Development Strategy of Greater London》 Emphasizing inclusion and eliminating discrimination; 《Hongkong2030: To provide a better quality of life》. Implement the concept of sustainable development, and strive to provide a better quality of life by equitably meeting the social, economic and environmental needs of this generation and future generations.

Increase the quality of employment opportunities, ensure high-quality medical services, protection of history and culture, meet the diverse needs of the population, affordable housing, building a comprehensive community, maintain quality open space, and improve sports and leisure facilities.

Inclusion, Social Construction include Culture, Education, Health ;Public safety; Social assistance; Social Security; Community building; Social management; House insurance; Employment. Social construction space: Living space; Employment space; Culture, Education, Health; Public space; Public safety; Social assistance

And then, the project analyses Shenzhen’s spatial current situation and existing problems of social construction, and it also confirm the important role that Shenzhen’s urban planning plays in social construction.

One is that, the rapid development under the combined conglomeration structure, the spatial overlapping of different social classes, has promoted the multi-culture fusion.

Under the group structure, different social strata living, the employment space cascades staggered, promoted the multicultural fusion.

The same development group gathered the original residential villas, industrial areas, old and new residential areas and old and new business district, etc. , in different social strata of space, 'get what they want', showing small scale mixed state, promote the integration of urban multiculturalism.

The next is that, the planning has covered all range of service facility. A social service network is established gradually through the effective carrying out of the planning.

Priority planning education, health care, transportation, transportation, social pension and other public facilities; Revised 《Shenzhen Urban Planning Standards and Guidelines》, Clear allocation of public service facilities standards. Formulate 《Annual Implementation Plan for Recent Construction and Land Use Planning》 to protect the supply of land for people's livelihood projects; Trough 《Implementation of Public Infrastructure Planning 》 to gradually promote the implementation of various types of social service space planning.

The third is, it legalizes the construction of urban planning, perfects the supervision over social construction's planning and implement.

Promote the legalization of spatial planning and construction; improve the supervision and implementation of social construction planning.

Formulate 《Regulations of Shenzhen Municipality on Urban Planning》, Through the establishment of the city planning committee system and public participation system, standardize the city planning, approval and revision procedures; Improve the planning management and implementation of the construction management of social supervision mechanism. Vigorously promote the community planners system, establish and improve the city planning and grass-roots communities of daily communication mechanism.

It further analyses the existing problem of social construction's spatial arrangement. The first is the arduous task of covering the historical deficit left by rapid urbanization. The existing problems of the Spatial Layout of Social Construction: To make up for the rapid urbanization of the historical legacy of the task is still very arduous. There is a big gap between Shenzhen per capital social service space indicators and domestic advanced cities. Facilities supply is still in the primary stage of basic services such as basic education and health services. Questionnaire reflects the doctor and school is the highest concern of the people of Shenzhen.

The second is the serious imbalance in the social service facility resource allocation; A serious imbalance in the allocation of social service facilities. From the large space level, the scale of social service facilities on the differences reflected in the original SAR difference between inside and outside. The original SAR public facilities construction land accounted for 7.2% of total, serving a population of 3.54 million, while outside the SAR accounted for less than 3%, serving more than 6.82 million people. Uneven community size, using the same configuration standards, results in uneven distribution of social services facilities in the community and service population mismatch.

The third is, the further social differentiation of social space becomes a hidden danger of social conflicts; Social spatial differentiation of the trend is obvious, leaving hidden dangers of social contradictions; Low-income groups for the living and employment space have been compressed. With the upgrading of industrial structure, the improvement of urban functions and the implementation of urban beautification movement, the original SAR has a tradition and modern blend, the coexistence of multiple social forms of the situation is broken, especially residential space has become high-end, mansion, aristocratic tend. Residential space show high-grade residential areas, common area, villages and factory dormitories and other rich and poor class differentiation and isolation. Spatial separation and loneliness caused by isolation, lack of identity and other social problems led to Shenzhen, most of the urban and community space environment did not feel the “home feeling” and “sense of belonging”.

The fourth is the existing dual contradictions of social service spatial resource shortage and its inefficient utilization. Social service space resource shortage and the use of inefficient coexistence of contradictions; The existing facilities, whether it is education, health care, pension or housing, have different levels of waste of resources. Cultural and sports facilities: Facilities use efficiency is generally not high, Guanshanyue Art Museum, the number of annual visits around 100000, when Hexiangning Museum is just not more than 80000. Medical and health facilities: When large hospitals are overcrowded, primary health care institutions are deserted, and even difficult to survive. Educational facilities: Nearly 2% of the state-run schools have an average class size of over 55, while about 14% of them have an average class size of less than 35. Pension facilities: The social pension facility occupancy rate is 18%, a large number of them are idle; Luohu and Nanshan welfare center waiting for the elderly a total of about 1700 people.

The fifth is, the urban characteristic has not been shown in the urban space construction yet. The existing problems of the Spatial Layout of Social Construction is lack of urban distinction; On the base of these, we study and draw from New York, San Francisco Bay district, San Francisco Bay district (diversified development), The Greater London district, (The Greater London district emphasize “social toleration and elimination of discrimination”), Queensland, The greater Vancouver and Hong Kong (Hongkong2030: better life quality), and Singapore (Singapore social security system).

The research has proposed the development goal of Shenzhen’s social construction. That is to promote a coordinating development between urban economies, culture, society, and ecology.

Spatial Development Goal: “Promoting the coordinated economic, cultural, social, and ecological development, and building a harmonious city so that a variety of people from everywhere can live a happy life here.” “Better city, better life. “

Space Development Strategies: Offering a variety of different spaces and services for various people; activating stock spaces; focusing on the community level; building city’s characteristics; innovating institutional mechanisms.

## Project Innovation

Analyzed and interpreted city from a social ecology perspective, provide various social services meeting different needs.

This project is a spatial policy research characterizes in cutting through from a society construction perspective, carrying out in all aspects and targeting in strengthening social construction. It no longer limited within a certain specific project (e.g. education facility), instead, it takes culture, education, sport, sanity, public space and social welfare as an entity and carries out a systematic spatial strategy research around it.

This project has implemented the work arrangement committed by the 18th CPC national congress and the third plenary session of the 18<sup>th</sup> central committee of the communist party of China. It changed the traditional research mechanism, which the

The second feature of the project is that has analyzed and interpreted city from a social ecology perspective which is a creative method in urban planning; it takes the city as a complex social ecology system, taking human demand into consideration, researching on a balanced relationship between human, construction and nature system, so as to formulate the self-adjusting and positive cycling abilities of social ecology system.

Innovation Point 1: Analyze and interpret city from a social ecology perspective. Build social-stability-and-ecological-harmony-based urban spatial structure. To improve function decentralization of city center, focus on developing city-group centers by rationally organizing office space, residential space and traffic space and realizing job-housing balance in these centers. Reasonably distribute housing land, industrial land and etc. to shorten commuting distance and to reduce commuting time. Study on features of people working, living and amusing to form public activity center system of the whole city.

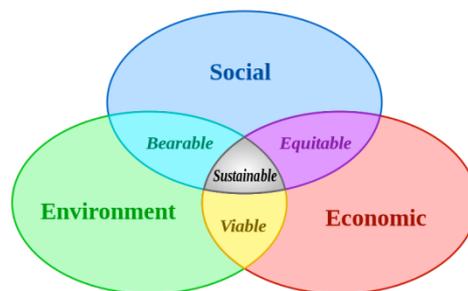


Figure 1: Social, environment, economic sustainability

We held an assessment over Shenzhen's conglomeration spatial structure, and we think that the original special zone's cluster function is incomplete which has broken the inner balanced relationship. As a result, we propose a key emphasis in perfecting the cluster's collocation function, to construct a more steady social ecology system.

Through tracking Shenzhen urban village's renovation, we find it that the tear down-reconstruction way of renovation has broken the social ecology chain and the symbiotic relationship between different crowds. A social ecology assessment system should be established in order to evaluate the social ecology impact of the

reconstruction before deciding whether the project should be approved.

Build social-relation-based urban renewal evaluation system. Shenzhen has been speeding up the pace of urban renewal since 2009 by removing and reconstructing urban villages to improve the quality of living environment and urban space. However, this can lead to some social issues such as damage to social ecological environment and self-organization mechanism. For example, cheap labor, such as cleaners and shoemakers, is forced out because of the reconstruction of Gangxia Village and the rising living cost.

Lacking of consideration on social and ecological mechanism and inadequacy of urban planning and practicing has caused a lot of social issues. The government sometimes has to realize urban planning by taking some actions, including land requisition and demolition of current buildings, removal of a whole urban village, public housing construction on non-agricultural construction land that used to be residential land, reconstruction of urban villages and so on, that may probably change the original social ecological system and trigger social problems.

We suggest that related types of planning, such as district planning and detailed planning, especially planning that involves interested party, should build a planning pre-estimate system and a planning practice social ecological evaluate system that are aimed at pre-estimating the planning and evaluating its influence on social ecological environment. Form an evaluation commission consisting of interested party and related government department to evaluate planning proposals. Build a planning practice hearing system to allow local people and interested party express their demands looking for a better way to improve the planning.

The third feature of the project is that it coordinates urban planning assignment on the base of a higher social construction target. According to Shenzhen's development stage and people's physical demand, we insist that social construction and urban planning work should be arranged on a higher base for a higher target. Not only to solve the existence needs, but also to satisfy the living demands, and further to presume the well-being life quality.

Innovation Point2: provide various social services meeting different needs



Figure 2: Meet happiness more than basic needs

Combining this orientation, we proposed the “basic utility and improving utility” social facility allocation standard to provide multiple space and service for different crowds.

Provide various social services meeting different needs. Advanced Utilities: New aging community; New education and training facility; New medical facility; New leisure serving facility. Basic Utilities: Cultural facility, educational facility, sports facility and sanitary facility; Caring facility: shelter for wanderers, lunatic asylum. Develop new aging community. According to the difference in aging people’s self-care ability, develop various kinds of aging communities, such as retirement community for active adults, daily assisting community and special care community, with different managing modes and for-profit modes.

Develop new education and training facility. Develop elementary career education and training into residential communities through community colleges and other training institutions.

Develop new medical facility. Relying on tourism resources, develop medical tourism serving facility with the subject of medical care and recovery and recuperation.

Develop new leisure serving facility. Develop new leisure serving facility containing culture, sport, entertainment, leisure, shopping and catering industries.

And we insist to cultivate a more diverse and inclusive feature for the coastal city Shenzhen. Develop characteristic of a subtropical coastal city. Raise the percentage of living coastal line from 25% to 30%. Develop waterfront area toward service hinterland; create more waterfront space with more activities. Develop characteristic of subtropical coastal city through streetscape design, park landscape design, architecture design, city sculpture and artistic creation and so on.

The forth feature is that it transfers its focus to the grassroots level and the community. According to investigate method of sociology, we have visited many communities and issued questionnaires all over the city to investigate on citizens’ comments on community and their spatial needs. Through the research, we point out that: Allocate the social service spatial resource according to community population scope. Shenzhen used to hold the same allocation standard in different community, however, the biggest community population scope is 1000 times of the smallest one, resulting in the mismatching community service facility allocation and actual service population.

We propose that the social service facility should be allocated according to the actual population. The scale and type of all kinds of facilities should be allocated while regarding the actual local population.

Considering the existing community service facility shortage and its ineffective utility, we encourage communities to construct more public service complex.

Planning and constructing community scale public service complex can integrate the functions maximally and facilitate the compound use of space resource. Also, the recycle use of community service space can be assured through the spatial management cover different time schedules.

The fifth feature of this project is the innovating mechanism of social construction spatial resource allocation. Considering the opacity and low utility efficiency, we call for coordinating the commonweal property management and reinforcing the public function of government service.

Relying on big data management, we integrate the medical, recreation and sport, education, population and social management resource information, so as to promote the sharing of social spatial resource, as well as to found an information platform of citizens' service space.

### **Project Effect**

Influences on related function departments: during the research, we further discussed issues with NDRC (national development and reform commission), civil affairs bureau, and tourist administration and so on. As a result, we have achieved a high degree of consensus in aspects such as the main idea of the project, reinforcing the leading function of planning and the future work focus.

The research outcome has been put into the article “Shenzhen social construction strategy research”, issued in social work brief report, and received highly regards and agreement from deputy secretary of Shenzhen. Another article “draw from national and international experience, perfect Shenzhen's social spatial construction supporting system” has been issued in the strategy reference held by municipal policy research administration. These have offered key strategic basis for work arrangement of social construction.

At present, Shenzhen planning territory committee has reached the agreement with social work committee to work on the implement of project and the specific working schedule.

Next, Shenzhen planning territory committee will further take part in the “knit mesh project” held by social work committee, realizing the “integrate the public resource sharing& release resource to the public” strategy, pushing forward the construction of information platform of social construction.

The Impact within Planning field: this project has invited socialists, Shenzhen sunshine family integrated service center, Shenzhen housing estate assessment development center and Pinshan new district urban construction limited company, etc. to have discussion on the topic “spatial solution of social construction”.

We held three seminars, inviting urban planning professors, socialists, urban planning officers and American anthropologist to join the discussion on the project outcome and the relations between social construction and spatial planning.

Also, we held academic salon on the topic “spatial planning& social management”, discussing some practical problems come up when implementing the planning, sharing the problem solutions and experience, after which we drew generalities and valuable strategic suggestions from different cases to drive the reform. The planning target, overall strategy, etc. have been included in new urbanization planning outline.

## **References**

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