



Fig. 1 (images left): African traders in Guangzhou (Photo by Qiyao Hu, 2018).

Planning for African Migrants in Guangzhou

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Chinatowns can be found all over the world. Since China opened up again in 1978, the country's cities have begun to see foreign settlements take root, particularly in the last two decades as globalisation really began to take hold. These new settlements are a direct result of globalisation and its new transnational migrations. This paper examines one particular type of settlement: African ethnic enclaves in Guangzhou. It examines how they formed and what problems they face, particularly social-spatial segregation. It also proposes a strategy for dealing with these problems through spatial design and realistic planning for socially minded city governance.

Globalisation and China

Since the beginning of the 20th century, and especially after World War II, global trade (i.e., import and export) has increased as a proportion of GDP.¹ With globalisation in economy and trade, other related factors have begun to globalise as well, such as population, technology, culture, and industry. In China, the reforms of 1978 ended the closed development that characterised the country since its establishment in 1949. China's development benefited from this change in policy. During the last 40 years, the country's economic output, industry, and foreign trade have all grown at an alarming rate.²

During this process, the manufacturing and transport conditions in some regions made the country once again competitive for industry, attracting investment from other countries. Those regions at the forefront of reform were mainly on China's long coastline, such as the world-class urban agglomeration of the Pearl River Delta (PRD). During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), Guangzhou and the colonies of Hong Kong and Macao were important foreign-trade ports, connecting feudal China to the outside world. Due to the PRD's prime

location, after the 1978 reforms, two special economic zones (SEZs) were established at Shenzhen and Zhuhai, further boosting the region's development in manufacturing. It has since become the main frontier in China's connection to the rest of the world. Accounting for about a quarter of China's trade. The PRD is also China's largest export base. The Pearl River Delta was and remains one of the most open areas in China and has been dubbed the factory of the world.

This economic take-off has brought about tremendous changes in China's social life and urban appearance. Urbanisation is also advancing at an alarming rate, which creates unprecedented challenges and opportunities for China's cities. In this, the cities' construction and industrial development require a large amount of labour resources and also attract a lot of business people.

The population within China has also begun to migrate. Rural labourers have poured into regions with rapid urbanisation, thriving industries, and developed commerce. At the same time, due to the arrival of labour and capital, the urbanisation in these places has also been actively promoted, which has

led to a rapid increase in size, density, and development in these cities. In addition to the large internal migration, many transnational migrants come to particular Chinese cities as a result of the country's opening up.

Guangzhou and migration

Globalisation in its earlier form was mainly colonialism. Subsequently, it came to rely on large multinational corporations, dominated by economic powers like the United States and the countries of Europe. But the transformations wrought by globalisation since the beginning of the 21st century have made individuals more and more prominent in the process. With the rise and development of the Internet, globalisation relies more on individual participation.³ There is an important component called low-end globalisation, which refers to the global flow of individuals or small-scale operations from underdeveloped regions. They go to places like China and Southeast Asia to buy affordable products and bring these fruits of globalisation back to the people in their home countries.⁴

When foreigners come to China, big cities with a higher degree of openness are the places they choose to come to. For example, there is a Korea Town in Beijing. Many merchants also come from the Middle East, and it is estimated that Guangzhou has the largest population of Africans in Asia.

The development of good Sino-African relations, especially in trade, has led to more African traders being familiar with China's markets, which attract them by their affordable products (e.g., textiles, shoes, small electronics).⁵ At the same time, Guangzhou is not only a provincial capital, it is a regional capital as well, with an internationally integrated transport hub. China's largest import and export trade fair, the Canton Fair, is held here every year. These are all factors that make this one of the most attractive cities for foreigners in China. As a result, African traders have been coming to Guangzhou to find new opportunities.

African traders in Guangzhou are mainly divided into two types. The first are "long-stay"

for trade or business. Some of these even open shops or companies and have purchased houses in the city.⁶ The other type are "short-stay" and mainly concentrate in Guangzhou around the time of the Canton Fair. These African traders, together with all the links in the chain from production to consumption, mean that products go from factories in Guangzhou to African consumers. Therefore, although their trade is not so large, the process is complicated because of the logistics and the fact that it is ad hoc, nor is there strong financial support – almost all of these traders come to Guangzhou to choose wholesalers and manufacturers by themselves.⁷ This has led to the arrival and residence of a large number of African traders each year, and they often choose to live close together, meaning that African communities have gradually formed in the city.

African enclaves in Guangzhou

According to local media reports, there may be as many as 200,000 Africans living in Guangzhou, legally or illegally. For several reasons, most of them choose to live together in communities like Sanyuanli and Xiaobei Road, which can as a result be called African ethnic enclaves. These enclaves have a number of common characteristics; they also face similar problems and challenges.

When African traders come to Guangzhou to look for accommodation, the major consideration is comprehensive transportation convenience. This convenience includes proximity to market areas, transportation hubs, logistics distribution centres, and other places closely related to business activities. Based on these requirements, such an area can only be found in the old town of Guangzhou. However, central urban areas also have very high land values due to their convenient conditions and good public facilities. Urban regeneration and real estate development results in Africans' concentration in some specific old and undeveloped residential areas that have cheap rent.⁸



Fig. 2 (images left and above): African enclave, Xiaobei Road (Photo by Qiyao Hu, 2018).

In addition, when African traders plan to live in a place for a long time, they will naturally need some support services. These include African restaurants, supermarkets, and food markets. Some shops in these communities sell beef and mutton aimed at Muslim African traders.⁹ The addition of these exotic elements to city life has made these communities characteristically African. These characteristics, in turn, attract other newly arrived African traders.

Researching these communities has shown that they are composed of old residential buildings and villagers' housing. For the former, most of the original owners of the houses have left. The current residents are complex and varied, but the property management is quite inadequate. Meanwhile, villagers' housing communities are not included in urban land use because they are deemed "urban villages." Nowadays, urban villages in large Chinese cities are no longer the residences of the original villagers. With relatively low rent, urban villages have become an informal type of settlement that facilitates large numbers of migrant labourers. Due to maintenance difficulties and a general lack of management, these types of communities have numerous problems in common, like unregulated construction, high density, low living area per person, and lack of safety. The sanitary conditions and maintenance of public spaces are also very poor. Some of the original public spaces have been abandoned, occupied by other uses, or simply transformed into garbage dumps.

When asked about these problems during interviews, community clerks said that the community can only be responsible for some major public sanitation issues. Detailed work, like internal floor cleaning and the maintenance of community facilities, lack funds. Some community clerks have already tried to mobilise residents to raise public funds for these works, but due to the complex composition of the residents' profiles, the result failed to meet their fundraising expectations. Whether African traders or domestic migrants, residents think that even though the environment is not good, it will not affect temporary residence or work too much. Therefore, the poor environment is a phenomenon that characterises these

communities. What lies behind it is the difficulty of social governance, especially the problem of how to promote public participation and community governance.

In addition to the poor physical environment, these communities are also characterised by very few local residents living there. This is why they are called "ethnic enclaves." When African traders come to Guangzhou, local residents choose to actively isolate these outsiders due to stereotypes and misunderstanding. They either do not offer them rental housing or they take the initiative in moving out of the communities themselves.¹⁰ Therefore, ethnic-based residential differentiation inevitably began to appear in Guangzhou. After Africans demonstrated their dissatisfaction with the management of the local government a number of times via protests, the confrontation between the migrant community and local society accumulated day by day. As a consequence, social segregation deepened further. These incidents are widely discussed on Chinese social media networks, where many comments are harshly critical of Africans. A lot of locals accuse them of crimes and call on the authorities to tighten up management of these areas.¹¹

Such segregation will be a destabilising factor for the local society because both parties lack trust and understanding. They often feel unfairly treated or even threatened by the other. With an increase in difficulties, the local community's attention on these African enclaves increases. But there have been some small breakthroughs: African traders are increasingly invited to public activities like community football matches.¹² In the future, communities and local organisations need to play a greater role in promoting the integration of Africans and their enclaves into local social spaces.

Proposals: participate, live, and stay better

Africans exist at the lower end of Guangzhou's social life, and this problem is exacerbated by neglect at the hands of the city. It is impossible to solve these issues unless we look at them in a new light. In view of the

characteristics, problems, and challenges of Guangzhou's African enclaves, and bearing in mind the current patterns of Chinese community governance, the government could start with some actions of spatial regeneration and governance for these communities. It could actively mobilise Africans and other residents to participate in such actions. Such a program could achieve the twin goals of improving migrants' environment and promoting cross-ethnic social integration.

Actions for improving the living environment of residents and promoting the integration of some minorities into the mainstream cannot be separated from a more comprehensive and in-depth participation of different stakeholders. Based on some successful attempts of public participation in the governance of Chinese communities, this author has designed a set of overall process frameworks that allow for more and better participation by African traders in community regeneration. The whole process is divided into four phases: Preparation, Plan-making, Implementation, and Management. The work at each phase is done by the public, professionals (such as architects and urban planners), and the government. The mode of cooperation and implementation will gradually change from a top-down, government-led model to a bottom-up model with public autonomy. In this process, the influence, input, and acquisition of these three parties will also change dynamically. The public has different ways of participating in community regeneration at different phases.

Through the design of this regeneration process, it is hoped that all stakeholders can be included in the process through different types of public participation and in different phases. The integration of African migrants into the Guangzhou's urban community can also be promoted through communication with the government, planners, and other residents throughout this process.

This research focused on the Xiaobei Road community, one of the most typical African enclaves in Guangzhou, as a sample for a spatial regeneration design and as a way of reflecting on the concept of better life. The design of the community regeneration is based on an analysis of the site. There are three main considerations in response to

three main problems: spatial disconnection between different areas; a lack of coherence in the organisation of functions; and the need to create a new identity for the place. The future of Xiaobei Road will be as a pedestrian- and environmentally-friendly, mixed and multicultural community. Therefore, the author reorganised and comprehensively redesigned transportation, public space, and public service facilities. Combined with the aimed improvements in participation outlined above, the design of the community regeneration will require residents to work on it according to their own needs and with the assistance of professionals and the wider community. For example, the renewal of housing and the beautification of the surrounding micro-public spaces are entirely dependent on residents' own ideas, supplemented by architects' suggestions and some financial incentives provided by the community. There are many other similar project proposals, including the transformation and utilisation of collective housing, the functional change of old factories, and the further excavation of public spaces such as school playgrounds. These designs revolve closely around solutions to the areas' specific problems.

Conclusion

An urban development strategy that fully considers the living habits and cultural background of Africans can make the city more friendly to this group. The application of these actions can protect the living space of African traders in Guangzhou, attract more Africans to work and study there, and promote good inter-ethnic, transnational relationships that are mutually beneficial.

If Guangzhou can really pay attention to this group and take practical action, then this city will be a more desirable destination for transnational business people, and transnational ethnic enclaves will no longer be like scars on the face of the city. Former outsiders and their communities will be better integrated into the city in an active healing of the urban social space.

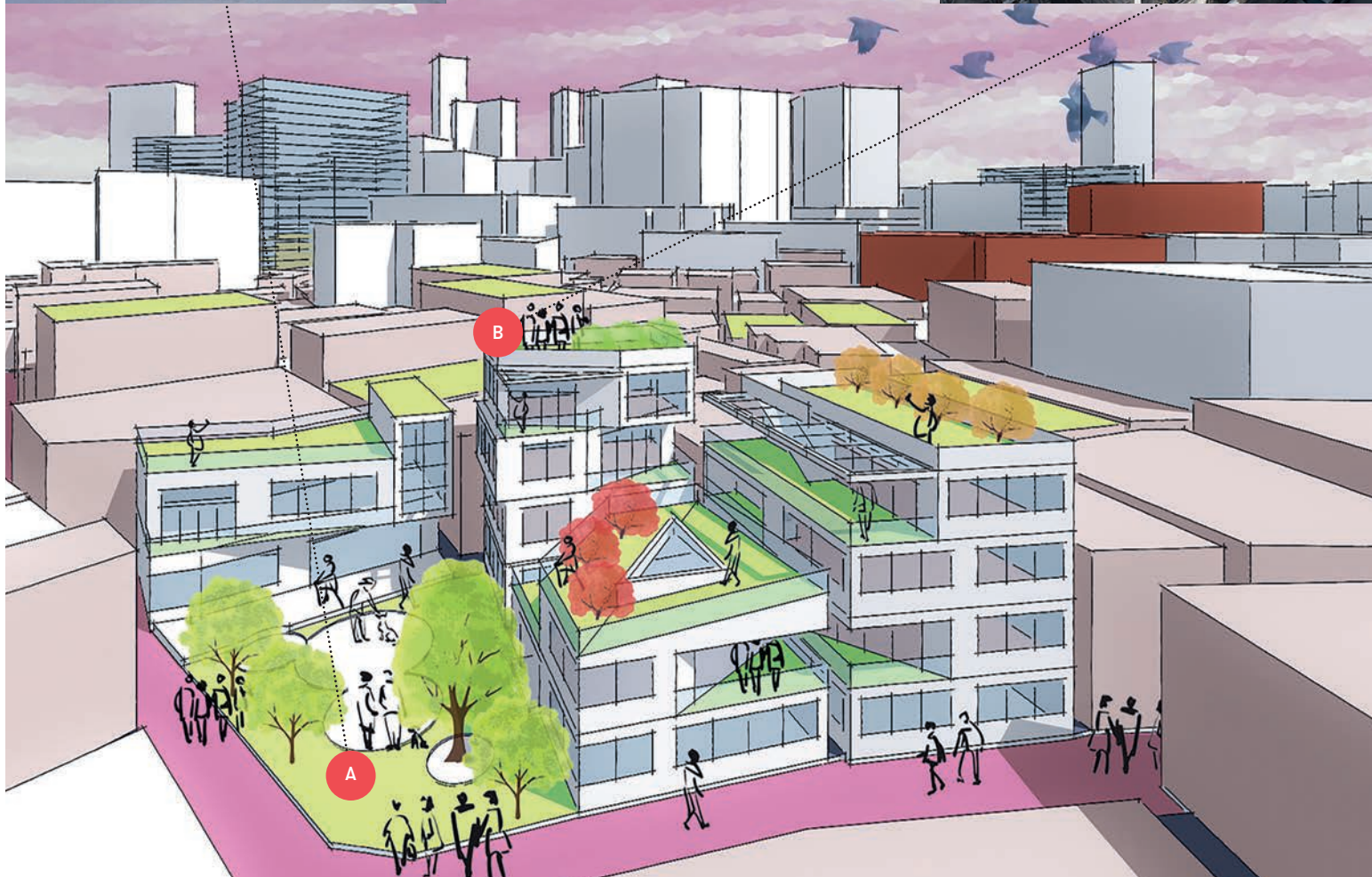
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Fig. 3: Community regeneration project design. (Figure by Qiyao Hu, 2019).

A (left):
Co-create Garden
Residents, community and planners use the corner space of the village to create some small leisure venues.

B (right):
Self-renewal Housing
Residents renew homes with the assistance of architects and community funding subsidies.



Notes

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