The problem of urban villages in urban planning: historical legacy and future development--Based on a comparative study of the old urban areas of Beijing and Hong Kong

Yu Deng *, Botian Li
International Business College, South China Normal University, Guangzhou, Guangdong, 510631
* Corresponding Author Email: dylandy0717@gmail.com

Abstract. This paper presents a comparative study of two different urban development models and urban planning concepts between the Mainland and the Special Administrative Region, based on an analysis of the historical process of urbanisation in Beijing and Hong Kong. This paper presents a multidimensional observation of the urban village problem in each of the two cities from four perspectives: land use, economic development, urban governance and urban culture. The finding shows that there are significant differences in the urban development patterns and urban planning philosophies of the two cities, Beijing and Hong Kong, influenced by different historical legacy factors, which have caused different manifestations and solutions of the urban village problem in the two cities. The purpose of this paper is to draw historical lessons from the analysis of the historical process and to provide a pathway solution for urban planning in other regions and for the solution of the urban village problem. This paper presents a comprehensive study on the issue of "urban villages" in two distinctive Chinese cities at the same level of development under the "one country, two systems" policy. The aim is to identify and analyze the social and demographic problems on the basis of an accurate picture of the urban development process, and to provide scientific strategies and suggestions for urban planning and management.

Keywords: Regional studies; Urban village problems; Mainland; Special Administrative Region; Urbanisation process.

1. Introduction

The urban planning of each Chinese city is deeply influenced by its historical environment. Wang Shusheng (2022) believes that urban systems bred by different histories show diversity and complexity. Although there are some commonalities among human cities among different urban systems, the more significant differences lie in the different values, planning concepts and design methods they pursue. These factors together create the uniqueness and differences of each urban system. An in-depth study of these factors is of great significance for a better understanding of social and environmental issues in human society and urbanization. [1] As the international metropolises with both history and immigration characteristics, Beijing and Hong Kong are naturally influenced by history and development environment. As population density increases, the question of the existence of "humanity" becomes more acute. You Jihong (2022) believes that Chinese local governments have selectivity in the process of performing their functions. In the past, due to the orientation of economic development, government focused on productivity and neglected welfare. With the improvement of China's economic, government focus on welfare would help prompt Chinese urbanization and further release economic potential. Therefore, it is crucial to realize the reintegration of government functions (ZGIS) to promote sustainable urbanization and economic growth. The government should take institutional measures to promote functional transformation, improve service quality and efficiency, and support the urbanization process. [2] This article will take the development process of urban villages in Beijing and Hong Kong as the starting point. Jiao Limin et al. (2023) proposed to analyze the changes, trends and driving mechanisms of land expansion and population growth in typical cities from a historical perspective. It is of great significance to promote the coordinated growth of urban land and population and promote the sustainable development of urban regions. [3] Discussing the historical process of Beijing-Hong Kong urban planning and the
relationship between urban planning and urban villages, in order to find an entry point to solve the problem and provide suggestions for the future development planning of other cities. As a model country of the "one country, two systems" system, it is important to examine the issue of socialist and capitalist management models in China. Urban issues are a matter of popular sentiment, political party stability, and social development. Beijing, as the political center of China, and Hong Kong, as the financial center of China, both occupy an important position in the development of Chinese cities, and the selection of these two cities as research objects can achieve objectivity in political, economic, cultural, and social aspects of the sample objects, and facilitate the introduction of direct solutions to China's urban problems. Therefore, these two cities are, to some extent, a microcosm of the entire Chinese metropolis. Under two different economic and political systems, it is worthwhile to explore the similarities and differences in the development and solutions to the problem of urban villages in China's political centers and China's financial centers. The different historical development processes of the two have also resulted in different urban village problems. The urban village problem has developed differential tendencies in these two cities. At the same time, since these two cities are in the center of their respective urban areas, their urban village problems are also representative in the context of other conditions close to each other in the whole region, so the solution of urban village problems in these two cities can provide key reference and reference for the neighboring cities to solve their own urban village problems and provide corresponding solutions.

2. The Historical Process of Urban Planning in Beijing

2.1. Urban planning concepts in Beijing in different periods

During the Opium Wars, with the signing of the Treaty of Tianjin, foreign envoys were able to settle in Beijing and many foreigners came with them. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, due to the accelerated modernisation of the country, Beijing's urban planning was dominated by the demolition of ancient buildings and the construction of industrial bases. After the reform and opening up of, the Beijing Urban Master Plan was drawn up to protect and develop the historical and cultural city and to define the city as a "national political centre and cultural centre". In September 2017, the Beijing Urban Master Plan (2016-2035) was officially released and implemented, making it the latest version of Beijing's urban master plan. The master plan clearly calls for the protection of the famous historical and cultural cities and the shaping of the city's characteristic style, and the strengthening of the overall protection of the old city. It also promotes the coordination of people and land to achieve common development. The different periods of urban planning bear witness to the whole process of Beijing's development, from the initial integration of East and West, through industrialisation and modernisation, to the promotion of the harmony of people and land to achieve common development.

2.2. The link between urban planning and urban village problems in Beijing

As the ancient capital of the Six Dynasties, Beijing has many historical buildings, the most representative of which are the courtyards. Because of their rich historical and cultural value and the many interests involved, it is difficult for the government to simply demolish them.[4] At the same time, with the implementation of China's reform and opening-up policy, which has brought about rapid economic development and accelerated urbanisation, and thus attracted a large influx of people, the conflict between people and land in Beijing has become increasingly prominent. Due to urban planning has not kept up with the changes in society, it has led to excessive population density. One of the adverse effects of this is that, because of the overpopulation and shortage of housing resources in Beijing, some migrant workers have had to resort to unreasonable housing methods, such as cramming many people into a small courtyard or living in unreasonable places such as basements. This gave birth to the problem of urban villages. During the reform and opening-up period, the government took a series of initiatives to alleviate the problem of excessive population density by increasing investment in residential areas, expanding administrative zoning to slow down the
concentration of Beijing's population, and intensifying the use of urban land. In the early of this century, the government launched a project to transform urban villages, while steadily promoting the relocation of residents, and in 2010, the government updated its urban planning and further improved the density of urban villages by regulating land use to avoid the emergence of new urban villages. This has not only improved the living conditions of the capital's residents to a certain extent, reflecting the humanistic spirit of urban planning, but has also preserved the courtyards, which are of great cultural value, and achieved the goal of preserving excellent traditional culture. As time goes on, the constant updating of Beijing's urban planning reflects not only the problems that have arisen in various eras, but also the evolution of Beijing as a whole.

3. The Historical Process of Urban Planning in Hong Kong

3.1. Urban planning concepts in Hong Kong at different times

The origins of town planning in Hong Kong can be traced back to the beginning of the British colonial period in 1841, when British colonialism introduced British-style town planning to meet the needs of commercial activities, and the phenomenon of dividing the city into different administrative functional areas, such as Central as the financial and commercial district and Victoria City as the administrative centre; From the 1960s to the 1980s, Hong Kong, during the Four Little Dragons period in Asia, experienced rapid urbanisation in response to the demand for high economic growth, a rapid rise in population, the emergence of a high-density "residential city" phenomenon dominated by residential housing, and a tighter supply of land in the city centre, which led the Hong Kong Government to implement a large-scale residential housing construction programme.[5] After Hong Kong's reunification in 1997, the Hong Kong government began to focus on sustainable urban development, proposing the development of eco-cities and smart cities, strengthening urban planning and land use policies, adjusting the spatial layout of the city such as relocating public housing to the suburbs, urban renewal, opening up parks, reducing industrial land and increasing residential land. Hong Kong's urban planning has undergone changes from British-style urban planning to high-density residential construction to sustainable development and smart city building. After the reunification, the Government has focused on urban renewal and land use policies to improve the ecological and residential quality of the city, but the issues of land supply and urban renewal still need to be addressed.

3.2. The link between urban planning and urban village problems in Hong Kong

During the British colonial period, residential and commercial areas were separated by urban zoning. As the population grew rapidly and urbanization accelerated, high-density "residential cities" emerged. It was not until the 1950s that the shortage of housing supply in Hong Kong became more acute as large numbers of mainland residents moved into the territory. To meet the demand for affordable housing, some industrial and commercial areas were converted into residential housing, giving rise to the problem of urban villages. After the handover of Hong Kong in 1997, the HKSAR Government has increased its investment in town planning. A large amount of public service infrastructure such as housing, schools, hospitals, etc. was built. At the same time, the Hong Kong Government has adopted such means as demolition and redevelopment, and enacted a series of policies such as the Home Ownership Scheme and the Building Maintenance Fund for Dangerous Buildings to support the solution of the problem of urban villages. The HKSAR Government has now adopted more integrated and diversified urban planning measures to enhance the restriction and planning of land resources management. On the other hand, it has gradually improved the living and living conditions of the residents of the urban village in order to preserve the human values of the village in the course of its history.
4. Comparative analysis of issues left over from history

4.1. The impact of Beijing's land resource management and urban spatial planning on the development of urban villages

The distribution of urban villages in Beijing is shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Distribution of Urban Villages in Beijing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaoyang District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haidian District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fengtai District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daxing District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changping District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other District</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Beijing Municipal Government Official Website Collation Calculation

At the beginning of reform and opening up, Beijing's urban spatial planning failed to adapt to the situation of a large number of migrant workers coming to Beijing to work, resulting in a disconnection between housing and population, which forced a large number of people to rent villagers' self-built houses. Over time, this area where migrant workers gather has become an urban village. As a result, later urban spatial planning has made the transformation of urban villages and the release of land in urban villages a priority.

Beijing's latest urban spatial plan covers urban land structure, building height, transportation network, zoning, public space and other aspects.[6] Urban villages are one of the key areas, and many of them have been transformed into land for various urban functions. Some of the transformed land in urban villages is developed into residential land to meet the housing needs of Beijing residents. For example, after the transformation of the Shifoying Nanli community in Chaoyang District, the land was used to build several residential communities. Some were used to build commercial areas, such as the renovated urban village in the Wudaokou area of Haidian District. Some of the land has also been used to build high-end office buildings and commercial complexes. For example, after the urban village renovation in the Pingfang area of Chaoyang District, some of the land was used to build the Pingfang West Street Primary School. All of these urban villages have been transformed to a certain extent to alleviate the problem of population conflicts in the city. According to relevant information, the population density of Beijing in 2020 will be 1,217 people per square kilometer, which is much lower than that of Hong Kong, which is also an international metropolis. In general, Beijing's land resource management and urban spatial planning have kept pace with the times, alleviated the population problem, promoted the harmonious development of people and land, and quickly adapted to the tide of development.

4.2. The impact of Hongkong's land resource management and urban spatial planning on the development of urban villages

According to relevant data, the population density of Hong Kong in 2020 is 7039 people per square kilometer, second only to Mumbai and Dhaka within the city itself. As a result, the government has implemented strict land management regulations. Urban villages often occupy large amounts of undeveloped land, so by controlling land use and limiting their expansion, the government can ensure efficient land use and harmonious city development. Due to Hong Kong's rapid economic growth in the last century, urban spatial planning lagged behind, with residential areas comprising only 7% of the city's total area. In this context, urban villages were established throughout Hong Kong, and in the special context of being colonized by the British government, urban villages were established.
throughout Hong Kong. Therefore, a new urban spatial planning was proposed by the Hong Kong government and many urban villages were transformed. In Hong Kong, some of the transformed urban village land was used to build residential communities to improve living conditions. For example, the Kowloon Bay City Garden in Kwun Tong was built on the converted land of an urban village. Some of the converted land in urban villages is used for commercial and office purposes, e.g. Wong Tai Sin Plaza is built on the converted land in Wong Tai Sin Village, an urban village. Used for public facilities: Some of the land after urban village transformation is used for public facilities, for example, Waterloo Road, originally an urban village, has been transformed into a modern city hall building that provides various public services for the Yau Tsim Mong district. Through a series of advanced urban spatial planning, Hong Kong has successfully transformed all urban villages, laying the foundation for further population and economic development. In summary, Hong Kong's land resources management and urban spatial planning have focused on the fundamental problem of Hong Kong's relatively small land resources and achieved renewal iterations based on the original urban villages, fully exploiting the potential of Hong Kong's land resources and achieving effective utilization.

5. Comparison of social security for residents of urban villages in Beijing and Hong Kong

5.1. Portraits of migrant people in urban villages

The characteristics of the mobile population in urban villages in the two cities are shown in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Residents of Beijing's urban villages with mobile populations</th>
<th>Residents of Hongkong's urban villages with mobile populations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>Due to family economic conditions and migration reasons, many migrant people cannot receive good education, which makes them less competitive in the labor market and often only engaged in some grassroots labor jobs.</td>
<td>The level of education varies, with some having junior high school or less, while others have college or bachelor's degrees, but the education level of the mobile population is generally lower compared to that of Hong Kong local people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social network</td>
<td>Most of them come from other cities, and many of them do not have many friends and social networks in Beijing, so they can only rely on their acquaintances such as fellow villagers and colleagues to maintain social relationships.</td>
<td>Coming from the Mainland or foreign countries, their social networks are relatively homogeneous, making it difficult for them to integrate into the local Hong Kong community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture difference</td>
<td>Coming from different places and having a wide range of literacy and living habits, this also brings certain challenges to community governance and social management.</td>
<td>Coming from the mainland or foreign countries, the culture and values are very different and pose certain challenges to community governance and social management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Incomes are generally low, making it difficult to afford the high cost of rent and living in Beijing.</td>
<td>Compared to local residents in Hong Kong, their incomes are generally lower, making it difficult to afford the high rent and cost of living in Hong Kong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs</td>
<td>The young labor force is mainly engaged in construction workers, service industry employees, delivery boys and other grassroots labor jobs.</td>
<td>Diverse occupations, including construction workers, waiters, security guards, cleaners, foreign domestic helpers, etc. Difficult to obtain higher income and good career prospects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2. Beijing's security population and security methods tend to be diversified but there are still problems with supporting facilities

Beijing has two main types of protection for residents of urban villages: low-cost housing and public housing.[7] Low-rent housing is mainly for low-income local residents with housing difficulties, while public housing extends the scope of protection to low- and middle-income local residents with housing difficulties and includes eligible non-residents. In addition, the government implements the "Youth Growth Program" for graduating college students and the "Elderly Care Program" for seniors, which broadens the social security of housing in urban villages to a wider range of age and geographical groups. However, the urban planning of basic service facilities in urban villages is generally in the form of centralized construction, and there is a lack of targeted design of facilities, and many community service functions such as medical care and schooling are missing. In summary, there are low-cost housing and public housing for residents of urban villages in Beijing, as well as programs and improved facilities for different groups, but urban planning lacks targeted design for service facilities, and more efforts are needed to improve them.

5.3. Hong Kong protects the local population and has fully matured supporting facilities

Hong Kong's 'Housing for All' program advocates for the diversification of housing protection in urban villages, which is an important measure to address the housing problem. This approach is flexible and mature, with transparent, dynamically-adjusted, low-level rents, and broad coverage. On the other hand, public housing in urban villages in Hong Kong is completely isolated from the market, making the protection of eligible residents concerned more stable; at the same time, public housing in Hong Kong is generally in the form of high-rise buildings, the University of Hong Kong Center for Urban Planning and Environmental Management Associate Professor Zhao Lixia has said: "Hong Kong is the first city in Asia to provide high-rise buildings for low-cost housing ", while such high-density public housing has a scale effect in providing public service facilities, saving land resources and thus better safeguarding the convenience of residents' lives. In general, the construction of urban villages in urban planning has been tailored to local conditions, with a diversified layout and comprehensive facilities and a high degree of completion. Hong Kong's Home Ownership Scheme has implemented various measures to protect housing in urban villages, providing low rents and broad coverage to eligible groups. High-rise public housing has a scale effect in providing public services and facilities, which better supports the convenience of residents' daily lives. Overall, the urban plan is site-specific, with comprehensive facilities and a high degree of completion.

6. Urban Governance and Urban Village

6.1. Community Governance Model in Beijing's Urban Villages

The governance of urban villages in Beijing has gone through different stages, and the government has adopted different policies and measures at different stages. At the beginning of the 21st century, the government implemented a series of urban renewal plans, such as the 13th Five-Year Urban Renewal Plan, which aimed to strengthen urban infrastructure, improve the urban environment and enhance the city's image. However, this model ignored the interests and participation of residents and lacked sustainability. Later, the government began to advocate a win-win cooperation model of governance and introduced policies to encourage participation of urban village residents, such as the "shantytown monetization" policy, which allows urban village residents to monetize their original housing. The government has strengthened institutional innovation and government responsibility for community governance in urban villages, and has established a multi-party governance model through various means, including market mechanisms.[8] As we enter the current era of rapid development, the government has proposed a comprehensive governance idea aimed at promoting multi-party participation in the governance of urban villages for the public interest. This has involved introducing policies related to land, finance, and social affairs to promote integrated governance of
urban villages and strengthen public services and infrastructure construction. The idea of integrated governance advocates the establishment of an inclusive renewal model. In general, it presents the trend of focusing on the coexistence and interaction between cities and urban villages, and gradually changing the situation of fragmentation between cities and urban villages. The implementation of these policies and measures has strongly promoted the joint development of cities and urban villages.

6.2. Community Governance Model in Hong Kong’s Urban Villages

As Hong Kong continues to urbanize, the governance of urban villages has been gradually improved. In the early days, the community governance of urban villages in Hong Kong was in a disorderly management. Since the residents of urban villages were mostly immigrants from the mainland, their living and cultural backgrounds were vastly different from those of local residents in Hong Kong, which also made community governance difficult. In the early twentieth century, the Hong Kong government gradually realized the importance of urban village governance and began to take measures to strengthen community management.[9] The government improved the living conditions of residents by redeveloping urban villages and strengthening safety management. In the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, the government established community centers, residents' associations, and other organizations to enhance residents' sense of self-governance and participation. The government has implemented additional policies to encourage residents of urban villages to participate in community management, including attending community meetings, voting, and providing suggestions, in order to increase residents' awareness of self-governance and self-management. In 2000, the government established the first batch of community development programs to provide financial assistance to urban villages to improve community facilities and enhance community development. In 2011, the government launched the Urban Renewal Strategy to encourage the renewal of urban villages to improve the living environment and quality of life of residents. The importance of community governance in urban villages has been gradually raised.

7. Urban village culture

7.1. Exploration on social and cultural diversity and sustainable development of urban villages in Beijing

The social and cultural process of urban villages in Beijing has also gone through different stages. In the early days, due to most of the residents in urban villages were immigrants from other places, the aborigines often kept the traditional rural social network and held a repelling attitude towards immigrants, forming a closed village culture. However, with the increasing number of migrants, they also brought culture from various places, which promoted the diversity and openness of urban village culture. Since then, sociologists and the government have gradually realized the positive significance of urban village culture to social development, and paid attention to the welfare of migrants and the self-development of urban village residents. However, the social culture of urban villages also has the impact in the process of urbanization of villagers and migrants. It is necessary for the government and all sectors of society to jointly promote social transformation and development, build social capital, play the role of community capital, and promote the sustainable development of urbanization. Through the concept of multiculturalism, an inclusive community culture can be established on the basis of respect and tolerance of different culture. At the same time, cultural identity can help residents of urban villages better integrate into urban culture and improve their social status and quality of life. At present, the government and all walks of life are also exploring how to build social capital, play the role of community capital, and promote social transformation and development. For example, the Beijing Municipal Government encourages residents of urban villages to actively participate in community governance, promote community self-government, and improve the self-management capabilities of urban villages and the service level of community organizations. At the same time, the Beijing Municipal Government has also proposed the "Three-Year Action Plan for Shanty Town Renovation", which aims to promote the sustainable development of urbanization by improving the
living environment and housing conditions of residents in urban villages. The implementation of these policies and measures will help promote the social and cultural development and transformation of urban villages.

7.2. Hong Kong's urban village culture has completed its transformation and revitalized according to local conditions

During the development of Hong Kong's urban village culture, the social status and cultural value of urban villages have changed in different historical stages. In the early 20th century, due to the process of urbanization and immigration in Hong Kong, urban villages rose rapidly and became the main residential area for a large number of immigrants and foreign laborers. However, due to poor housing conditions and poor sanitation in urban villages, the culture of urban villages has long been neglected and rejected and has not been recognized and valued by society. Until the end of the 20th century, as the Hong Kong SAR government gradually paid attention to the issue of urban villages and began to implement urban renewal plans, the culture of urban villages was protected and improved. The Urban Village Art District is one of the important achievements of the cultural development of Hong Kong’s urban villages. The construction of the urban village art district is not a simple urban renewal plan, it reflects the recognition and emphasis on the culture of the urban village. The reconstruction plan of the urban village art district not only protects the local architectural and cultural heritage, but also injects new artistic elements into the urban village culture. In the urban village art district, dilapidated houses in the original block have been transformed into art spaces such as galleries, art studios and small theaters, providing opportunities for local residents to experience art and culture. Tsuen Wan Tsing Yi City Art District and Nam Cheong Street Cultural and Creative Park in Sham Shui Po have become representatives of Hong Kong’s urban village art district, attracting a large number of tourists and culture lovers to visit and explore.[10] Hong Kong’s urban village culture has a rich and diverse cultural background, so the construction of the urban village art district pays more attention to the presentation of local cultural and artistic characteristics, injecting new vitality into the development of urban village culture.

8. Conclusions

After comparative analysis of the impact of urban planning in Beijing and Hong Kong on urban villages, we have made the following reflections on the issue of urban villages in my country and obtained corresponding enlightenment. First of all, the existence of urban villages is a complex and multifaceted issue, which requires the government to adopt diversified security methods and construction of supporting facilities. The government should formulate flexible policies according to the housing security needs of different residents to meet the needs of different residents. At the same time, the construction of supporting facilities in urban villages should also be more targeted, adapting measures to local conditions to meet the needs of different residents. Safeguard policies need to be dynamically adjusted and open and transparent to enhance the credibility and credibility of policies. The second point is that the implementation of urban planning needs to be combined with the protection of the interests of residents in urban villages to establish a sustainable renewal model. The government needs to listen more to residents' voices in urban renewal, formulate more reasonable policies, and increase opportunities for residents to participate in order to promote sustainable urban development. The government needs to strengthen institutional innovation and government responsibility for community governance in urban villages and establish a governance model with multi-party participation. The government can establish a diversified governance mechanism through various means such as market mechanism and community consultation, strengthen the participation of the market and society, and improve the efficiency and quality of community governance in urban villages. Last but not least, urban development needs to realize that urban villages are not simply problematic areas, but special areas with unique social and cultural values. Therefore, urban planning should focus on the protection of the social and cultural values of urban villages and make them an
important resource and supplement for urban development by transforming and adding new functions.[11]

References


