From Blueprint to Participatory Planning—
Approaches to Sustainable Communities and Urbanization in China
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CHEN Liqun - CHEN Yang - ZHANG Qianqian
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The lead authors of this report are, in alphabetical order, CHEN Liqun, CHEN Yang, and ZHANG Qianqian from Crowdsourcing Placemaker (CSP). Will Fulwider and Karin Janz of the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) also contributed to production of this report.

The views expressed in this report are of the individual authors and contributors; therefore, these views do not necessarily represent the official positions of the academies or organizations listed in this report.
CROWDSOURCING PLACEMAKER (CSP)

Crowdsourcing Placemaker (CSP) is a research and action initiative founded by a group of urban planners. Under the condition that China is undergoing a "big era" of reform and institutional change, CSP believes that public place and community will be the new "battle field" of urban/rural management and planning, and that the intelligence and interest of the "crowd" will be essential for urban planning. With the goal of returning urban space back to citizens, CSP is working on theories and practices in participatory planning, crowdsourcing, placemaking etc.

The three co-founders of CSP are (in alphabetical order):

CHEN Liqun
Master of City Planning from MIT, Bachelor of Engineering in City Planning from Peking University, double majored in Psychology. Liqun is currently working as a planner at the China Center for Urban Development.

CHEN Yang
Master of Metropolitan Governance from Sciences Po Paris, Bachelor of Engineering in City Planning from Peking University, minor in French. Yang is currently working as a planner at Shanghai Urban Planning and Design Research Institute.

ZHANG Qianqian
Master of City Planning from MIT, Bachelor of Engineering in City Planning from Peking University, double majored in Economics. Qianqian is currently working as a planner at Urban Planning and Design Institute of Shenzhen.

INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES (ISC)

The Institute for Sustainable Community (ISC) has worked more than 20 years in low carbon, sustainable development and has led 91 sustainable community-driven projects in 25 countries across the globe. It started working in China in 2007, and has offices in Guangzhou, Beijing and Shanghai. It works with local partners, including governments, private sector, academies and NPOs to address the challenges of environmental protection, reducing carbon emissions, and creating low-carbon developments mainly in Pearl River Delta and Yangzi River Delta.
Table of Contents
1
Introduction:
The New Era of China’s Urbanization and Planning
1.1 The slowing down of urban development and the need for participation

In 2014, urbanization rates in China approached 53%, and as first tier cities grow bigger and bigger, urban expansion has brought along a host of. Standing at the intersection of the previously tread path, which would likely lead to a largely unorganized urbanized China and a new style of urbanization, the national government articulated a left turn into an urban development transition. The National New-Type Urbanization Plan was released in early 2014. The policy highlighted “human-centered” thinking as the core ideology of their urbanization roadmap with Chinese characteristics, marking the start of the transition of urban development and in tandem, urban planning. The key characteristic of the new concept lay in the quality of urbanization, which emphasizes people and livelihoods, rather than the quantity of land and property value growth. Hence, it is supposed that more people’s voices should be heard and more people’s opinions/ideas be utilized.

The fact that the Chinese society has noticed that cities must slow down their urgent and extensive pace of urbanization arises from another important urban reality: cities are running out of vacant land. Land resources are being exhausted in large Chinese metropolises, like Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen. For instance, the share of urbanized land in Shanghai municipality is close to 50% of the total land, threatening the city’s ecological security. Land-leasing development has long been a powerful approach for development, creating growth formerly concerned with big-scale, greenfield construction. Now that land available for development is increasingly limited, renewal of what will be inevitably a trend. Following the start of urban renewal pace in Shenzhen starting from 2004, Shanghai, Beijing and other cities have been more and more focusing on urban redevelopment, other than greenfield development.

As land is limited and urbanized land becomes the focus, urban development needs to deal with the complicated problems of property rights, existing space, existing land use and the role of communities and different interest groups, nonexistent in greenfield development. More stakeholders are expected be involved. In the built area, the questions of how to host the increasing population moving to the city as well as upgrading the living quality of the existed urban population will be key.

With a more complicated power structure in China’s urban development, the concept of Governance started to gain attention and be identified as a national political philosophy1. “Governance is a method/mechanism for dealing with a broad range of problems/conflicts in which actors regularly arrive at mutually satisfactory and binding decisions by negotiating with each other and cooperating in the implementation of these decisions” (Jessop, 2004). In the context of urban development, the key concept of Governance, distinguished from Government, lay

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1 The concept of governance was first highlighted in China at the Third Plenum of the 18th CPC Central Committee in 2014. The Communiqué points out that the overall goal of deepening the reform comprehensively is to improve and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics, and to promote the modernization of the national governance system and capacity.
in its emphasis on the equal importance of multiple stakeholders and that a city is governed by the negotiation and the balance of competing powers.

Hence, a balanced power structure inevitably calls for the empowerment of the public in Chinese cities. The voicing of public opinion, the adoption of suggestions and the respect of the public’s decisive right in urban development would largely help form a society of governance. It is a clear sign that the central government is willing to make a change, since the Third Plenum of the 18th CPC Central Committee has defined that the overall goal of deepening the reform comprehensively is to improve and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics, and to promote the modernization of the national governance system and capacity. Accordingly, policy making processes are likely to be more open and accountable in Chinese urban development. In this context and against the background of a more human-centered and renewal-prioritized urban China, participation can take a central role.

1.2 Planning in transition: from ‘growth-oriented’ planning to ‘stock-oriented’ planning

During the past 30 years of China’s fast urbanization and development, top-down approaches to planning have achieved incredible successes, demonstrating the power of concentrating common-pool resources and capital into growth. However, these large-scale, centralized, government initiated process have left behind small-scale vitality and quality of life. Blame should not fall upon officials and planners, but rather the fact that “fast” and “big” growth naturally leaves little space for thorough meditation on thousands of communities, people, and places. The transition of Chinese urban development is posing intractable challenges to China’s traditional as ‘growth-oriented’ planning system. No longer suitable for the massive modern Chinese city, the method of planning must be retrofitted.

First, ‘stock land’ (urbanized land) is different from greenfield land in the sense that capital has already been invested in the land, i.e. there are investors, residents, managers, all of whom can be termed stakeholders, bound to the land. They may be public organs, private developers, property owners, tenants, or the general local residents/public. If, generally speaking, the goal of urban planning is to seek the optimal way of resource arrangement, stock-oriented urban planning then is talking about capital rearrangement and profit redistribution. In this sense, the public and all stakeholders should be involved to achieve an acceptable solution for everyone.

Second, the traditional method of planning has helped to perpetuate the so-called last mile problem, the crucial but oft overlooked issue of ensuring networks of transportation, open spaces, urban services etc. are available and accessible to every citizen and household. This problem has become a barrier to the amelioration of quality of life in cities. This is due to several reasons: (1) traditional greenfield planning usually has no existed factors and residents to consider; (2) the large scale and fast pace of planning and urban management has made it difficult to look into

2 “Stock” refers to the existing “developed” or “urbanized” part of the total urban land
the details of every stakeholder; (3) feedback process to report and fix problems after construction is finished are very limited and inefficient. Now that people as well as quality of life is in the spotlight of new urban development agenda, more attention needs to be paid to closing the last mile gap. Since it is people who are the users of urban services, and they often know where the gaps are, it is them who need to be given a say in such endeavor. Urban planners are faced with unprecedented challenges to transform not only their methodology, but also their way of thinking. The word people must have its place in the new framework of urban planning.
Participatory Planning in China
2.1 What is participatory planning

Participatory planning is a planning paradigm that emphasizes involving the entire community in the strategic and management processes of planning, be it urban-, community, or rural-level planning processes. It is often considered an integral component of community development. Participatory planning aims to harmonize views among all of its participants as well as prevent conflict between opposing parties. In addition, the inclusive nature of participatory planning allows marginalized groups the opportunity to participate in the planning process.

Although participatory planning had previously existed in various forms, it was first given structure as a response to the gap between the desires of local communities and government programs such as urban renewal by Sherry Arnstein, who wrote A Ladder of Citizen Participation to “encourage a more enlightened dialogue”. (Arnstein, 1969) She developed the ladder as a typology, with eight rungs ranging from various degrees of nonparticipation, to degrees of token participation, and ultimately, citizen power (see picture..)

Participatory Reflection and Action or Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) started as the leading school of participatory planning. Of which, German–American Kurt Lewin (Kurt, 1947) and later, Brasilian Paulo Freire (Freire, 1970) are key pioneers. Freire’s belief that poor and exploited people can, and should be, enabled to analyze their own reality was a fundamental inspiration for the participatory planning movement. Lewin’s relevance lay in his integration of democratic leadership, group dynamics,
experiential learning, action research, and open systems theory, and his efforts to overcome racial and ethnic injustices.

Later, PRA approaches were further developed in Participatory Learning and Action (PLA), which emphasizes the links between the participatory process and action.

Robert Chambers (Chambers, 1997), another icon of the movement, defines PRA/PLA according to the following principles;

- Handing over the stick from the outsiders to all stakeholders;
- Facilitating investigation, analysis, presentation and learning by local people themselves, so they generate and own the outcomes and also learn;
- Self-critical awareness of the planning team;
- Facilitators and planners continuously and critically examine their own behavior;
- Taking responsibility of all stakeholders for what is done, rather than relying on the authority of manuals or on rigid rules;
- Sharing and transparency during the planning and implementation process;
- Involving the wide range of techniques now available, from chatting across the fence to neighborhood mapping, diagrams, digital apps and e-mail.

The benefits of participation in planning are multiple. Firstly, the participatory methodology makes it possible to balance competing power, thereby help to produce a city of good governance. Secondly, which is related to the former, through the participation process, voices from different social groups can be heard, which in theory will influence the decision-making process, eventually contributing to social equity. Thirdly, participation as a process of crowdsourcing planning expands available solutions by generating ideas through the involvement of all possible concerned parties in community problems. Through this process, planning and decision-making becomes no longer a government responsibility, but rather a collective task. Fourthly, there is a higher probability of successful and especially sustainable implementation for a plan or a project co-produced.

2.2 The Chinese planning system and the role of the public

Participation is often more easily executed in a developed society because of the higher capacity and more general awareness of public right, education, etc. However, especially in China, such is not always the case. China’s vast geographically imbalanced development and variation in local context makes the establishment of a precise one-for-all institutional or legal system at the national level quite difficult.
To great extent, the Chinese planning system is still primarily top-down, centralized and government-dominated. Though much power has been decentralized to the local level, including some of the legislative right, these rights of legislating planning law are still subject to the central government and the power of local regulatory bodies remains weak.

When it comes to the role of the public in the planning system, the discussion on democracy seems unavoidable. Democracy in China, rooted in traditional Chinese philosophy and culture, is often realized as a combination of electoral democracy and deliberative democracy. The vertical structure of this iteration of democracy – Vertical Democracy – is a combination of top-down governmental directives and bottom-up grassroots participation (Naisbitt, 2010). Different from direct democracy, the representative democracy of China is characterized by the dominant power of elites, making grassroots participation in policy decision-making challenging. Yet, grassroots democracy has is aided by fertile institutional soil and extensive practical basis in China. Entrenched democratic systems, such as those within the framework of villagers’ committees in rural areas and neighborhood committees in cities, could serve as favorable foundations for public participation.

The organization of the Chinese planning system as well as Chinese democracy dissuades direct application of western methods of participation in China. Therefore, we must find our own way. A functional path for public participation in urban planning, tailored to China’s bureaucratic and institutional context needs to be explored while the advantage of native grassroots democratic systems begs further application.

2.3 The rise of public participation in China

The rise of public participation in China dates back to mid-1990s. Yet, not until several years after the beginning of the new century did public participation see relatively extensive social application. The logic behind the relatively quick development of public participation in China is tangled up within the transition of social structure resulting from the economic reforms. With the gradual establishment and maturation of the market economic system, the webs of social relation in urban planning and urban development are turning out to be more complex; cities are becoming thicker systems of layered of interests, and more actors with diverse values and different and often conflicting interests are involved in urban development. Conflicts concerning demolition and “not in my backyard” mentality has mushroomed in large cities. Thus, platforms and rules inevitably need to be established for communication and coordination.

Sheer political recognition is another indispensable factor in the development of public participation in China. The report of the 16th National Congress of CPC promotes that democratic mechanisms need to be implemented, more democratic channels need to be provided and the role of public participation in politics needs to be enlarged. The report of the 17th National Congress further points out that the
right of public participation should be guaranteed and the level to which the public participation is engaged needs to be advanced. Such clear political affirmation lays down the political foundation and provides more space for the grassroots growth of public participation.

2.4 The legal position and instruments of planning participation in China

Initially, the public right to participation in urban planning is given by the constitution. The constitution stipulates that all power in the P.R.C belongs to the people. It is the major principle of China’s socialist constitutional theory that governmental power is derived from the people, serves the people and is held accountable to the people. Since urban planning is one of the government’s public administrative functions, public participation throughout the processes of urban planning is not only the expression of public will and the representation of public interest, but also is the exercise of the public right granted by the constitution.

Moreover, it is also the public right given by administrative law that the public has the right to participate in urban planning. Administrative law, of strength secondary only to the constitution, encompasses laws and regulations that adjust social relations through the process of national administrative authorities exercising their right of administration. Currently, the Urban and Rural Planning Act, and the associated Environmental Impact Assessment Act and Administrative Permission law provide the basic institutional framework for the procedures of public participation in urban planning. These administrative laws lay down the institutional foundation to support and guarantee planning participation.

The Urban and Rural Planning Act enacted in 2007 stipulates for the first time the legal procedures of public participation in planning. The agents of participation include government departments, experts, direct stakeholders and the general public. The Act clearly requires that public notice of draft plans last for a minimum of 30 days and also stipulates that the stakeholders must be consulted when deciding whether a detailed regulatory plan need be revised.

To be more precise, the Act requires certain participation procedures at the compilation, decision, implementation and revision stages of planning, such as public notice, verification meetings, and public hearings. Clauses such as “the plan compilation authority should make public notice and organize verification meetings, public hearings etc. for consulting experts and the public” and “the approval authority should organize expert review before approval ” give the public the right of participation by regulating the procedural obligation of administrative bodies at each planning stage.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning Stage</th>
<th>Applicable Plan</th>
<th>Participation Procedure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compilation</td>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>The plan compilation authority should make public notice (&gt;30 days) and organized verification meetings, public hearings etc. for expert and public consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan Environmental Impact</td>
<td>Any special plan may have an unfavorable impact on the environment and directly involve the public environmental right</td>
<td>Verification meetings or public hearings etc. for the department, expert and public consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision</td>
<td>Master Plan</td>
<td>The approval authority should organize expert review before approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Plan publishing</td>
<td>The plan compilation authority should publish the plan in time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning permission</td>
<td>Major issues involving public interest required by law</td>
<td>The approval authority should make public notice and organize public hearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Environmental Impact</td>
<td>Projects may have big impact on the environment and should compile an Environmental Impact Assessment Report</td>
<td>The construction unit should organize verification meetings, public hearings etc. for department, expert and public consultation before submitting the Environmental Impact Assessment Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal</td>
<td>All plans</td>
<td>Any unit or personnel has the right to report and sue any activity not in conformity with the concerned plan to the department in charge of urban and rural planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision</td>
<td>Planning assessment</td>
<td>The plan compilation authority should organize concerned department and experts for regular assessment and consult the public by verification meetings, public hearings etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plan compilation</td>
<td>If revision is confirmed necessary, the planning authority should organize public hearings etc. for stakeholder consultation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Current legal procedures of planning participation in China  
(referred to as Urban and Rural Planning Act)
2.5 The limitations of formal planning participation in China

According to Table 1- *Current legal procedures of planning participation in China*, several features of participatory planning in China can be observed. Though certain public participation procedures are required at each planning stage, most are revisory nature. In most cases, the public are informed and consulted only after a plan has been drafted or a decision has almost been made. Among the main participation instruments of public notice, verification meetings and public hearings, only public notice is compulsory. There is no detailed procedural requirement for each participation instrument, nor are there stipulations to guarantee the quality of participation. Third, how the planners should respond to and adopt the results of participation is unknown and the whole process is not open and transparent, meaning that the impact of participation on the final decision, in other words, the efficacy of participation is uncertain.

All the features above often lead to the consequence of pervasive formalism and ineffective participation. For instance, online public notice is given using low-resolution figures uneasily accessed on the website, while onsite public notices are often rarely visited due to lack of publicity. Moreover, the planning authority responsible for organizing the verification meetings and the public hearings ultimately decides meeting attendees. Therefore, these meetings are not open door, and the minutes are not accessible by the public. The lack of regulation on detailed procedures and the lack of supervisory mechanisms allows the planning authority much manipulate the extent of participation with the result often being nothing more than a performance.

Overall, the procedures of participation in planning required by law exist more as principles than in exercise in China. In addition, the level of planning participation remains low, basically hovering around the Tokenism level of Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation.

However, at the grassroots level, voluntary implementation of participatory methods has seen much progress and many lessons can be learned. Limitations on the impact of these grassroots efforts do exist. In the following chapter, case studies will aid in unveiling the updated status of China’s participation in urban planning.

By and large, public participation in China remains a superficial endeavor and is executed with the aim of fulfilling requirements under the Urban Planning Law. Neither the government nor developers want public participation to slow down development. Therefore, participatory planning in China is usually 1) an afterthought: there is no effective participation during the planning and design process; 2) unidirectional: usually the government informs the public; or collects opinions from the public without any future feedback; 3) passive: no interaction between different players and those chosen for participation are sometimes biased; 4) not legitimate: a procedure that governments must fulfill according to the urban planning law; 5) lacking in the participatory culture: Chinese culture has
evolved from the nucleic concept of family and the collective rather than a focus on individual freedom. Civil rights is an unfamiliar concept for most of Chinese citizens.
3
Case studies of participatory planning in contemporary China
3.1 Case Study  Urban renewal in a minority community

_Nanshi District, Yining, Xinjiang Autonomous Region_

Context

Nanshi district is located at the city of Yining, capital of Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Xinjiang province. The 12km² area of Nanshi is the provenance of Yining city—in the 1950s, the main street was a bazaar brimming with people and goods from other provinces of China. The relative foreign atmosphere of this main street, in contrast to the largely indigenous Uyghur and Kazkh population, engendered the name “Han Street” and became one of the most popular destinations in Yining.

Nanshi district has a population of 87,000, among which 77% are of ethnic minority. This small area shelters 25 of the 56 ethnic minorities in China. Over time, Nanshi developed as a mixed area of local culture and mid-Asia culture, which helped to shape its unique style of architecture and environment. Nanshi district hugs the Yining river (the main river in Ili Prefecture) and has grown in step with the waterway, forming a complicated urban framework.

Nanshi district has witnessed every step of Yining’s development. However in recent years, Yining’s growth
has gradually migrated to the newly developed area, leaving Nanshi to be marginalized as urban–rural fringe. In 2006, before the start of redevelopment planning, about 50% of the households were low-income families (monthly income of less than 155 RMB); the infrastructure was also poor: most alleys were not paved and without drainage.

The master development plan of Yining did not recognize the special value of Nanshi district, simply wanting to apply a grid road network to this area. If implemented, the contexture of Nanshi would have been irrevocably damaged. In July 2006, the former minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Construction visited Nanshi district. After touring the historical neighborhood, he decided to support its renovation. The China Academy of Urban Planning and Design was assigned to help draw up an urban renewal plan for Nanshi District.

**Objective and why participation**

The objective of this planning project was to 1) improve the quality of living in this neighborhood by paving alleys, constructing infrastructure and making public spaces; 2) protect the special architecture style and ways of living as well as guide the construction of private housing; 3) encourage the communication between different minorities in the neighborhood; 4) try to introduce culturally sensitive tourism to this neighborhood to increase the household income.

There were several reasons that made engaging “public participation” one of the most important parts of Nanshi redevelopment. The primary reason is that the Nanshi is composed of a complex assortment of different ethnic and religious groups, a microcosm of Xinjiang and the reason underlying some of the area’s more sensitive political issues. Therefore, all of the actions by the government must be very sensitive to not intensify the potential ethnic conflict.

In addition, the planners also recognized the value of the neighborhood and suggested not to ruin the texture of the environment and way of life. To prove that unique, exciting, rich urban environment could be achieved through an incremental self-improvement process, Nanshi was setup to be a pilot demonstration.

Another motive for engaging the public was the small budget of the project, which laid the bulk of long-term maintenance responsibilities onto the local residents.
Given this precondition, building a strong sense self-identification with and a strong capacity for the neighborhood appeared to be the best solution.

As a result, the planning process was designed to emphasize the participation of the local residents.

Figure 5: Before and after of the project: the street environment is significantly improved  
(Source: Director of the project Mr. Chi Shen)

Key players and their roles

Local government – The government of Yining city and the government of Nanshi district made the decision to rejuvenate the area through a participatory process as well as contributed to the financing of the project. The subdistrict office and neighborhood committee helped with collaboration, organizing neighbors, etc.

Residents – In the Nanshi district project, the residents actively participated in the project cycle. They expressed their willingness to improve the environment, provided their local knowledge, gave comments and helped the planners determine the draft plan. In addition, the residents themselves completed most of the renovation of private housing and the greening of the streets with materials provided by the government.

Planners – Different from the conventional method of master planning, for this
project, the planners acted as principal coordinator, project manager and technical professional. The main responsibility of planners was to build consensus, maintain the value of the local culture, and consolidate the ideas of residents into a workable plan.

Participation process and methods

2006.6–7 Motivate the residents, field investigation, and collect ideas

With the help of subdistrict office of Nanshi district and the neighborhood committee, the planners started to visit the residents, conduct surveys and host community meetings. Most of the residents supported the project with the hope that their quality of life could be improved. In light of the importance that religion plays within the community, the working group held a meeting with local religious leaders, who agreed on the objective of the project and expressed their willingness to work with the planners on potential disagreement between residents.

Figure 6: The bilingual resident survey asking 1) whether the residents are planning to move to other parts of the city 2) accepted options for relocation 3) how the residents recognize the local culture of the district etc. (Source: CAUPD)

Figure 7: The first community meeting (Source: CAUPD)
According to the discussion between residents, local governments and the planners, the Nanshi urban renewal project would not relocate residents nor change the living habits of the community. The focus of the plan was on improving the infrastructure (pavement and drainage) and guiding the overall style of the neighborhood environment.

**Principles of the plan**

1. Put Nanshi in the context of Yining’s development. Integrate the available resources and opportunities;
2. Balance reservation and development; renew the neighborhood organically, based on the overall features while improving economical, environmental and social quality of life;
3. Focus on the human needs, respect the ideas of the residents, and encourage neighbors to build the community;
4. Emphasize the special characteristics of the local culture, apply development methods that best fit the community;
5. Focus on operability, minimize demolition and relocation and maintain the environmental effect on a micro-scale.

**2006.9 First round of publication and comments collection**

At the end of September 2006, the preliminary results were published through a press conference held by the Yining government. The planners went to the street to explain the drawings and scheme to the residents. About a hundred effective comments were collected.

![Image](image-url)
2006.10-2007.3 Plan revision

Based on the comments from multiple groups, the revisions mainly focused on three aspects: 1) widening the main street; 2) increasing public activity facilities; and 3) some minor changes to the street network. At the end of this period, the collected comments were archived for future reference.

2007.3–6 Second round of publication, final plan

The revised plan was published and the working group designed several discussion panels for the different participating groups – the government officials and experts, the local residents, and the potential relocated neighbors in Nanshi district. In the neighborhood, the revised plan for Nanshi district and plan for the phase-one area was posted on the community message board.

The value guidance

During drafting of the plan, the working group contacted the primary school and middle school in Nanshi district and invited the students to draw out and write down their expectations for the future of Nanshi.

Zhang Rongrong, an eighth grader wrote:

“in a corner of the world, there is another satisfying place—the place is Nanshi district......the houses are clean and full of sun light. There are pretty flowers in the courtyards, the schools are full of greenery...”

2007.6–12 Implementation

After finalizing the plan, the project went into the implementation process. On one side, the government worked on street pavement, infrastructure and public facilities. On the other side, the residents took the chance to renovate their houses with the support of government.

To guide the renovation and maintain the consensus of the community, the working group drafted a “Residents’ Handbook” for guiding future construction and renovation.
Achievements

Through this renewal project, the environment of Nanshi district was significantly improved. The traditional style of residential housing was maintained. There was little demolition of houses or relocation of the residents. In this process, the residents, planners and local government worked together closely on the shared goal of the community.

After the project in 2008, the city of Yining designated Nanshi part of the Kazanqi tourism zone. More tourists came for the authentic architecture and lifestyle of the neighborhood. Some of the local residents collaborated with the tourism zone to host travelers at their home or sell handcrafts, which saw an increase in overall income.

In March of 2009, the Nanshi urban renewal project was awarded to be a Chinese Exemplar of Living Environment (中国人居环境范例奖).

Conclusion and lessons

Nanshi urban renewal project was one of the earliest planning projects that fully applied resident participation throughout the entire process. It explored the participatory planning process from several aspects:
1. Given the chance, participation techniques can be quickly learned. In the Nanshi urban renewal project, although the working group had no experience in participatory planning, they learned from international research and cases.

2. The government, specifically the city or district office is key in initiating the participatory planning process. As in most cases, it is the government who decides when, where and how to develop a neighborhood.

3. As the most localized institutional body in China’s governance framework, the neighborhood committee and subdistrict office are the actual organizers and collaborators on site.

4. The local residents should not only participate in the planning process, but also help with the implementation. Because of the budgetary restrictions, the Nanshi project encouraged the residents to contribute their labor in painting, planting etc., which helped to build a stronger connection between the neighbors and the community.

5. Planning is a consensus building process. In the Nanshi planning process, the planners and government learned and integrated the needs of the residents and informed the residents as to the purpose, limits and process of the project, which successfully brought group to the table to work together to achieve the shared goal.

6. It is also necessary to build a long-term maintenance and self-governance mechanism for the community. The working group of Nanshi attempted to build a collaboration board composed of the government, neighborhood committee and the residents. However, such a collaboration board needs an institutional system in order to survive after the project.

Though the context of this planning process was very special and therefore not replicable under the current constitutional framework of planning, the Nanshi urban renewal project successfully achieved its own goal and proved that participation processes can be applied under the context of China’s planning system.
3.2 Case Study

Urban incremental redevelopment:

Beijing Qianmen Dashilar Area

Context

Dashilan and Xianyukou are two historic neighborhoods located at the west and east sides, respectively, of Qianmen street, Beijing. Dashilan falls under the jurisdiction of Xicheng District, while Xianyukou is under Dongcheng district. Around 2008 when the municipal government of Beijing initiated a redevelopment project of Qianmen street, the two neighborhoods also took part in the urban renewal process, but taking opposite approaches.

The entirety of the Xianyukou neighborhood was redeveloped concurrently with the district government and developer in charge of relocating all of the residents within the targeted area and building a commercial street.

In contrast, the redevelopment of Dashilan, initiated by Xicheng district, followed an incremental approach that based the relocation of residents on each household’s willingness, and the reuse of properties is implemented on a case-by-case basis. The district government formed a management cooperative to work on the redevelopment, programming, branding and upgrading of the public space for the neighborhood.

Figure 14: The comparison of redevelopment mode – big scale relocation (left) and incremental approach (right) (Source: Dashilar.org)
**Objective and why participation**

As one of the oldest commercial areas in Beijing, Dashilar had its most prosperous period in the Ming and Qing dynasties and then gradually declined when the commercial center of Beijing moved to the north of the city. Though reduced, the commercial atmosphere and local culture was still preserved. Given this strong, still existent identity, redevelopment must navigate difficult waters further compounded by complex resident composition and property conditions in the area.

As a result, it is clear that the revival of this area can be only achieved through a process that respects and fulfills the diverse needs of each redevelopment case; this is not a one-off project, but rather a long careful process to cultivate the existent social capital.

![Figure 15 (above and below): the location of Dashilar, the build year of the properties (Source: Dashilar.org)](image)

**Key players and their roles**

**Beijing Dashilar Investment Limited (BDIL)** – is invested and owned fully by the government of Xicheng district. It was formed in 2003 as a policy-oriented investor for the redevelopment of Dashilar historic area. BDIL was authorized by the government to redevelop the area, including both infrastructure and non-profit projects.

**Dashilar Platform (Dashilar.org)** – is a project platform formed by the BDIL. The goal of Dashilar Platform features several aspects: 1) research, planning and providing advice on policy and management of the area; 2) programming and organizing the cultural, historical and social resources of Dashilar; 3) marketing, providing a communication platform for government, developments, businesses, local residents and cultivating social capital by encouraging diverse modes of development and
preservation; 4) managing properties and releasing available ones to business, activities, groups, etc. By managing properties, the platform can provide spaces for temporary/long term activities and groups. By sharing resources; engaging academia, the media, and policy makers; and working with the social and administrative networks “on the ground”, Dashilar Platform is at the core of implementing change in the area. The platform office is located at the Yangmeizhu Hutong in Dashilar.

Small businesses, artists and social groups – provide the area’s diversity and activity. The small businesses are often self–initiated and are among those seeking short term/long term physical spaces to hold their activities.

Participation process and methods

Dashilar Platform

Dashilar Platform acts as the property manager, programmer and advocate of the area. It was founded specifically as a channel for the case–by–case programming process of Dashilar’s redevelopment. It is an open platform for parties and stakeholders to collaborate on exploring new methodologies of placemaking with the goal of a creating a truly vibrant old city centre in Beijing. Currently, the Platform team is focusing on several projects including Dashilar Pilot, Pop–ups and Events.
Dashilar Pilot

Dashilar Pilot is a new process that the Dashilar Platform team initiated by during Beijing Design Week. It aims to solve the challenges related to Dashilar’s built environment and cultural heritage. The Pilot Project operates via a two-stage process: stage 1 involves the presentation of a concept or scheme for evaluation, while stage 2 is the implementation of the pilot after feasibility has been determined.

Pop-ups and Events

With owned properties, the Platform encourages short-term “Pop-Up” and event usage of its vacant spaces. Utilizing affordable spaces for short-term lease allows start-ups to gauge feasibility or for more established businesses or offices to try something new without the risk of long term contracts. People can also apply to use the space to host events and activities. Thanks to the pop-ups and events, Dashilar has been creating a built environment with different venues.
Beijing Design Week

For the past 4 years, Dashilar area has been an active area in Beijing Design Week, which is an integral part of the overall revitalization of Dashilar. Exhibitions, experiments, and street markets collaborate with local residents, businesses, and craftspeople. The unique environment and culture of Dashilar entangled with design is a highlight for many visitors.

Achievements

From the beginning of the redevelopment, Dashilar area has never witnessed big scale relocation. The Dashilar Platform, as both the developer and government representative, recognized the value of long term programming and involving multiple groups from outside the area. As a result, Dashilar gained traction within Beijing as an incubator of creativity and laboratory of revitalizing Beijing local culture.

Conclusion and lessons

The redevelopment of Dashilar encountered several problems that we can take as lessons for future reference:

1. Although small in scale, the redevelopment is still based on the relocation of local residents. When making contracts with the local residents, Dashilar Platform only buys the housing properties from the residents without other options (such as entrust the Platform to manage their property) for the original property owners to participate into the redevelopment of the area.

2. The overall strategy of Dashilar Platform is focused on cultivating creative industry in this area. This idea is not fully accepted by the local residents, who might think the new venues are sweeping away the original commercial culture of the area.

3. The decisions made in redeveloping the area were mainly led by Dashilar Platform based on their judgement of the market. Few conversations took place between the Platform and the local resident groups.

4. Since its implementation, the Dashilar Platform has constantly run a deficit; the cost of obtaining these properties is much larger than the rental income of the spaces. The fiscal gap is made up by Beijing Dashilar Investment Limited, in other words the government of Xicheng District.

Although with some shortcomings, as a redevelopment project, Dashilar Platform implements a novel mode of government-initiated process and has resulted a long-term program of placemaking. The government of Xicheng District should receive credit for taking it upon itself to open up the conversation and provide financial support.
3.3 Case Study

Urban planning institute-initiated participatory planning:

_Shangbu Urban Renewal_

Context

Shangbu Village is an urban village located in Shenzhen’s old city center between two major parallel roads, Shennan Road and Binhe Road. To the north of the village is the previous city hall, while to the south of the village and the river is Hong Kong. Shanbu village, together with some other areas to the east, were some of the earliest constructed residential areas in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone. The five residential clusters in Shangbu village altogether occupied 23.4 hectares with an average FAR (floor area ratio, a measure of total built floor area compared to the land on which the building) of 4, which is quite dense. Among all the residents, only about 2000 are original villagers, while the other 100,000 are urban migrants.

Urban villages are originally villages in rural areas that were swallowed whole by construction due to rapid urban development. Because of the ever-increasing urban population and rental demand, villagers began building taller and denser buildings to boost rental revenue. Moreover, because the village committee collectively owns the land, they founded a corporate enterprise in 1992 to better invest and operate. Shangbu’s buildings and villages are old relative to the surrounding area, giving rise to severe problems such as a lack of public facilities, poor sanitation, congestion, etc. Under these circumstances, urban renewal issues were brought up.

Figure 20: One dream one family (Source: Shangbu Urban Renewal public consulting)

Figure 21: The location and current situation of Shangbu village (Source: UPDIS)
Key players and their roles

There are two major players in the whole process:

**Villagers** - The original villagers from Shangbu.

**Urban Planning and Design Institute of Shenzhen (UPDIS)** - UPDIS is a coordinator tasked with collecting ideas from villagers in order to help them better understand urban renewal policies and better lay out the urban renewal plan.

It’s also worth to mention that real estate developers are usually also quite important in urban renewal process. Real estate developers and the village cooperate enterprise consist the development body. However in this case, the urban renewal was still in the initial stage when the village enterprise hadn’t chosen their development partner (real estate developer) yet. Therefore, real estate developers are not included in key players.

Objective and why participatory

To help the village answer two questions:

1. Whether or not they should proceed with urban renewal and apply for the urban renewal quota (meaning urban renewal approval)

2. If the answer is yes, future questions should be discussed. How to proceed? What should be the development approach? Whom should they partner with? And most important, what does the ideal outcome look like? An urban renewal unit plan should be laid out.

Participation process and methods

The whole process required 3 months, from 2014.07 to 2014.10, and included five stages:

*2014.07 First round public consulting*

Participants went on a field trip, visiting Tianbei village and Tianxia village, both of which have previously experienced urban renewal processes. After that, an open discussion about urban renewal was started.
2014.08 Expert lectures

Four experts offered lectures to the villagers. The experts represented different industries and held different perspectives and included Mr. Feng from an architect firm introducing the concept of community organic renewal, Mrs. Wu from a real estate valuation and consulting firm introducing urban renewal accounting and financing, Mr. Xiang explaining urban renewal related affairs and Mr. Wang from UPDIS disseminating the procedures of urban renewal.

2014.09 Comparing five proposals

Another five public consultations were held during proposal comparison. Another five experts engaged with the 113 villagers who participated and another 2000 villagers expressed their concerns.

At the beginning, participants expressed their opinions and concerns (such as: “I need more green space, or I have nowhere to go for a walk.” “more schools please” “can we have a say in our own village? We think we have the right of decision making.”) and reached a consensus of 95% of the villagers agreeing that the village should go through urban renewal process.

The next step on how to proceed drew more mixed responses: the majority (70%) of the participants voted for “separate urban renewal”, meaning each residential area (in total five) of Shangbu village would go through the urban renewal process separately rather be rebuilt as one entity. Additionally, 66% of the villagers considered the future function of Shangbu to be residential, while 12% imagined it as soho (small office/home office), 6% as office and 10% as commercial.

Based on the idea of separate urban renewal, debates over five proposals took place. After a month-long discussion, proposal one, “coordinate mixed use urban renewal proposal” stood out, largely because the potential profit and profit rate are the highest among the five choices and the existence of a risk sharing mechanism.
2014.10 Forum

During the forum, experts and people from urban planning profession exchanged ideas and analyzed each subject in the proposal, including land use, contribution rates, public facilities, underground spaces, traffic impacts, relocation, affordable housing, etc.

2014.11 Second round public consulting

After months of public engagement, the result of a second round public consulting poll showed that the village had a stable idea of what to do: 1) 95% agreed that the village should be rebuilt; 2) 69% agreed with “separate urban renewal”; 3) as for function, about 52% of the villagers agreed that Shangbu should be apartment/residential, 17% SOHO, 9% office, and 17% commercial.

Achievements

- It was a good practice that increased public awareness and fully motivated villagers to engage in public affairs.
- The whole process offered the villagers an opportunity to learn more about urban renewal and established a common ground for future cooperation. This is crucial for long-term negotiation and to eliminate misunderstandings.
- Reached a general consensus for urban renewal.

Barriers and how to overcome

General consensus vs. detailed action plan – Shangbu village is a huge village with five separate residential areas. Although a general consensus (question 1 and 2) was reached among all, people from different residential areas still hold different opinions on other issues. For example, 99% of villagers from Jiuxu residential area disagreed with the urban renewal position while 93% and 95% of villagers from Shaputou and Chiwei, respectively, agreed with the position. Moreover, villagers also have different ideas on how urban renewal units should be set. The existing proposal received only 63% and 65% support from Shaputou and Chinwei, respectively, while only 6% of villagers from Yutian supported the proposal.
Conclusion and Lessons

Shangbu village is an example of the one of the many village Shenzhen has swallowed during its path of development, and as result the Shangbu has been trapped in complicated property rights issues, which have severely impeded its urban renewal process. Complicating matters further, the five separate residential areas hold different opinions and voices. Therefore, this is a case of urban renewal confronting institutional barriers. The major purpose for public consulting is to attempt to untangle these complicated knots. Although this is a special case, there are some strategies and practices that can be learned:

1. **How to build up mutual trust** - Inviting experts from different industries with different background might be a good strategy. It is not easy for villagers to trust one party, but with more perspectives being introduced, villagers are educated through the process and can make their own choice.

2. **Multiple rounds of public participation** - Two or more rounds of public participation is also crucial. It reveals how people shift their ideas and why. It might help future consensus building.

3. **Physical model** - Based on the lessons learnt from the case, physical models are of great help. It makes all proposals easier to understand and increase villagers’ willingness to participate.
3.4 Case Study

Government/NGO initiated participation process:

Nanjing Xiaoweijie Neighborhood

Context

Xiaoweijie neighborhood is located at Xiaolingwei subdistrict, Xuanwu District, Nanjing. It was built around 1995 when the rural land of this area was redeveloped into urban land. As one of the first rural land redevelopment projects in Nanjing, Xiaoweijie community is composed of landless farmers. Notable features include:

- A large proportion of senior residents: there are 2000+ households living in Xiaoweijie. Among them, more than 1200 are senior residents.
- The overall income level in this community is very low compared with other urban residents——most of the senior residents do not have retirement pension and rely on subsistence allowance from the government.
- The environment of the community has for a long time been poorly maintained with growing contradictions between the residents, the neighborhood committee* and the development and management company.

In 2014, Xuanwu District of Nanjing was appointed as “Community Governance and Service Innovation Experiment Area” (“社区治理与社区服务创新实验区”) by the Ministry of Civil Affairs. Taking Xiaoweijie as a pilot community, Xuanwu district commissioned a third party
NGO—Jiangsu Huayi Social Organization Assessment Centre (江苏华益社会组织评估中心, HYSOAC) to support and help Xiaoweijie’s social and spatial improvement. The center would be expected to expand their services to other communities in Xuanwu.

**Key players and their roles**

**Residents’ committee** – a self-created organization. Led by one of the community leaders (called “Uncle Zhu”), who has been very active and fought with the management company in 2009 for the community to build an underground parking lot. The committee is maintained and managed by the resident representative. There are four branches focusing on environment improvement, neighborhood assistance, entertainment and resident networking. Currently the residents committee is setting up its network of building liaisons, each of whom are responsible for contacting residents in their own building.

**Jiangsu Huayi Social Organization Assessment Centre (HYSOAC)** – supports, fundraises, and provides services and guidance for the community. Since its foundation, HYSOAC has been based in Xiaoweijie community and has helped the neighborhood committee to improve the community in the long term. HYSOAC also takes the responsibility to invite other professionals to help on specific projects.

**Neighborhood committee** – the local branch of the government, has been working closely with the resident committee and HYSOAC. It provides administrative support, applies finance aid from higher government authorities and organizes activities.

**Other professional groups** – include a third party NGO, Zhengrong Foundation, the Tongji University planning department and department of sociology, etc. They have been helping on specific projects in the community, such as the design and reconstruction of a new community garden.

**Objective and why participatory**

Compared with most of the neighborhoods in the city of Nanjing, Xiaoweijie is a community composed mainly of elderly residents, who are generally quite close with their neighbors. The fact that they were all relocated farmers created a strong bond of community. The neighborhood committee and HYSOAC have also been working on improving the living condition and welfare of the elderly people by organizing sports and activities. The want for improved living conditions led to the creation of the resident’s committee. The construction of community garden (starting from 2014) was the first experience in attempting a multiple-group process of participation. Since there had been a lack of building policies and experience about how to construct a community garden, participation appeared to be the only way to gain consensus of the neighbors.

**Participation process and methods**

The participation process of community garden started with a vague idea of building
a community garden in the spare public space of Xiaowenjie. For this reason HYSOAC invited professors and students from Tongji University, Shanghai to help on the design proposal. The expected process of participation includes: (1) interview the residents, host a workshop and understand the needs for the space, (2) the design team works on draft proposal options, (3) work with the residents again and refine the draft design of community garden, (4) construction.

The design team went through the first and second steps, however when came to the draft design step, the residents started to step back—some of the targeted spaces for community garden were public in name, but were actually used by first floor residents for storage and gardening, therefore they would not agree to turn their front yard into a public space. The design team from Shanghai was not initially aware of the pushback because of the long distance. Without an alternative, the community changed the original plan. They began pilot construction in vacant plots not occupied by any nearby residents.

Barriers and how to overcome

For the single project of community garden, the design and management team was not able to achieve the original goal. The main reason was that the communication between the community and the invited design team was not the most effective. As a result, the design team was only able to focus on the physical arrangement of the community garden, overlooking the cooperation mechanism between the residents.

Achievements

Beyond the community garden project and looking at the big picture, HYSOAC has helped the residents and local neighborhood committee in capacity building and self-organization. Because of the resident committee, the neighbors can quickly notice the general condition of the community and seek help from the neighborhood committee.
Conclusion and Lessons

With the idea of “community making”, HYSOAC as a government-initiated NGO, recognized the potential of Xiaoweijie and integrated recourse from outside (professionals from universities, third-party foundation, etc.) to achieve the common goal of the community. The idea of “community making” is not limited to Xiaoweijie, but has come into being in other neighborhoods in Nanjing——Cuizhuyuan is another example. An open atmosphere created by the government could be the underlying contributor. For this reason, it is highly possible that the experience of Xiaoweijie can be replicated in other communities.
3.5 Case Study

Government affiliated organization initiated process:

*Shenzhen Jiaochangwei*

**Context**

Jiaochangwei is a beach village located on the far east side of Shenzhen, on the Dapeng peninsula. Although the surrounding area hasn’t been heavily developed, Jiaochangwei has already faced huge pressure from the local government and developers for two reasons: 1) most of the construction in the village is illegal (due to complicated issues associated with land property rights), so according to law, they must be removed; 2) the ever increasing number of tourists visiting Dapeng beach has brought in money as well as huge potential profit for developers and local government. Because of the increasing tourist demand, most of the villagers have leased their houses to weekend hotel managers who have turned their houses into weekend hotels, co-managing the hotel with the homeowners.

Villagers and hotel managers were understandably very upset and angry when they heard the village might potentially be demolished. A hotel association was subsequently established by the managers and homeowners in order to lobby the government.

Due to the lobby, demolition and rebuilding plans were put on hold, therefore villagers and hotel managers had to seek another path for renovation. It is an unwritten rule in China that if one village can find a “new” model/pilot model that can be replicated in other villages, this new model village would not be demolished.
Under the circumstances, Jiaochangwei’s public participation was initiated in a special yet innovative way.

**Key players and their roles**

In the participatory process, there are five key players:

**Villagers/house owners/hotel managers** – rely on the revenue from beach tourists and their small inns run out of their houses. Profit is their top priority, and the weekend tourists are increasing. Though tenants and landlords do support revitalization, they don’t want their houses to be removed. They will calculate the cost-benefit of revitalization to make sure it within the budget.

**The Hotel Association** – was formed by local business men in order to work together and fight for their own interest. It is the coordinator of all village members and hotel managers. It is quite powerful in lobbying the government.

**Shenzhen Center for Design (SCD)** – is the government affiliated non-profit organization who acts as a coordinator. They are value-neutral and trying to reach out to as many entities as possible.

**Architects** – have a simpler goal: most of the architect teams see it as a great opportunity to practice their new ideas and do something for the public welfare while raising their prestige.

**Government** – in urban renewal cases have to take cost-benefit into consideration: it might be costly to remove the whole village. Another major concern for local governments is pursuing innovation and the desire to launch a “pilot project”. If the pilot project proves to be a success, the government officials might get promoted.

**Objective and why participatory**

- All parties have to participate. There are too many stakeholders and shareholders.
- In order to create a better beach and village environment from the original villages.
- To protest against demolition and to ensure villagers’ own interest.
- To renovate and practice a bottom-up approach rather than top-down.

**Participation process and methods**

Instead of a going forward with a strategy to completely rebuild, decisions were made to conduct a scattered bottom-up renovation.
1. Recruit architects and match with house-owners - In January 2014, the government designated the Shenzhen Center for Design as the official coordinator to recruit architects from the crowd. Via an online platform, the Shenzhen Center for Design successfully recruited 40 architect teams via an open invitation and matched them with 25 house owners after several rounds of on-site matching events. After the matching, each house owner and architect team was asked to submit their initial building renovation plan in order to receive the “matching fee” to cover the construction cost.

2. Co-design and co-renovate - Architects work as volunteers with their client, the house owner, under the supervision of an overarching planning team that provides guidelines and an infrastructure plan. Architects and residents work together to draft the final, detailed redevelopment plan. Throughout the whole process, each house owner is in charge of his or her own land’s renovation.

3. Shift of focus during the process - The coordinating platform is Wechat. In general, people focus on organization issues, matching issues, discuss design and construction, etc. The conversation is quite focused. However, major discussion topics are different from time to time. According to the word analysis, here is the result:

At the beginning phase, matching and design proposals were the most discussed topic. After architects and house owners were matched and created the initial design proposal, the topic shifted towards coordination and on-site construction. From March onwards, some problems emerged and were brought up on the Wechat platform.

In this case of suburban village renewal, public participation began from the government’s tendency to explore pilot communities for urban village renewal and resident’s concerns about preserving the emerging hotel industry along their part of the shore. There are several interesting takeaways, especially regarding incentives:

- Almost every entity has incentive to be involved with other players. There are market incentives.
- Shenzhen Center for Design, having received the proposal from and being under the supervision of the government, has a strong incentive to conduct participation.
- While Shenzhen Center for Design is the official coordinator representing the government side, the hotel association is the unofficial coordinator representing...
the village side. These two entities work well in collaboration, although neither possesses power over the other; the hotel association has market incentives, while the Shenzhen Center for Design has promotional incentives.

- Crowdsourcing played a vital role in this case, and the online platform enabled matching between architects and house-owners.

**Achievements**

- This was one of the first crowdsourcing (architects and house owners matched on a crowdsourcing platform) public participation cases in Shenzhen.
- In this case, the crowd is composed of people with distributed powers of decision making who were the ones contributing to the redevelopment planning project.
- In the Jiaochangwei case, local residents successfully changed demolition into onsite renovation.
- 24 architect teams were involved and matched with another 30 house owners.
- Crowd to crowd sourcing can lead to distributed decision making.

**Barriers and how to overcome**

**Lack of investment** - The first problem, and as a result, two projects were terminated.

> “I was so frustrated that one of our investor broke the contract and we can’t keep on going.”

> “I have two buildings to redesign but now it goes down to one”

**Ambiguous private property boundaries** - The other problem was the grey area between public property and private property. Many construction projects encroached upon public spaces and triggered conflicts.

> “There is some property issue problem with Aloha’s land. Their grape grid is occupying the public space, so that’s why it was removed by the urban management enforcement team”

**Application/implementation of zoning and design guidelines** - There were problems regarding whether individual designs met zoning and design requirements. There were conflicts between construction teams and local urban management officers. One conflict even erupted into a fight, which ended with the arrest of on of the house

“A person from Dalv Xiaoshe was arrested yesterday because they obstructed urban management enforcement team’s forced demolition.”
owner’s. This is a result of a lack of communication between the municipal planning department and district government.

“I hoped there could be better communication between Design center and local government.”

“Didn’t we hand in the construction permissions?”

“This is going to be on today’s TV news.”

Institutional misunderstanding – There might be some misunderstandings between municipal urban planning bureau and district level government. When the construction began, the local government sent urban management teams to stop the construction, giving rise to the conflicts in which some people were arrested.

Conclusion and Lessons

The setting of a beach resort and that even before the renewal proposal, the local tourism industry was already highly developed endows the project with special circumstances and characteristics. However, there are still some important practices that other renewal projects can learn from.

1. Let the decision making power be distributed amongst the crowd, who are the ones contributing to the redevelopment planning project.

2. The government-affiliated NPO, Shenzhen Center for Design is the key player, but a player whose role can also be replicated. It is easier for a NPO as a third party to organize public participation than government itself. Shenzhen Center for Design handled the task, but was still not powerful enough to deal with conflicts.

3. Establish a strong entity to represent the villager’s interest: e.g. the hotel association.

4. The introduction of architect teams breaks away from the more traditional single-designer mode.

5. Crowdsourcing is also a key element in the whole mechanism. Crowdsourcing enables information exchanges between residents, planners, architects and the hotel association. Crowdsourcing also provided distributed solutions for the urban renewal project. If not for crowdsourcing, the Shenzhen Center for Design would not have been able to launch this project.

6. Improve information transparency and increase its accessibility.

7. Community empowerment: people learnt how to self-organize and be more aware of civic rights through Wechat.
3.6 Case Study  Government-led experiment:  
*Civic center placemaking*

Context

Shenzhen Civic Center is the new city center, opened to the public in 2004. Upon its opening up, it received criticism for its inhuman scale. The huge plaza to the south of the city hall was usually empty and the plaza to the north of the city hall, in between the book megastore and city library/concert hall barely attracted people, day or night.

It appeared to be a huge waste and prove quite ironic if the plaza in the civic center attracted no citizens.

Key players and their roles

**Futian Performing Arts Association** – is the authority in charge of street artist auditing, issuing certificates, operating and monitoring their activities.

**Urban Management Bureau** – provides assistance to the performing art association if necessary. Their major role is to keep urban public spaces under control.

**Street Artists** – can enter a open audit in order to obtain the certificate necessary to conduct performances.

**Citizens** – can express their opinions or complaints to Urban Management Bureau.

Participation process and methods

Beginning in March 2015, the Futian Performing Art Association (FPAS) started to recruit artists in three fields: handcraft, visual art and performing art and open to the public. After a three-month application period, FPAS received 262 artist teams’ application. In accordance with the street artist certificate regulation, FPAS organized an audit in order to select the most qualified artists. The audit began in
June 2015 and more than 60 artist teams were selected. The teams draw lots to decide rotations and the booth location (30 in total).

Based on the agreement made between FPAS and the artists, they should not charge a fee for any finished art pieces. Rather, they can only charge a little for the art materials or receive the audience donations.

Since the artists came and established their booth/places, the entire plaza has brimmed with people. During lunch time, weekday evening and weekends, crowds stand listening to bands, violinists, look at artists painting, sit down for portrait paintings, etc. The most popular booths were geared towards children. Children’s options were heavy on DIY, providing them with materials to make their own fan or sculpt a statue from clay. All these artistic experiences are free, only sometimes requiring a materials fee, costing no more than 20 yuan (about 3 USD).

**Achievements**

The benchmark achievement is that this was the first time for Shenzhen to issue certificates to the street artists allowing them to perform in public. Shenzhen is the second city, after Shanghai, to roll out this program.

The second achievement is the success of this urban experiment, exemplified in the sudden appearance of crowds in the previously empty plazas. According to FPAS, if this turns out to be very popular, they will continue to open up more spots for artists, and they will appear in more public places, not only the civic center plaza.

**Barriers and how to overcome**

The project is popular among and supported by both citizens and artists. However, there are some complaints from surrounding residents and company employees about the noise made by performing artists. Strict execution of regulations solved the problem; performing artists should not perform earlier than 6 pm on weekdays, 11 am on weekends, and end before 10 in the evening.

**Conclusion and Lessons**

This is not typical public participation practice. However, it is still worth mentioning to illustrate two takeaways:

1. Community participation is usually limited to a certain group of people and a certain physical space. In the future, as internet is rising, the concept of distance
will be gradually eliminated, and thus, “place” (场所) becomes a more important than “space”. Placemaking will gradually become an important portion in public participation.

2. Many “placemaking” practices do not have specific stock-holders, which is the same case in this placemaking project. It is a great example for future placemaking which might engage more public participation among various stakeholders.
3.7 Case Study  

Mixed process:  

*Beijing Shijia Hutong*

**Context**

Shijia Hutong is one of the oldest and most well-preserved Hutong neighborhoods in Beijing. It used to be the home of many famous artists and writers in Beijing, and the residents have a strong self-identification with the neighborhood. For this reason, the subdistrict government office of the area has been working closely with the residents to improve the quality of life. In 2010, the Prince’s Charities Foundation chose Shijia Hutong as one of its funded programs in the protection of hutong and traditional Chinese architecture. Shijia Hutong No.24 courtyard was proposed to be converted into a community center and museum. In 2011, when the Beijing Institute of Planning started drafting the preservation plan for this community, the planners found that the community had started a self-organized process of historical preservation and environmental improvement. Since then, the planners have joined with the residents to establish a board to work on community projects for the long term. Since its foundation, the board had invited experts, architects, volunteers, and grassroots artists to provide opinions and skills according to the needs of a specific project, such as housing improvement. In 2013, the Shijia Hutong Museum became the first community museum in Beijing, presenting the history of Shijia Hutong and the culture of Hutong life.

**Key players and their roles**

*Local government* – namely the subdistrict government office and neighborhood committee. They helped to set up the participation process since the beginning. They are also responsible for applying for funding from higher government authorities.
Residents – They are mostly residents who have been living in Shijia Hutong for a long time. In the past, the traditional Chinese courtyards in Shijia Hutong were considered decent living units. However, most of them gradually became tenement yards. Therefore, the quality of life of most residents needs to be improved.

Planners – serve as coordinator, project manager and technical professional. The role of the planners from Beijing Planning Institute (under the Beijing Municipal Commission of Urban Planning, the executive agency of Beijing’s planning and construction) is similar to a “community planner” in U.S. They work closely with the residents, the local government and other groups in the participation process. The involved planners act as representatives of the planning institute and a means to encourage the long-term process of community making.

Other professional groups – Other groups in the participation process include professional architects, landscape architects, and NGO experts who are invited to contribute their professional skills for projects such as renovating the built environment.

Participation process and methods

Similar to Xiaowei village neighborhood, multi-group participation in Shijia Hutong is a long-term process that is not limited to a single project. It is based on the confluence of residents’ needs, funding, supports from other social groups, etc. It usually begins with an initiative and funding from upper government authorities or third-party groups. The community will notify the planner through regular connection channels and set up a working board with the help of the planner. If needed, the planners will invite other professionals who work mostly on a volunteer basis. Then the working group will work with the neighborhood committee or residents simultaneously.

For example, in the summer of 2015, the subdistrict office applied for a small amount of funding for courtyard renovation and cleanup. The working group was set up with 6 groups of architects, planners, the neighborhood committee and the material supplier. According to needs and willingness of the residents, 7 courtyards were selected to work with the architects on space cleaning, courtyard furniture design, etc. Each of architect group worked with 1–2 courtyards, carefully investigated the courtyards, interviewed the residents and drafted proposals on upgrading the courtyard space. The working group met every two weeks to update the design process before reporting the draft proposal to the residents and other volunteer professions. After several rounds of refining the proposals, the
proposals were finalized and ready to be implemented. During this time, the residents of the courtyards were responsible for cleaning up the litter based on mutual agreements. Once the consensus was gained, the renovation and installment team came in and worked with the guidance of the designers.

Achievements

Shijia Hutong Museum: as the first of its kind, Shijia Hutong Museum’s collection comes largely from local residents, including furniture from the 50s, employment letters from the 20s, recorded voices that represent the traditional Hutong life, etc. Other than this, Shijia Hutong Museum also acts as “the living room” of the community, hosting most of the community meetings, activities and events.

The Association of Shijia Hutong Preservation – Established in September 2014, the Association pulls its members from the community, universities, NGOs, local government and planning institutes. More than half of the members are local residents. Areas like the property owner authority, housing management authority and government representatives’ also involved. Since its foundation, most of the projects (including the one mentioned above) in Shijia Hutong have been under the supervision of the Association. It has initiated/helped on projects such as setting up the museum, recording oral histories, design and renovation. It has been also a resource pool of professionals and skills for improving the living quality of the neighborhood.

A long-term social connection and culture of consensus building – In October 2015, representatives of the residents signed up for a Community Manifesto for the benefit of Shijia Hutong’s long-term development. A community consensus has been built around preserving the local culture and ways of life. At the same time, neighborhood relationships have significantly improved.

Conclusion and Lessons

The experience of Shijia Hutong is a bottom-up community participation process that is supported by local governments and planners. As a potential mode of participation that can be replicated in historical areas, there are three lesions that we can learn from Shijia Hutong:

Figure 39: Community workshop at Shijia Hutong Museum (Source: Designboom.com)
1. **The importance of neighborhood committee and subdistrict office** – As the most localized government branch at the community level, they are in charge of the day-to-day community work. The success of Shijia Hutong is based on the close collaboration of community officers and the residents. During the participation process, the local government branches provided administrative and financing support.

2. **The mechanism of community planner** – The Beijing Planning Institute is in charge of drafting all of the local plans in Beijing. The planners and the community set up an informal community planner mechanism, albeit accidentally, making the preservation plan into concrete implementation projects.

3. **The spirit of volunteer in community making** – Since the community has a very limited source of funding, most of the involved project members – the residents, planners, designers and professors, joined the team as volunteers. These people share a common goal to build Shijia Hutong into an active, unique community.
3.8 Case Study  Government–initiated NGO–led urban regeneration:  

Yangzhou Wenhuali

Context

In the historic area of central Yangzhou City, which is home to 110,000 residents, the fabric of a Ming and Qing dynasty era city remains. The municipal government has recognized the historical and economic value of the area and has been paying particular attention to its preservation. Yangzhou Municipal Government and GTZ (now GIZ) started working a “process-oriented approach” for the comprehensive preservation of this area and initiated a city regeneration program – “Yangzhou city promotion strategy” in 2005. In the following year, they selected Wenhuali neighbourhood as the pilot plot for this program.

Wenhuali neighbourhood covers an area of 1.5hm2 and was home to 148 households in 2006. Its architectural style is of the late Qing Dynasty and while remaining well-preserved, the inevitable disadvantages of aging housing, the unfavorable sanitation conditions and the lack of infrastructure and public spaces were big concerns for the locals.

Key players and their roles

Yangzhou municipal government was Party A as well as the coordinator of the project. Led by the municipal government, the Ancient Town Office, the Planning Bureau, Culture Bureau and the Real Estate Bureau provided necessary support for related activities. Yangzhou Mingcheng Construction Co., Ltd, a municipal owned company, was the implementation entity representing the municipal government. The consulting group of GTZ constituting both domestic and international experts was responsible for organizing and leading the planning and participation processes. The representatives of Wenhuali Neighborhood Committee helped gather residents, facilitate communication and coordinate related activities.
Objective and why participation

The objective of this project was to: 1) improve the living conditions of the neighborhood, including the improvement of sanitation conditions and infrastructure, the rehabilitation of the aging houses, and the creation of more public space; 2) benefit the local residents by jumpstarting the local economy; 3) preserve the historic value.

Since the living conditions and well-being of the local residents, especially of the low-income group were paid most the attention in the project, a “process-oriented approach (incremental improvement)” that invited locals to express their needs and actively participate in the improvement process was adopted, replacing the normal “project-oriented approach” that often leads to the relocation of the local residents. They aimed to emphasize the process rather than the result and focus on the resident’s needs rather than the official’s or the planner’s vision, thereby making it possible the continued residence of locals in the community and the sharing of not only the physical but also the economic benefits of the project.

Participation process and methods

The international experts applied Community Action Plan (CAP) approach to the project. The planning and participation processes can be divided into three stages: Pre–CAP, CAP Workshop and Post–CAP.

Pre–CAP

The experts and planners first visited local families and related government departments and organizations to build connections and obtain a general picture of the main problems and future potential. Secondly, they designed the topics and form of the workshop and created graphics of the framework to aid discussion. Lastly, a photography contest, “I See Ancient Town”, was organized. The residents were provided disposable cameras and asked to take pictures of scenes and landscapes suited and unsuited to historical style of the neighborhood.

CAP Workshop

Some 30 representatives of the local residents, government departments, the subdistrict office and the neighborhood committee participated in a three-day workshop held in an office not far from the neighborhood.

Day 1: Warm up and consensus building – The objective was to stimulate the residents’ sense of participation and their recognition of the historic value of their homes and to build consensus on existing problems.

   Step 1: Proposed questions such as “if tourists and your friends were to come to our neighborhood, what would you proudly show them?”, “What do you want to pass on to your descendants?” to initiate the discussion on the
value of the neighborhood.

Step 2: Identified together the streets and houses suited and unsuited to the historical style of the neighborhood according to photos of the photography contest.

Step 3: Listed together the existing problems and prioritized them according to their significance.

Step 4: Estimated how much money is needed for improving each problem.

Step 5: Prioritized all the actions according to the level of significance and difficulty (those of greater significance and lower capital demand were supposed to be solved first)

Day 2: Field work and problem locating – The GTZ experts, residents and representatives of the neighbourhood committee and Yangzhou Mingcheng Co., Ltd conducted field trips, visited local families and pinpointed problems on the map.

Day 3: Making the action plan

Step 1: Representatives of three streets of the neighborhood formed three discussion groups. Each group categorized the problems facing their street, made a statistic table, located the problems on a map with stickers of different colors, and chose a reporter to make a presentation.

Step 2: All workshop participants discussed and worked out the detailed action plan, including what needs to be improved, who should be responsible for it, how to improve (measures, money, supporting policies), and when to implement (time table).
Post CAP

This stage was designed for preparing for the implementation stage. The main activities include:

1. Designing the housing renovation guidelines in a simple matrix format.
2. Revising the detailed plan according to residents’ suggestions.
3. Estimating money needed for housing renovation, so that the residents could make decisions accordingly.
4. Choosing and fixing one contact for each street for facilitating the implementation.
5. Holding a report meeting with the vice-mayor in charge of planning and related officials and residents in attendance to further confirm the implementation plan.

Before implementation, a Mini-CAP led by GIZ experts was organized on site. Residents were asked to decide what plants and street furniture needed to be added in public spaces and to implement it by themselves.

Achievements

The project had been basically fully implemented by the end of 2007. Most houses were renovated and the community’s infrastructure and public spaces were much improved. Many of the residents chose to stay and did not leave, and the detailed regulatory plan of the plot was revised according to the willing and suggestions of the residents.

Thanks to the participation process, the residents’ consciousness and enthusiasm for participation increased, and consensus on many neighborhood problems was built, resolving many conflicts.

The affirmation and appreciation of a government-driven, resident-participated, process-oriented model of historic neighborhood regeneration manifest itself in the generalization of the model to other places in Yangzhou.

Barriers and how to overcome

There had been sporadic housing renovation in Wenhuali for two decades. Due to the lack of recognition of the community’s historic value and necessary policy guidance, many historic features and landscape had been ruined. The local residents did not have enough information on the future direction of their neighborhood and were suspicious of the objective, plan and measures of this government-initiated project. Many kept the attitude of wait-and-see. All of above constituted barriers
To participation, in spite of many campaigns and visits that had been paid to local families.

To overcome these barriers, foreign expertise and methods were utilized. A well-known expert on action planning from MIT was invited to work with the GTZ group. His method of CAP helped to arouse the residents’ interest in participation and their sense of involvement in this project. The Mini-CAP practice especially helped to present residents with a vivid picture of the participatory methods of the project and helped build resident’s confidence in the project.

**Conclusion and Lessons**

Unlike urban regeneration projects in other historic areas, which are often aimed at developing the local economy by commercial measures and tourism development, Wenhuali project prioritized the residents’ benefit and emphasized the preservation of the community’s historic value. Thus, demolition and reconstruction were avoided and a participatory and incremental approach was adopted to ensure the residents real needs and their important role as an indispensable component of preserving the local culture. Only when the key decision maker (the municipal government in this case) places value on the benefits to the public and their role in urban development can a project be implemented in a truly participatory way.

The CAP approach is undeniably the highlight of this project. The manner in which residents self-constructed the action plan using their own methods and selected key contacts for facilitating and monitoring the implementation guaranteed the sustainable realization of the participation process.
4
Lessons learned
4.1 Where is the suitable soil for participatory planning in Urban China?

Until now, most of the successful cases of participatory planning (except the special case of Yining) are spatially concentrated in more urbanized cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Guangzhou. The modes of participatory planning are mainly associated with historical preservation, urban renewal, community place-making, and the revitalization of public space. There are several reasons for these facilitating participation with triggers including, but not limited to:

1. **From physical expansion to quality of life** – The bigger, more developed cities are where the physical expansion of urbanization has slowed. Thus, in the planning process, the quality of space and sense of place are more and more emphasized. This reason applies to the cases of Xiaoweijie, Shenzhen Civic Center and Wenhuaili.

2. **A stronger sense of ownership** – The local residents have a strong demand for participating in the decisions related to their own life and interest. This applies to the cases of Shangbu and Nanshi District.

3. **The innovation of governance** – The government and local NGOs are open and exposed to new methods of governance and planning and are therefore willing to change the modes of urban management and redevelopment. This applies to the cases of Dashilar, Xiaoweijie, Shijia Hutong, and Jiaochangwei.

4. **Complicated interest of groups** – For the urban regeneration projects, the ownership and interest of groups are often complicated. The decisions must be made amidst different opinions voiced from multiple groups. This applies to the cases of Shangbu and Dashilar.

5. **Significant invisible value** – When the value of culture and history is fully recognized, participation is used to carefully and delicately apply changes. This applies to the Nanshi district, Jiaochangwei, Dashilar and Shijia Hutong cases.

In most cases, the incidence of participatory planning is not caused by a single reason. However, with the overall transformation of planning in China, we are confident that we will see participation playing a more and more significant role in the planning and placemaking process.

4.2 What are the feasible models of participatory planning in urban China?

While participatory planning does not have to follow a built model, solving some key issues can help community leaders and planners to sort out the main tasks of participatory planning.

For **community building projects**, there is nothing more important than building consensus among the residents, community leaders, government authorities and (if existent) the property management company. From the resident side, one or two active community leaders can be key representatives of the local voice. The platform
of a resident committee can be an effective approach for residents’ self-organization. On the other hand, the subdistrict office and neighborhood committee as the local government authorities can be never bypassed; seeking their recognition and support is crucial to gain legitimacy, administrative and financial support.

For the place-making project, designers, artist and architect can contribute their professional skills. Participation is more of a process to build a platform to match the needs and solicit supports. When approaching street and public space project, it is the urban management authority (“城管”) that has the power to implement or prohibit changes, not the local government.

For urban renewal and redevelopment projects, it is usually managed or controlled by district or municipal governments. For example, government or a government owned company (Beijing) can direct the implementation of a project, or it can simply be led by a developer (Shenzhen) and then get examined and approved by the government. The key is that the government clarifies the responsibility and legal right of each group, so that each group at the table has equal standing.

It is worth noting that the participation process of planning does not always happen as expected. The process can be finalized through many rounds of experiments and tests, and the results are often what were unexpected. However, all of the cases have the advantage of utilizing the public as potential sources of labor, skill, intelligence and social capital.

4.3 What are the limitations of current practices?

Market power is not fully incentivized – According to the above cases, most of the public participation was initiated and led by government entities, as in the Yining case. It is also the government that provides financial support for public participation. However, the government usually does not have a strong enough incentive to carry on with public participation through to the end of the project because of a lack of constraints are requirements imposed on the government.

Market power, on the other hand, is an underutilized power in public participation in China. We can learn from the urban renewal case in Shenzhen that the government can let the market conduct the negotiation and consensus building. In that case, the market did a evenly spread participation and decision making power among shareholders. Government is no longer a player, but a judge/referee. A mature mechanism will encourage the real estate companies to deal directly with local residents or encourage more bottom-up initiatives. The market will solve problems like financing and maximize the utility of each component, etc.

Tiger’s head and snake’s tail – This is also a common problem evidenced in the above cases. Many examples of public participation start with much fanfare, but fizzle out with throughout the extended process, producing little impact and few takeaways. This frequently occurs because of a lack of a clear purpose for the participation. Many
forms of participation initiated by governments are for the sake of participation rather than having a clear goal. Many attempts at participation lack a long-term goal, thereby limiting the initiatives impact. To improve this, a clear purpose and a combination of short-term and long-term goals are the key.

High threshold: experts’ game – It is not unusual to find that many people express their interests but do not become involved in the participation process. Sometimes, it is due to a high threshold. Many participation initiatives require participants to have a thorough understanding of the issues or even have access to some technology. This will impede some people from participating. The consequence is that much of the so-called participation eventually becomes an expert’s’ game. Many cases illustrated above circumvented this setback by organizing events like field trips to deepen participants’ understanding, using physical models to demonstrate spatial models, etc. Even with these attempts to elucidate the public on the issues, the problem of high thresholds still remains.

Incomplete feedback loop – Incomplete feedback loop is another critical problem. For the residents, one of the key factors to holds them back from participation is that they are not sure whether their voices will be heard or adopted. Therefore a feedback loop will be important to let people know how the process goes and whether what they proposed have been taken consideration. Many psychology studies reveal that games attract people partially due to perfectly designed feedback systems. Ideally, so should public participation. Many current public participation initiatives are too superficial and offer limited or no feedback to participants. Without a feedback loop and a virtuous circle, fewer and fewer people will choose to participate. The success of many cases above lay in setting up a positive feedback system between participants and organizers, for example the Shangbu case, the Jiaochangwei case and the Yining case.

Unclearly defined power boundary – Power boundary here specifically refers to each institute/organization/department’s administrative power realm. In many cases of the participation process, the organizing institute is actually leading the participation out of its realm of power, and as a result, the institute can do nothing to solve the problems brought up during the participation. For example, the city government should not initiate a public participation regarding community issues; Participation regarding a regional master plan cannot solve community issues either. The purpose of participation should be limited to respective realms of power.

4.4 What are the keys for participatory planning in the Chinese urban context

A good beginning is half the way to success – Preparation and warm up events are important. Before the core participation process, the project organizer needs to arrange informal meetings with different players and conduct field trips if possible in order to produce a general picture of the project. This also allows an agenda to
be established and mutual trust to emerge before wider public meetings are held. The framework and workplan of the participation process needs to be designed accordingly, and made as detailed as possible. A warm up event inviting all concerned actors to gather together is necessary. It provides a chance to discuss the project objectives and the agenda of the upcoming process with all parties, and it helps build fundamental consensus from the very beginning and creates an encouraging and harmonious atmosphere.

Multi-round reciprocal participation prevents formalism – Effective participation cannot be realized at one time. Several rounds of participation can be observed in many cases. Participation is a reciprocal process and a feedback loop needs to be structured so as to ensure the outputs of the participation process exert an influence on decision. It is the feedback loop that makes participation authentic and sustainable. This can be realized either by a well-designed agenda, which fully takes into account the time and number of rounds necessary for a certain kind of feedback or a platform ensuring sustainable and continuous feedback mechanism.

Approachable and intuitive tools stimulate more participation and facilitate effective communication – Planning is closely associated with people’s daily life, yet it is often done using high-threshold techniques and is expressed in a very sophisticated way, impeding the active participation of the public and often leading to an “expert game”. However, it is the residents who are most familiar their home and they who can provide useful information for planning decisions. The problem is how to guide them to express useful information as well as ideas and how to translate the planner’s draft plans into an understandable language.

There exist many approachable and intuitive tools that can be mobilized. For example, for information collection, the “photography contest” in the Wenhuali case not only helped collect the residents’ opinions on their neighborhood environment, but also helped locate the problematic and valuable sites. Residents’ art works and articles can also serve as other options. At the early stage of public consulting, more innovative tools are under development. The “Litter Cubic” tool of UPDIS is a good example. The tool looks like children’s building blocks, but it effectively translates land use type, FAR etc. into 3D reality. Interesting and intuitive tools also encourages more participation.

Participation in implementation guarantees the final success – Implementation determines whether the participation is a success or a failure. Without the key stakeholders’ involvement in the implementation process, the outputs of participation cannot be fully realized. Participation in implementation legitimizes the project on the base of the public.

An action plan must be done collectively for the sake of the smoothness of implementation. The modes of participation in implementation can be multilevel. For a project like Nanshi District, DIY is a suitable option since private properties were concerned. In such cases, guidelines and technical support are necessary.
The Wenhuali case demonstrates the importance of a responsibility system with resident’s involvement. The selected persons in charge structured not only the monitoring mechanism, but also the platform to which both the upper-level and lower-level can resort in the emergence of problems.

A long-term maintenance and self-governance mechanism makes pattern change

The most successful cases of public participation all occurred or are happening in communities in which the relationship among residents and local officials or NGOs is close and harmonious (e.g. Nanshi District), public interests and collective ideas are locally valued, and even the self-governance mechanism has been fostered (e.g. Dashilar). These characteristics often underlie the choice of these communities to serve as the pilot areas. They ensure the ease of implementing participatory planning projects because of the expectation of smoother communication, fewer conflicts, more trust, and more familiarity with the participatory and collective decision-making process. Once locals have learned the philosophy and methodology of participation, once they have mastered the techniques of making decisions and solving problems collectively, participatory planning will become a familiar practice in which they are willing and capable of taking part. With the community empowerment (社区营造) movement in full swing, such chances to help communities build up such self-governance mechanism cannot be passed up.
5
Outlook: How Should We Start?
5.1 Planners responsibilities: a change of the role

As the pattern of urban planning is shifting to adapt to the new urban era, the role of urban planners has to be redefined as well. In the past era of growth-oriented planning, urban planners were blueprint designers and often the project dominators or even the implementers of government leaders’ will. Nevertheless, stepping into this new era, more small-scale and community-based planning projects are being called for. Learning from the cases above, we can find that, in addition to their role of professional technique supporters, the planners more often serve in the role of midwife and coordinator than producer and dominator. Thanks to their professional skills, the planners help to translate stakeholders’ ideas and requirements into feasible plans and translate the plans back into understandable language. From their neutral position and interdisciplinary and cross-industry knowledge, they can act as principal coordinators and communication facilitators, helping build consensus and consolidate ideas into a workable plan.

With such a change of role, new capabilities and skills are required for a qualified urban planner of the new era, including a mastery of communication and mediating skills. Planners need to reposition and prevent themselves from dominating or manipulating a project, which might be an unconscious habit hard to change. Planners should no longer be the leading actors.

In the meantime, planners have to get a better feel for the ground. In order to better understand locals, for smoother communication and trusting relationships, planners need to hit the streets and familiarize themselves with not only the street-level environment and issues, but also the people. This takes time. And in this sense, a system of community planners can be established. The cities of Nanjing and Shenzhen have already started such initiatives. A community planner system is basically a responsibility system of volunteers. Qualified planners are invited to volunteer to be responsible for one community. He/she needs to build up a long-term connection with the community, get familiar with the locals, keep an eye upon the community development, give public education lessons if possible, and most importantly, be responsible for any planning projects of the community. By building up such steady and close bonds between the planners and the communities, more effective community planning projects of participatory nature can be expected.

5.2 Seize the opportunities of “Web 2.0” and “big data”

The emergence of social media like Weibo (Chinese Twitter), Wechat, etc., enables individuals to self-broadcast and significantly improve the real-time information transfer, which exposes planning projects to the public and raises the awareness of participation, civil rights and the consciousness of citizenship that calls for participatory planning. These online platforms also enable multiple channels for the public voice.
In this information era, the new wave of big data and data visualization presents information as more accessible and understandable to the general public, facilitating an open-model of decision making in which taking public opinions into consideration in the planning process is inevitable.

With more online and offline tools available, it is easier for people to engage in brainstorming of how a place should look like and how such a look or final product should be achieved. The crowd is potentially a powerful source of local knowledge and data. Thinking about Wikipedia, a completely user created information platform, a similar method of platform creation using the eyes, hands and minds of the public has been applied to urban management.

5.3 Embrace the “market power”

As the emphasis of urban planning is gradually shifting to urban renewal, it is rational to think that market forces will soon wield power. Private Public Partnership (PPP) has increased in China in recent years, as such, public participation and participatory planning should also embrace the power of the market. The market usually knows better than the government what is wanted and why participation is necessary. With a mature institutional and legal system, the market could potentially lend greatly to the effectiveness of participatory planning.

Take cases of urban renewal for example: real estate developers are in charge of public participation. According to the urban renewal regulation, the area can be redeveloped only if the developer receives more than a certain percentage of agreement from the residents. Developers, thus, will try their best to build up mutual trust between themselves and the local residents for the win-win situation. However, there are limitations when profit-oriented real estate developers lead public participation. They focus more on stock-holders/shareholders rather than all stakeholders. Therefore, it would be a challenge for institutional designers to enact appropriate regulates and how to incentivize real estate developers to engage more stakeholders.

Market forces can also do a aid in place-making. Business improvement districts, privately owned public spaces, etc. are good approaches for place-making, which can also involve more public participation.

5.4 Value and mobilize NGOs

The rise of social organizations is doubtless a new phenomenon of Chinese cities. They are becoming important actors in the social development of today’s China. As we have learned from the cases, NGOs have already played an indispensable role in local participatory planning practices. Their initiatives and resources need to be further valued and mobilized in the future, and their neutral position and value of public interest can be great advantages for facilitating participation.
There are various types of NGOs with different strengths and resources that can be contributive. First, NGOs that have expertise and rich experience of project management, can be initiators and project leaders in participatory planning projects. They can also act as technical consultants in government-led and bottom-up projects. Their comparatively large scale and position may promise as well potential financial resources.

Local grassroots NGOs are second only to the neighborhood committee itself in understanding the communities. They are also active entities that care about residents’ daily life. The past five years have witnessed a movement of community empowerment in developed Chinese cities, and community–based NGOs have been the key players in this process. Close bonds have been established between these NGOs and local residents, which can be relied on in participatory planning projects. After all, the intrinsic philosophy of participatory planning is the same as those community empowerment projects, the core idea of which is to cope with issues and problems with collective idea and action, relying on a sustainable community self-governance mechanism. Though such mechanisms has yet to be broadly built up in Chinese communities, the experience gained by the grassroots NGOs can be serve as wellsprings for participation.

NGOs can also help advocate the significance of participation and conduct public education in communities. Capacity building on participatory methodologies for local officials and planners may be another undertaking of certain NGOs.

5.5 Adopt the idea of crowdsourcing and start from “placemaking”

Crowdsourcing is originally defined as an online–only method. However, planning’s space–based nature necessitates that crowdsourcing not be only a virtual process. The key characteristic of crowdsourcing is the outsourcing of problems to the crowd/public and the fostering of a problem–solving process within crowd that leads to an agreed upon solution. Crowdsourcing can have a variety of applications in different fields. The Jiaochangwei case exemplifies one of its applications: creating a platform to match architects and house–owners, thereby disseminating the decision making.

Given the rise of crowdsourcing in many areas, planners have also started to apply crowdsourcing in the public sector to facilitate participatory planning. It could be a powerful tool to overcome planner’s limits and enable a better mode of participatory planning that realizes collective–intelligence and non–expert knowledge in the process of urban planning.

Discussion on crowdsourcing’s application in urban planning has yet to be fully explored, and there exist few cases of practices having taken place. The climate of public participation in Chinese urban planning is ripe for an untangling of this concept and its application. A study into crowdsourcing participatory planning in the Chinese context would be especially lucrative for the initial stages of community level participatory planning. As in Jiaochangwei, crowdsourcing is a tool with high potential to embrace urban diversity and democracy.
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Experiences and Lessons

What are the problems to be solved or what is the object of the initiative or what to achieve?

Who are the stakeholders? participated? At what level did they participate?

Why did you choose public participation?

How did you design the process of the project? What is the process like?

What are the participatory tools? Why did you choose these tools?

What are the main barriers? What barriers did you overcome? How did you manage to overcome (some of) them?

How do you think about the different roles of the planners, the public, the community leaders …?

Was the original goal was achieved? What was missing and why?

If given the second chance to do this project, would you still choose to conduct public participation and what can be improved?

Ask for relevant materials and contact

Do you have any documents/maps, photos that you can give to us?

Can we visit the community you planned with?

Do you have any additional comments for us?

Do you have any people to contact for us?
Appendix II:
Participatory Planning Related Sites and Institutions

coUrbanize: List of project information for development proposals and gather online feedback.

Cityzen: Gathers feedback by integrating polling and social media sites.

Community Remarks: Map-based tool for facilitating dialogue and collecting feedback.

Crowdbrite: Organizes comments for online brainstorming sessions and workshops.

EngagementHQ: Provides information and gathers feedback for decision-making.

MetroQuest: Incorporates scenario planning and visualizations for informing the public and collecting feedback.

SeeClickFix: For reporting and responding to neighborhood issues.

Neighborland: Forum that encourages community discussion and action at the neighborhood level.

PublicStuff: Communication system for reporting and resolving community concerns.

MindMixer: Ideation platform for community projects.

NextDoor: Private social network and forum for neighborhoods.

Adopt-a-Hydrant: Allows citizens to help maintain public infrastructure.

CivicInsight: Platform for sharing progress on development of blighted properties.

i-Neighbors: Free community website and discussion forum.

Recovers: Engages the public in disaster preparedness and recovery.

EngagingPlans: Information sharing and feedback forum for productive participation.

Street Bump: Crowdsourcing application to improve public streets.

neighbor.ly: Crowdfunding platform to promote local investment in improvement projects.

TellUs Toolkit: Map-based tools for engagement and decision-making.

Budget Simulator: Tool for educating about budget priorities and collecting feedback.
CrowdHall: Interactive town halls meetings.

Citizinvestor: Crowdfunding and civic engagement platform for local government projects.

Open Town Hall: Online public comment forum for government.

Shareabouts: Flexible tool for gathering public input on a map.

Poll Everywhere: Collects audience responses in real time, live, or via the web.

Tidepools: Collaborative mobile mapping platform for gathering and sharing hyperlocal information.

Community PlanIt: Online game that makes planning playful while also collecting insight on community decisions.

Open311: System for connecting citizens to government for reporting non-emergency issues.

DialogueApp: Promotes dialogue to solve policy challenges with citizen input.

Loomio: Online tool for collaborative decision-making.

PlaceSpeak: Location-based community consultation platform.

Citizen Budget: Involves residents in budgeting.

e-Deliberation: Collaborative platform for large group decision-making.

CrowdGauge: Open-source framework for building educational online games related to public priority setting.

Citizen Space: Manage, publicize, and archive all public feedback activity.

Zilino: Host deliberative online forums and facilitated participatory meetings.

WeJit: Collaborative online decision-making, brainstorming, debating, prioritizing, and more.


Community Almanac: Contribute and collect stories about your community.

GitHub: Connects government employees with the public to collaborate on code, data, and policy.

VividMaps: Engages citizens to map and promote local community assets.

OSCity: Search, visualize, and combine data to gain insight on spatial planning. (EU only.)

Civic Commons: Promoting conversations and connections that have the power to
become informed, productive, collective civic action.

**Crowdmap:** Collaborative mapping.

**Codigital:** Get input on important issues.

**All Our Ideas:** Collect and prioritize ideas through a democratic, transparent, and efficient process.

**Neighborhow:** Create useful how-to guides for the community.

**OurCommonPlace:** A community web-platform for connecting neighbors.

**Front Porch Forum:** A free community forum, helping neighbors connect.

**PrioritySpend:** Prioritization tool based on valuing ideas and possible actions.
Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BDIL</td>
<td>Beijing Dashilar Investment Limited</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>Community Action Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAUPD</td>
<td>China Academy of Urban Planning and Design</td>
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<td>CPC</td>
<td>Communist Party of China</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIY</td>
<td>Do It Yourself</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIZ</td>
<td>Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit</td>
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<td>GTZ</td>
<td>Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit</td>
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<tr>
<td>HYSOAC</td>
<td>Huayi Social Organization Assessment Center</td>
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<td>ISC</td>
<td>Institute for Sustainable Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>PLA</td>
<td>Participatory Learning and Action</td>
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<td>PPP</td>
<td>Public-private Partnership</td>
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<td>PRA</td>
<td>Participatory Rural Appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPDIS</td>
<td>Urban Planning and Design Institute of Shenzhen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Index

Administrative law 行政法
Administrative Permission Law 行政许可法
Big data 大数据
Community Empowerment 社区营造
Crowdsourcing 众包
Detailed regulatory plan 控制性详细规划
Detailed construction plan 修建性详细规划
Environmental Impact Assessment 环境影响评价
Environmental Impact Assessment Act 环境影响评价法
Neighborhood committee 居民委员会
Placemaking 场所营造
Subdistrict office 街道办
Urban and Rural Planning Act 城乡规划法