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Title:

Emerging Participative Approaches for Urban Regeneration in Chinese Megacities

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Abstract

The rapid development of Chinese megacities in the past decades have been mainly characterized by top-down planning and large-scale urban (re-)development, and by using “place-making” as a tool for city branding. This approach has also been used in other countries and has been constantly criticized for replacing old neighbourhoods. In recent years, alternative development modes and participative approaches in urban regeneration practices have emerged in cities such as Shanghai and Shenzhen. This paper investigates participative urban regeneration cases in Yangpu district, located in Shanghai and the Dalang sub-district in Shenzhen. Both case studies are located in the urban-rural interface, where past industrialization processes have resulted in complex socio-spatial conditions. The primary focus was to analyse the governance aspects in the cases, such as the enabling factors that allow the participative approach to emerge in these projects and their governance model. This paper concludes on the importance of civil society organizations and the incorporation of social objectives in emerging participative regeneration practices.

Introduction

Public participation has become an increasingly used approach to spear urban change with social inclusion and facilitate place-making in countries where the planning system provides space for it (Strydom *et al* 2018; Karacor 2014; Main and Sandoval 2015). A more sustainable urbanization strategy relies on the joint effort of the public, private sectors and the civil society, with the exchanges of resources, shared goals and common interests (Healey 1997; Koppenjan and Klijn 2004; Head and Alford 2015).

The current Chinese planning system has been characterised as a top-down system due to a strong government- dominated ideology that has limited room for the public to participate in the decision-making process of urban (re-)development. This is considered a result of socialist legacy and economic-led development under state entrepreneurialism. Chinese megacities have experienced rapid development in the past three decades, manifested in the construction of new urban areas with top-down planning approaches. Nevertheless, there is a paradigm shift in these cities that urban development is paying more attention to the regeneration of existing urban areas and the urban–rural interface, where the urban composition, land and property ownership are complex (Liu 2017). Regenerating such areas means dealing with wicked problems, such as those rooted in urban decay and due to complex and intertwined ownership, demographic and socio-economic issues. The top-down hierarchical governance approach might encounter deadlock situations in practice when the consensus among stakeholders cannot be reached (Zhai and Ng 2013). In this context, there are emerging participative approaches in urban regeneration practices experimenting with small-scale interventions in the existing built environment, focusing more on the cultivation of social capital and a new economy (Qu *et al.* 2017).

The necessity of adopting participative approaches in urban regeneration in Chinese megacities lies in the context of rapid urbanisation, particularly the associated processes of migration and socio-economic restructuring. Due to the influx of rural-urban migrants, the megacities in China face the challenges of accommodating a large proportion of floating populations (Liang *et al.* 2014). These migrants are comprised of mostly young people trying to find their own ways to settle down in mega cities and are more vulnerable to changes in the built environment compared to local residents. However, this large social group is usually neglected in the planning and (re-)development process because they are not property owners (Huang and Li 2014). The issue of socio-spatial inequality has become increasingly prominent in Chinese megacities, leading to some concern about the risk of social instability, which may have the counter effect on China's rapid economic growth (Knight 2014). Enhancing social inclusion and capacity building in the urban (re-)development process is therefore essential from the perspective of social resilience (Berkes and Ross 2013).

Despite the constraints and limited space in both the planning system and institutional setting, public participation started late in China but has gradually gained attention in urban development (Enserink and Koppenjan 2007). Inspired by the lessons from European cities and international best practices, public participation is considered essential for a better decision-making process towards social inclusion. For example, in the case of the low-carbon community project in Yangzhou, local participants were informed of the benefits that public participation brings. These include opportunities to incorporate professional and public interests, to create an informal public space inside the neighbourhood and to find transdisciplinary solutions by incorporating the needs and interests of diverse stakeholders, as well as the possibility to raise funds for various activities (Tian and Zhu 2015: 19). Verdini

(2015) compared the different forms of public participation in several urban regeneration cases in Nanjing, Suzhou and Shanghai. In the South Nanjing case, local elite (academic scholars and local experts) and residents used different ways, such as petitioning, protesting and campaigning through local media to preserve a few portions of the local historical area. In Shanghai, the Tianzifang project was initiated by a community of artists. Through a community-initiated organization, both the artists and local residents established a partnership and self-financed the rehabilitation of buildings and public facilities. With a self-organized approach, local communities achieved the conservation of the Shikumen neighbourhoods. Both the Nanjing and Shanghai cases have shown the leading role of local elites, in historical preservation or urban rehabilitation, such as academics and artists, who advocated the concerns of local issues and their professional skills or opinions were instrumental.

In these examples, residents from the local community participated in practices of urban regeneration. Theoretically speaking, the root of resident participation comes from the assertion that without the active engagement of local people, neither the state nor the market could solve the issues of disadvantaged communities in urban renewal projects (Wood 2002). However, a participative approach in urban regeneration is context related. Each context has its enabling factors and constraints. This paper analyses such participative urban regeneration practices in two Chinese megacities - Shanghai and Shenzhen. It investigates how these urban regeneration projects were carried out by incorporating different goals, interests, resources and involvement of various stakeholders. Furthermore, it examines and compares these emerging practices using governance parameters. By doing so, the authors try to understand: 1) What enabling factors allowed participative approaches to emerge in these urban regeneration projects? 2) What participative methods have been adopted? 3) To what

extent did these participative urban regeneration projects contribute to inclusive places? The conclusions highlight new roles of planning, design and governance in urban regeneration. It suggests that there is a necessity of shifting urban regeneration approaches from product-oriented redevelopment to process-oriented place-making and re-imaging.

Theoretical perspectives of participative urban regeneration and their relevance to Chinese practices

Perspectives of participative approach in urban regeneration

The debate on participative approach in urban regeneration has been driven from different perspectives. Based on intensive literature studies, the authors summarised three main perspectives.

The first is a governance perspective on the creation of places. Place is meant for people, encouraging them “to linger and return” (Adams and Tiesdell 2013: 15). To make vital places, the governance of place involves not only plural stakeholders but also the attempt to turn such extensive stakeholder engagements into advantages. The network mode of governance recognises that the stakeholders “not only have the right to comment” but also may “bring valuable insight or information to the planning process that may well improve intended outcome” (Adams and Tiesdell 2013: 126-127). David Blunkett (2001) used the term democratic renewal to suggest a transformation of the government to get citizens and associations engaged in the process of governance.

The second perspective emphasizes on community involvement in an area-based urban regeneration. Deakin and Allwinkle (2007) states that sufficiently place-based knowledge can be incorporated into strategic solutions that top-down interventions may be lacking. Community involvement brings resident knowledge that can help find solutions to local

issues, which would otherwise be difficult to resolve from the outside. Residents are more likely to connect and protect their local areas if they are involved in the locality and thus, make the solution more integrated and sustainable. This may in turn encourage communities to develop skills and social capital, which may contribute to the people's own welfare (Tallon 2010: 146-147). In the past decades, the regeneration of disadvantaged neighbourhoods or so-called 'distressed urban areas', has become the focus in urban public policy agendas in European countries (Conway and Konvitz 2000). These urban policies are mainly area-based, with the aim to adapt to the local socio-spatial conditions. By involving local residents to find solutions, these policies have shown a certain degree of comprehensiveness and acknowledge the multidimensional nature of urban regeneration (Parés et al 2012: 241).

The third perspective is the intent of social inclusion through a participative approach to achieve more balanced power relations and to deal with conflicts among interests of stakeholders, especially between the marginalised and the dominant (Bull and Jonges 2006). Narayanan et al (2013) stated that people with different levels of power behave differently. Individuals with low power are more likely to socially withdraw when they are excluded and take less initiatives to connect with potential networks. This indicates an unequal access to resources and rights (United Nations 2016), and the importance of raising the voice of people. In European Union (EU) countries, social inclusion has steadily gained recognition in public policies (Marlier et al. 2009). Furthermore, beyond the perspective of social inclusion, there are studies examining participative approaches through the lens of local direct democracy (Fischer 2006; Fung and Wright 2001; Healey et al. 2008). The importance of participation in planning exercises represents a shift from pure participation to participatory democracy. More space for self-help activities is provided, contributing to citizen empowerment and community development (Stratigee et al. 2018). However, critics suggest

that citizen participation schemes are rarely implemented smoothly due to difficulties in designing and managing participatory processes. People may be “highly sceptical about the worth of investing their time and energy in participatory activities” (Fischer 2006: 22).

The relevance of participative approach in Chinese urban regeneration practices

In China, participative urban regeneration is seen as an approach that originated from Western (in particular EU) countries. The transferability of such participative approaches in the Chinese context still has a knowledge gap. One of the debates is on the role of civil society, which falls into two camps: one that emphasizes on the incipient civil society that can be cultivated in the Chinese context and the other thinks that the concept of civil society is Western and not relevant to China (Verdini 2015). Such debates triggered an increase in studies on the role of civil society, including the local communities, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), local organizations, and leading professionals in the urban regeneration process in the Chinese context (Ming 2011; Wu 2015). One of the most extensively studied term is the so-called community in the Chinese context (Bray 2006; Shieh and Friedmann 2008; Nguyen 2013). The Chinese term for ‘community’(shequ) is designated as “the basic unit of urban social, political and administrative organisation” (Bray 2006:531). As a result of government-led community building projects, the Chinese community represents a hybrid combination of strategies for community governance. On the one hand, it is given a clear institutional identity defined with territory and population; its staffs are professional cadres and can access a range of financial materials and cultural resources to appeal governmental interventions (Bray 2006: 546). On the other hand, much of the day-to-day work of the community depends on “the active participation of numerous unpaid volunteers mobilized among the local population” (Bray 2006: 546).

Another well studied term is NGOs in the Chinese context (Chan 2012). It is worth to note that: Chinese NGOs have grown largely in numbers in the last three decades, mirroring the emerging social challenges caused by political, economic and social changes. Local NGOs have been recognised for their positive social contributions. Although with the desire to encourage participation of social organisations, the state is cautious with the independence of social organisations and the possibility of losing control. As a result, the strict NGO regulation and NGO registration system has left most NGOs unregistered in the system (Hsu and Hasmath 2014). Second, besides NGOs, the role of active citizenship has also been acknowledged in the debate of community involvement (Marinetti 2003). Civic associations, professionals, artists and citizens seem to be a group encountered less political suspicion.

Regarding public participation in Chinese planning and governance, Wu (2015: 72-73) indicated two common misconceptions. The first one refers to the statement that no consultation exists under the ‘authoritarian state’. However, China’s Urban and Rural Planning law (Government of China 2007) does encourage the consultation of public opinions in the planning process (article 26 and 46). The statement above underplays the consultation that happens between work-units and local governments within a more sector-based administrative hierarchy. The second misconception claims that great participation is driven by the marketization process that may eventually lead to democratic politics. According to Wu (2015, pp 72-73), this is only partially true, as competition may turn resource mobility and redistribution towards the advantage of the business interest, making participation more procedural rather than substantial. With the debate of public participation in mind, Wu has seen an increase of using design competitions, which have led to a greater scope of planning participation. Public participation has been treated as a method of place promotion in this case. However, the emphasis is still on growth-dependent planning and

social justice is “not explicitly raised in the planning process of China” (Wu 2015: 205).

These observations bring forth the relevance of the term ‘place-making’ - in relation to ‘place branding’-in the discussion of participatory planning in China.

‘Place-making’ and ‘place branding’ embedded in participative regeneration in China

‘Place-making’ and ‘place branding’ have “a wide range of rationales and effects” and may interact but more often operate at different scales (Evans, 2015: 135). The interest on place surged in the field of urban planning since the 1990s when the planners’ principle preoccupation was with city branding in response to world-wide inter-city competitions (Friedmann 2010). Place-making in that context mainly referred to area-based development in line with place branding and with investment from different levels of authorities (Ashworth et al 2015). In these cases, the emphasis is on the distinctiveness and qualities of the physical environment for city re-imaging (Evans 2015). The rapid urban (re-)development in Chinese cities in the past decades can be seen as part of this phenomenon. Such a place-making model has been controversial, since it can lead to the displacement of old neighbourhoods due to the values of social infrastructure and communities in the local scale being considered as less (Friedmann 2010).

The concept of place-making has developed in the past decades from a term concerned mainly about places as physical end-products towards a participatory process as an empowering tool (Strydom et al. 2018). It is becoming a more suitable route to stimulate active participation and enhance social capital, although affordable applications in practice is still scarce (Alvarez et al. 2017). For example, in Western European countries, raising the voice of people has been institutionalised in renovation projects and has continued as a strong movement in urban restructuring activities (Qu and Hasselaar 2011). In Chinese cities, small-

scale urban regeneration projects focusing on social infrastructure and community spaces are also emerging. In these cases, planning and design are also playing different roles, as the designers mainly facilitating the making of places together with local people throughout the process. This is in line with the argument that place-making is “everyone’s job” as pointed by John Friedmann (2010: 149), which requires more open and collaborative processes among various stakeholders and celebrates everyday life (Schneekloth and Shibley 2000). An important nature of place experienced by people, individually or collectively, is that it is part of the everyday environment (Evans 2015). Urban regeneration in emerging incremental way has also shown interactions of place-making and place branding. As is shown in the two study cases of this paper, urban regeneration helped re-imaging underdeveloped areas during the process of deindustrialization and industrial upgrading.

‘Place-making’ may not comprehensively interpret the emerging participative regeneration practices in China, since the concept itself is broad and has evolved in the past, as mentioned above. Different perceptions on place-making from social, political and physical point of views make this framework controversial. Nevertheless, such wide range of rationales, on the other hand, makes ‘place’ at the centre when addressing conflicts of interests of the stakeholders involved. Through this lens, the projects introduced in this paper offer a fresh look at the participative approaches applied in Chinese urban regeneration practices. As Verdini (2015) states that several elements are essential, such as: the level of achievements in participative practices, the role of leading organisations at the local level, and the relation between the government and non-governmental organizations. This paper will try to interpret the cases from a governance perspective on place-making, instead of a top-down versus bottom-up narrative.

Case studies: Shanghai and Shenzhen

The choice of study cases

Following the theoretical discussion, two in-depth case studies are carried out: the Yangpu district in Shanghai, and the Dalang sub-district in Shenzhen. Chinese cities have undergone a tremendous speed of urbanisation since the economic reform and open-door policy in the late 1970s. As China's economic growth poles, Shanghai and Shenzhen both experienced astonishing urbanisation process in the last 40 years. Their economic growth and drastic urban transformation have largely been driven by various strategic large-scale urban interventions to develop financial centres, retail centres, high-tech enclaves and massive residential districts. Since the 1990s, land reforms and housing reforms resulted in the commodification process of housing, manifested by dramatically increased land prices and commodity prices (A-level office, retail and high-end house estate), which attracted massive investments to these megacities. These dramatic spatial transformations have raised concerns from critics, such as the massive scale of demolishing old neighbourhoods and forced relocation conflicts with the expense of local values. According to Wu et al (2007), a large number of residential relocations in Shanghai in the 1990s was the result of a spatial process driven by urban redevelopment. Similarly, in Shenzhen, urban villages at central locations have been gradually replaced due to large-scale redevelopment projects. Such concern has drawn attention to smaller-scale and community-oriented approaches in urban regeneration practices.

This paper focuses on Shanghai and Shenzhen because both are China's mega cities at the frontline of experimenting participative approaches in urban regeneration, in which various stakeholders are involved and encouraged to co-create small-scale urban projects. For example, Shanghai incorporated concrete guidelines on public participation in the Regulation

of Shanghai Municipality of Urban and Rural Planning (2010). In recent years, the city has been extensively examined for its development in community/*shequ* building (Liu 2006; Nguyen 2013), which was considered important to achieve self-governance for local residents and migrants (both well-educated graduates and migrant workers). Shenzhen is one of the pilot cities in China to experiment with social organisation reform and has encouraged the NGOs to play an important role in stimulating public participation in public affairs. Both in Shanghai and Shenzhen, local communities are particularly encouraged to work with other social and economic organisations in dealing with urban issues. It is especially worth mentioning that in Shanghai, the so-called university-science park-local community collaboration model was first initiated by the former industrially-concentrated Yangpu District to achieve synergy by combining its own resource, finance and creative ideas, which was later introduced to the whole City.

Recently in Shanghai and Shenzhen, the urban (re-)development process has expanded gradually to peripheral districts and have paid attention to places with complex socio-spatial conditions. In such areas, to implement the large-scale urban redevelopment approach, the amount of compensation for relocation can exceed 80-85% of the total cost for urban renewal, which makes it hardly possible for developers. Furthermore, the complex land and property ownership in peripheral districts makes massive urban interventions difficult to implement. Therefore, this paper chose to focus on these two districts located in the urban-rural interface, which used to be peripheral areas but are experiencing socio-economic and spatial transformation towards new sub-centres of the city (fig. 1). The empirical analysis of the two cases will be focusing on the three research questions mentioned in the introduction chapter. It examines emerging participative urban regeneration projects from the governance perspective on place-making, in line with the theoretical analysis.

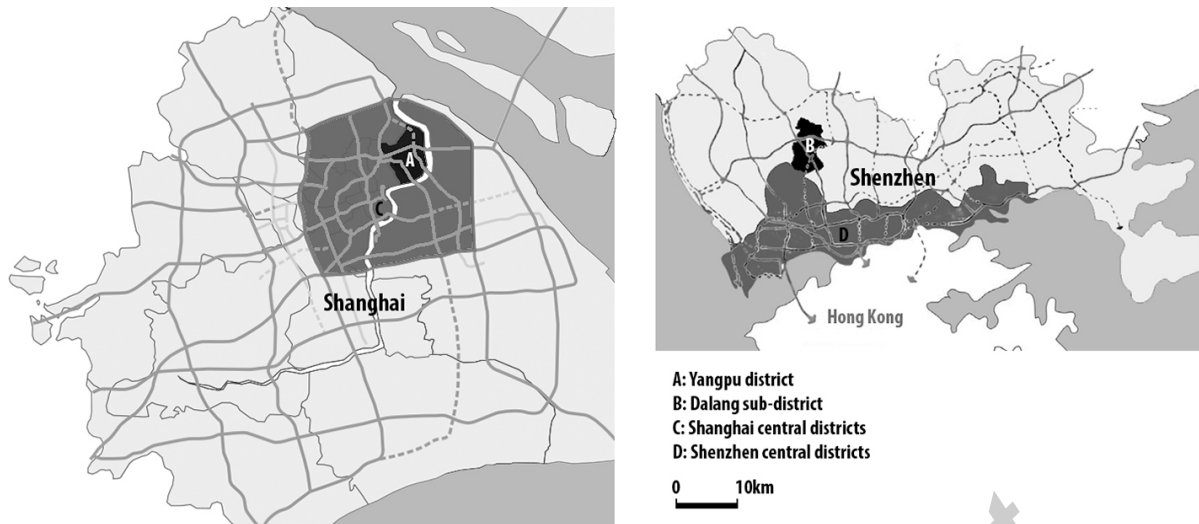


Fig. 1. Locations of Yangpu district and Dalang sub-district

Participative approach in regenerating Yangpu District towards an Urban Innovation District

The Yangpu district is one of the urban districts at the northeast edge of the city, where more than a century ago Shanghai's earliest industries used to cluster there. Until the 1980s, Yangpu was still home to around 2000 local factories. Worker villages started to be constructed nearby since the 1960s to accommodate factory workers. In the 1990s, the Yangpu District had undergone a painful process of industrial restructuring to become a cluster of Sciences, Technology, Research and Development (R&D) and headquarter offices. Around four-fifth of its factories disappeared, leaving many vacant industrial estates behind. The factory managers, while losing manufacturing revenue, attempted to use their property to generate income to pay off the pensions of retired workers (a typical Chinese arrangement for state-owned enterprises before the pension reform). This temporary attempt offered opportunities for small-scale regeneration projects. On the other hand, there is a largest concentration of universities (more than 60% of universities in Shanghai, such as Fudan University and Tongji University), research institutions as well as half of Shanghai's university-based national science parks, which play an increasingly significant role in the

338 economic restructuring of the Yangpu District. The Yangpu District set its goal to be an
339 innovation district in 2003 to best explore its own potentials in talent, technology and
340 innovation. By 2010, the district had become the first national Urban Innovation District in a
341 national program. The Yangpu District Government paid special attention to the talents and
342 young graduates who stayed, lived and worked in Yangpu. To start their career, these people
343 preferred to choose a place adjacent to the university campus and close to the nearby old
344 neighbourhoods where cheap rental accommodations could be found. Lacking maintenance,
345 many of these old neighbourhoods became dilapidated. Redevelopment of such
346 neighbourhoods has been proposed since the 1990s but limited changes were made. Private
347 developers lacked interest due to the complexity in ownership, the potentially high cost and
348 low return after relocation. Besides old neighbourhoods, many industrial properties were left
349 idle after bankruptcy and were in need of new functions, users and investments. The local
350 district government had been anxious to improve the urban environment at the
351 neighbourhood level in Yangpu District, therefore started to encourage smaller-scale urban
352 regeneration from diverse initiators. The local district government strived for a possible
353 synergy between the technological parks, universities and local neighbourhoods in the
354 regeneration process. The policy *mass entrepreneurship and innovation (Da zhong chuang*
355 *ye, wan zhong chuang xin)* was advocated by premier Keqiang Li in 2015. It served as a
356 catalyst in Shanghai to eliminate various restrictions in the registration and permission of
357 entrepreneurship. Professionals, university staffs and graduates as well as local communities
358 have all been considered by Yangpu as a seedbed for innovation. This is also the reason why
359 the so-called ‘micro regeneration’ concept was initiated in Yangpu District. It promoted
360 participation in the regeneration process by local communities and active professionals. In the
361 following text, three regeneration cases in the Yangpu District are introduced, which had

incorporated participative approaches with initiatives from artists, private developers and university-community collaboration.

Artist-initiated Creative Park along the Huangpu River

The transformation of vacant industrial properties in Shanghai dates back to the 1990s as artists transferred these spacious but vacant warehouses and factories along the Suzhou Creek into art and design studios. These experiments have created discussions within the Shanghai Municipality on how to reuse vacant industrial property to facilitate the creative industry in Shanghai. Despite their success in transforming the urban space, a development plan for the creek developed by the Urban Planning Administration Bureau and the involvement of property developers forced the artists to move out eventually (Chen 2007). Mr. Teng Kun-yen, an architect from Taiwan, was among the first who had such an experience. He was invited by the Yangpu District Government to help with the regeneration of vacant factories and warehouses along the Huangpu River. This has led to an inspiring regeneration project of a former warehouse cluster at No. 2200, Yangshupu Road. After the regeneration to become Yangshupu Creative Park, suitable office spaces were created for design studios and companies that still represented the industrial legacy (fig. 2). However, despite the great individual efforts made in the design and investment for transforming the place, Teng was never able to reach an official contract with the estate owner - Shanghai Power Station Auxiliary Factory, even after the renters had moved in. This issue of uncertainty was a direct result in the fact that the design companies who rented the space were unable to register their companies without an official address. Many had to leave in the end. One company was so daunted by the situation that it sued Teng for fraud and asked for compensation. This artist-initiative ended with the initiator in a vulnerable situation and left the project in dismay.



Fig. 2. Creative park at Yangshupu Road after regeneration effort by individual artist. (Image by Yawei Chen.)

Private-initiative regeneration in developing innovation district

The 49-hectare site where the Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) is located is nearby an emerging sub-centre of Yangpu District, adjacent to several universities such as Fudan University and Tongji University. The original site was occupied by a number of small factories, workers' houses, a bus depot and the Jiangwan stadium from the 1930s. The real estate company, Shui On had experiences in adapting historical buildings into urban landmarks with innovative concepts. The company, saw this location as a great potential as an innovative cluster. Their initiative was well received by the Yangpu District Government, who saw the project as a critical measure to help develop the Yangpu District as the "National Urban Innovation District". In 2002, Shui On started the project in a joint venture with a local public company under the Yangpu District Government (Urban Land Institute 2015). Shui On aimed to foster an innovation cluster of knowledge and technology that included universities, incubators, trading institutes, commercial services and legal consultancies, etc. Shui On was keen in establishing a business model to offer assistance (e.g.

in finance and loan, etc.) to start-up companies and small businesses (Urban Land Institute 2015). The local district government had also been keen on this focus. For example, the InnoSpace is a flex space providing a variety of services to small businesses (Urban Land Institute 2015). These InnoSpace tenants can later move to SOHO units (small office, home office) at University Avenue, which accommodates smaller start-up companies. To meet the diverse need of young talents settling down in the area, KIC developed four different areas that provides spaces for working, living, education, and retail functions. To engage local residents, of which most are employees working in KIC, participating in public activities, Shui On reserved small pieces of vacant land as community gardens. For a small rent, local residents can grow their own plants. A landscape architect Dr Liu Yuelai from Tongji University, who advocated the concept of Urban Forest and encouraged inhabitants' joint effort in developing and maintaining community gardens, was actively involved in developing the KIC community garden. As a result, the residents from KIC became the most active volunteers in neighbourhood activities and helped build its community identity.

University-community collaboration in micro-regeneration projects

The 2.75 square kilometre Siping Road Neighbourhood is an ageing neighbourhood with residential buildings constructed between 1950 and the 1980s and with 70% of the residential buildings identified as privatized public houses in workers' villages. Both the buildings and public spaces have deteriorated during the years and need regeneration. Large-scale urban interventions were difficult to implement in a neighbourhood with high density and a large number of households. The university-science park-local community collaboration model advocated by the Yangpu District Government supports neighbourhood innovation and entrepreneurship, provides possible resources and finances for the local community organisation to take initiatives. The Siping Road Street Committee held the idea that smaller-

scale regeneration programs with the help of local communities might meet the local needs better. In this way, the use of the public space could be more effective, which will further enhance the quality of place. This view was increasingly shared by a number of planners and designers from Tongji University, which is located within the neighbourhood. One of the initiators was professor Long Yongqi, Dean of the College of Design and Innovation, who considered that engaging with communities could bring new perspectives and stimulate creativity. Therefore, Long advocated for more collaborations between the university and the local communities. Under the motto of ‘Neighbourhood of Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship towards 2040’ (N-ICE), both the teaching staff and students from Tongji University started to engage in community regeneration through education tasks, design competitions or community activities. The Yangpu District Government saw the potential of the small-scale participative approach in the so-called ‘micro-regeneration’, which transforms ageing and unattractive urban environments with limited costs and joint efforts between different actors. They issued a series of policy documents to encourage collaboration and shared public facilities like libraries and lab equipment and provided financial instruments to facilitate such participative actions.

The possibility to improve neighbourhood public spaces by aligning local communities and professional expertise from nearby universities is in line with the community building concept promoted by the Yangpu District government. Since 2015, one of the attempts was made by hosting the Siping Space Creation Action annually. Students from the College of Design and Innovation selected different neighbourhood spaces for improvement, including telephone booths, green spaces, street corners, and etc. Inhabitants from the neighbourhood were invited to work together with the students and the design results were exhibited in the neighbourhood. In three years, more than 50 viewpoints have been created within the Siping

Road Neighbourhood. This was comprised of a collection of design results like wall confetti, street statue, public couches, and children playgrounds. These actions attracted inhabitants to pay attention to the efforts from university students and to build trust during the process. Following the series of actions, in 2017, a collaboration effort between Tongji University and the Siping Road Street Committee was made to redevelop a former community centre at No. 115 Tieling Road. It was transformed into a centre for research, training as well as an exhibition space that fit local needs in 'SPace' (fig. 3). Presently, there are multiple groups using Space. Tongji University conducts some teaching activities and local residents attend creative skill training programs and jewellery workshops. With the joining of the Glass Museum, the three parties decided to establish The New Centre of Contemporary Jewellery and Design Culture (NoCC), together with two labs focusing on jewellery design, as well as the integration of glass and jewellery design. In the same year, Tongji University and the Massachusetts Institute of technology (MIT), collaborated with the Siping Road Street Committee to establish an urban living lab, Shanghai-MIT Media Lab, in a community waste collection centre to observe local lifestyle changes. Another active participative project is led by a landscape architect Dr Liu Yuelai mentioned in the previous project. Liu worked together with inhabitants from Ansan No. Fourth Village to take care of a 200 square meter neighbourhood green area by training inhabitants with knowledge of plants and gardening, so that the community could self-maintain the garden in the long term. These actions had a direct impact in the improvement of the neighbourhood environment along with getting more inhabitants involved in neighbourhood issues and helped create a sense of belonging for the inhabitants.



Fig. 3. Microregeneration projects as the result of university–community collaboration: (a) Shanghai MIT Media Lab; and (b) Siping Space. (Images by Yawei Chen.)

Capacity building and community development in Dalang’s participative urban regeneration

The Dalang sub-district (a sub-division of urban area in Longhua New District) was developed along with a spontaneous rural industrialization process at the border of the special economic zone (SEZ) of Shenzhen. It has only 8,600 registered local population. However, the actual total population was 520,000 people, and more than 90% are young migrant workers working for manufacturing industries. This has been a prominent issue in regards to the mismatch between the numbers of the local and migrant population and has posed great challenges to the local governance. The past three decades of spontaneous development has resulted in a spatially fragmented built environment in Dalang, where factories and urban villages were densely built without well-planned infrastructure and public spaces. This is a common spatial pattern in most of the industrial areas of Shenzhen which lacked spatial qualities in the living environment. Currently, Shenzhen is experiencing industrial upgrading by transforming itself from the world’s factory into a world city. Large-scale urban regeneration projects are being implemented mainly in former industrial areas in central districts of Shenzhen (such as the Sungang-Qingshuihe area in Luohu district), turning these areas into new places of global functions. Due to its peripheral location, Dalang has not become a place where urban redevelopment is implemented as intensively as in the central urban area. The local government is trying alternative ways to improve liveability and

enhance social construction. A more participative and inclusive urban regeneration approach has been adopted in practices consisting of co-creating small-scale public spaces in urban villages and industrial parks. By re-using wasted space and materials, interesting places were formed where social facilities, informal education and recreational functions could be provided by and for people. These projects offered opportunities for the empowerment of migrant workers as well as a mechanism of self-management. The following examples of place-making in Dalang could represent a variety of emerging participatory approaches for urban regeneration in Shenzhen.

The Youth Dream Centre cultivating young talents

As mentioned above, Dalang has a large proportion of young migrant workers in its population. These young migrant workers mostly do not have a university degree, and some did not complete high school. However, the young migrant workers have a very strong motivation for learning and personal development. In response to such a high demand, some training schools for professional skills emerged, offering evening courses to migrant workers. In addition, the Youth Dream Centre is located in an industrial park in Dalang that offers various types of informal learning activities, especially to young migrant workers. It is a public space jointly launched in 2013 by the Dalang sub-district government, Yifenghua Property Co., Ltd., China Development Institute (CDI, a think tank based in Shenzhen), and a non-profit organisation (NPO) called Teach for China (TFC). The centre is on the ground floor of Buildings no. 16-18 in the Yifenghua Industrial Park. The place was designed by Professor Zhu Tao from the University of Hong Kong, using the concept of ‘civic architecture’, which includes a library, service stations, spaces for social interaction, training, and performance, and etc. It can accommodate around 1,000 people participating in a variety of activities, such as courses, forums, workshops, conferences, counselling, exhibitions, large-scale evening parties, and etc. It provides a multi-functional platform for young migrant

workers to developing themselves, with better access to informal learning and practices of public affairs.

In order to better coordinate the operation of the Youth Dream Centre, the local government, enterprises, and the NPO (TFC) jointly launched a Public Welfare Culture Centre called KIDO (Kindly Intended Deed Organisation). This was established to run the charity alliance, integrate public affair resources, incubate local social organizations, and to conduct training and workshops at the same time. The aim is to enable young migrant workers to embark on a new path of urbanisation: getting integrated into the city, developing capacity, contributing to society, and eventually realizing their dreams. At present, the members of the Youth Dream Centre Charity Alliance include more than 60 education and academic institutions and non-profit organizations from China or abroad, including universities like Peking University and the University of Hong Kong. An interesting and meaningful exchange between migrant workers and visiting scholars or students happened during field studies of these institutes, which opened a window for the young migrant workers to the outside world.

The involvement of migrant workers in the development of the centre is not much in the design and construction of the space, but mainly in the self-management of the place. Social integration of young migrant workers has become a common governance issue in the process of urbanization in Shenzhen. Especially in Dalang, these young migrant workers are still facing problems such as long working hours, low income, and having an unstable job. Moreover, public spaces and cultural facilities in Dalang are seriously inadequate, resulting in a monotonous and boring daily lifestyle of young migrant workers that only involves ‘the production line – canteen – dormitory’, which has led to psychological depression and social problems. However, within this social group, there are many of them who have dreams, eager

561 to be recognized by and care for the society. They have a strong need to participate in society,
562 develop and enhance their own skills. They hope to play a role as a citizen, improve their
563 current life situation and realize their dreams through hard work and creativity. The local
564 government is also aware that migrant workers have contributed greatly to the development
565 of Shenzhen, and that the future of young migrant workers determine the future of the city.
566 Therefore, this special group of young migrant workers has always been the target group in
567 Dalang's experiments of promoting social integration, innovating grassroots governance, and
568 building social construction. Within such a context, the Youth Dream Centre offers
569 opportunities to migrant workers to participate in public affair activities. For example, the
570 above-mentioned non-profit organization KIDO is dedicated to promoting the growth of
571 young migrant workers, cultivating young talents who are self-reliant, honest, innovative,
572 empathetic and socially responsible in practices of social innovation and public affairs.
573 Young migrant workers are encouraged to come to the Youth Dream Centre for social
574 interaction, exploring ideas and participate in public affairs. The leaders of KIDO themselves
575 were talented migrant workers, acting as role models of participation and self-development.
576 In the past three years, many public events targeting young migrant workers have been
577 organized inside the Youth Dream Centre and in other places of Dalang, led by KIDO and
578 volunteers of young migrant workers themselves (Fig. 4).



(a)



(b)

Fig. 4. Social spaces for young migrant workers in the Youth Dream Center: (a) outdoor stage for events; and (b) outdoor space for sports and lunch break activities. (Images by Lei Qu.)

Community building in Shi'ao village

Shi'ao is an urban village located in the north part of Dalang. It has around 500 local residents and an additional 20,000 as a floating population. Managing such diverse social groups with insufficient public facilities and services has been challenging. How to improve community governance and change the status quo? The Dalang sub-district government has been focusing on innovating the local governance model and launched a plan for community development. This is implemented through infrastructure reconstruction, environmental remediation and culture enhancement, exploring a new model of self-management, and allowing residents to be the main force of community development. It has resulted in a few interesting place-making practices, re-using leftover spaces and waste materials, and have offered new public spaces for people to participate, interact and innovate (Fig. 5). For example, a piece of empty land used to be a garbage dump in Shi'ao village is now turned into a community cloth art workshop, thanks to the launch of a project called 'Bu Yi Bang'. Considering the fact that the village is adjacent to the fashion industry park of Dalang, many residents in the Shi'ao village are employees of the clothing industry. Together with the sub-district government, the NPO called Shenzhen Public Welfare Development Centre brought

together public interests and resources within the community, and initiated the ‘Bu Yi Bang’ project. Attracted by traditional weaving, cloth dyeing, and modern sewing techniques, community residents were motivated to participate in the workshops. A fabric culture village is taking shape, and the environmental protection concept of waste utilization is promoted.



Fig. 5. Shi'ao phenomenon of participative urban regeneration in the new trend of community development: (a) Tire Amusement Park; and (b) reusing the production waste of the enzyme workshop for gardening. (Images courtesy of Xiaoxiao Mo.)

Another example is an unfinished building enclosed by broken wooden boards, which is now turned into the first Tire Amusement Park for children. This idea was initiated from the community, since there are more and more children in the neighbourhood but has an insufficient number of playgrounds. In this tire park, community residents carry out activities like tire painting, tire climbing, and etc. It became a place for children to grow and interact with parents and other children, continued to enhance the sense of community, and strengthened social cohesion. After the park was established, the community selected the ‘rotating director’ and ‘rotation management team’ through open recruitment and election campaigns, to form a mechanism for residents to participate, jointly build, share and manage together.

A third example is an abandoned construction site that was transformed into an enzyme production site, created by a non-profit organization and community residents. Under the

guidance of the NGO called Green Code Environmental Protection Organization, residents are consciously involved in the action of waste reduction. They collect organic wastes like vegetable leaves and fruit peels, hand it over to the enzyme workshop to make environmentally friendly enzymes, and eventually receive the enzymes as kitchen degreaser for free. In the past two years, experiments in Shi'ao has drawn attention from society. Scholars think that it represents a new trend of community development in Shenzhen, and even called it The Shi'ao Phenomenon.

Findings

The experiences of the participative urban regeneration projects introduced above include examples of both failure and success. They contribute to a relatively comprehensive understanding of these participative approaches, especially the enabling factors behind the emergence of such practices within specific localities. Both Yangpu and Dalang are located in the urban-rural interface of a Chinese megacity. Yangpu is close to the border of the central urban area while Dalang is part of a peripheral district. The two places used to accommodate industrial development and later experienced industrial upgrading and loss of traditional manufacturing sector and jobs. The difference is that the development of Yangpu dates back to the early 20th century and its industrial upgrading process started already in the 1990s. The process had resulted in numerous obsolete industrial property and job loss in Yangpu; whereas Dalang only started its rural industrialization since 1980s and has just entered a new phase of industrial upgrading. Although at different stages of urban transformation, both Yangpu and Dalang faced similar issues of implementing large-scale urban regeneration. The districts also came short in investments and interests from property developers, due to the complex land and property ownership as the legacy of its past industrial development. Meanwhile, both districts are relatively less expensive urban areas

where young people congregate and look for opportunities. In the Yangpu District, a large number of university graduates stayed after graduation searching for jobs, due to the ageing neighbourhoods that offer them affordable accommodations. Various industrial properties in the district were difficult to attract investors for regeneration but at the same time they offered cheap spaces for start-ups from the creative industry. Dalang has a substantially large population of young migrants working for the manufacturing factories. The migrants also live in simple accommodations in urban villages without well-planned infrastructure and community facilities. Based on the description of the practices, the authors compared the above-mentioned projects in Yangpu and Dalang with the three research questions. Results of the comparison could be summarized (Table 1). Findings focus on enabling factors, participative methods and how these practices contributed to the making of inclusive places.

Enabling factors

1) Enabling institutional environments and active support from the local government.

It is important to highlight that there are clear signs of institutional arrangements in the two cities that provide both spaces and instruments to allow unconventional approaches to emerge in urban redevelopment processes. The Yangpu District government is one of the first public sectors that carries out the national policy *mass entrepreneurship and innovation* in practice. These policies encourage various initiatives from societal actors to develop innovative spaces and facilitate entrepreneurship, among which, in combination with the regeneration effort to redevelop spaces within industrial properties or neighbourhood spaces. Restrictive regulations that led to the failure in the Artist-initiated Creative Park has been dismantled. The university-science park-local community collaboration model advocated by the Yangpu District Government encouraged the private sector, community and individual efforts to create innovative spaces. These initiatives are further facilitated with subsidies, seed funds for start-ups, and permission in transforming certain urban functions at the neighbourhood

level. The process of community building allows different societal organisations to share certain responsibilities in the community, encouraging a bigger role from *Shequ*, volunteers, and urban professional activists. Whereas in the case of Dalang, the sub-district government also provided an enabling environment for participative regeneration, where social construction is the main objective. It stimulated the emergence of small-scale projects as a result of self-organization in urban villages and the leading roles played by NGOs in public affairs. In this sense, such small-scale urban regeneration practices in both cities could be seen as experiments contributing to specific urban agendas. These include skill training and creating community space in Yangpu, as well as capacity building and community development in Dalang. To support these activities, there are policies to stimulate initiatives and seed funds to attract private investors and social organizations. In both cases, the facilitative role from the local government paved the way for participative urban regeneration projects, and encouraged civil society organizations, real estate developers and professionals to take initiatives.

2) A strong involvement from civil society organizations

As mentioned in the theory chapter, civil society is not a concept born in China. The Shenzhen case shows that a variety of civil society organizations started to emerge and contribute actively to public affair and community development. Many of the introduced participative urban regeneration practices in Dalang were led by such organizations, such as social enterprises, charitable foundations, NPOs, NGOs and volunteer groups. Although these organizations are still in the early stages of growth, they could already play an essential role in facilitating the sustainable socio-spatial transformation of the city. In the case of Yangpu, the community/ *Shequ* in Yangpu played an intermediate role between local government and residents. *Shequ* deals with residents' complain and worries with an informal mechanism

(Shieh and Friedmann 2008). In the case of the micro-regeneration projects around Tongji University campus, *Shequ* went one step further to facilitate entrepreneurship within the community. They obtained certain financial means and policy advantages to attract social enterprises and active professionals to participate in neighbourhood regeneration. The lesson learned from the Creative Industry Park in Shanghai also shows that without a strong involvement of civil society organizations, individual participants like professionals have less power in the decision-making process. If there is interest from the market forces represented by property owners, the powerful market players could terminate a real participative process in order to pursue commercial interests.

3) Voluntary individuals

Many of the above-mentioned urban regeneration projects involve a target group, for whom new places are made. These target groups include artists, young talents, local residents, young migrant workers, and so on. The relatively large number of people involved in these groups made it hard for them to participate in the urban regeneration process as individuals. However, these examples showed that the voluntary individuals are of great importance to the success of a regeneration project. The eagerness to learn, to interact with others, or to start their own businesses, are all strong interests from people, which could be incorporated in place-making. What is also worth mentioning is the group of urban professionals that have played an active role in the regeneration process. They have the expertise and creativity to transform urban spaces and the ability to involve local inhabitants to work with them. Some have pushed for a social movement and have actively engaged communities in the micro-regeneration effort. The try-outs were triggers for the local government to recognise the creativity within the communities. Following up was the policy documents issued from local

government to incorporate community supporting mechanisms and encourage such deeds with financial support.

Participative methods

The planning system in China is still known as a top-down system, in which participative urban regeneration is not yet institutionalized. The enabling factors of the emerging participative approaches explained above indicate that the participative methods being adopted differ case by case. These could be seen as experimental projects exploring various possibilities in practice: who takes initiative, who participates, and with which governance model? In comparing the examples in Yangpu and Dalang, it is clear that participative regeneration projects were initiated from diverse actors. Notably, there is always some form of participation by the local government, even in small-scale projects such as the Youth Dream Centre and the Bu Yi Bang project in Shi'ao village. In these projects, the target groups who were the end users, participated mainly in the daily operation and maintenance of the place. Nevertheless, a real collaboration among stakeholders is prominent in all projects that have achieved the original (social) objectives. The termination of the participative approach happened in the Creative Industry Park in Shanghai, has shown what could have happened otherwise.

Place-making

It is seen in the case studies that social objectives such as capacity building and community development could be combined with urban regeneration projects. In this way, place-making in urban regeneration is supported by new participative governance models, in which volunteer groups, NGOs and social enterprises could contribute to achieving these social objectives while new public spaces are created and maintained. Thus, the social benefits

associated with certain target groups and inclusiveness of the space (whether is it open to the public) give profound meaning to the place. In this sense, a variety of practices could be justified as place-making practices, from the informally formulated temporary tire-amusement park to the professionally designed and constructed SSpace, Shanghai-MIT Media Lab or community gardens.

Conclusions and discussion

Due to the nature of existing urban areas that involve complex networks of stakeholders, participative approaches are increasingly adopted in urban regeneration practices, which refers to the role of planning in facilitating such practices. This paper focuses on the governance aspect when analysing the emerging participative regeneration practices. It tries to understand the enabling factors behind, the participative approaches that have been adopted, and place-making as the outcome of the process. These regeneration projects introduced in this paper strategically combined the effort of cities re-imaging former industrial districts with social objectives at the neighbourhood scale, like capacity building and community development. In the view of John Friedmann (2010), such a people-centred approach can ensure that old places could be taken back by the neighbourhood by providing public spaces for all. Although this paper focuses on two Chinese megacities, it is also meaningful for other cities world widely. It emphasizes on the necessity of understanding the enabling environment for emerging good practices of participative regeneration, even in so called “top-down” planning context. Besides, putting ‘place’ at the centre of the discussion can help to understand more clearly the interests of various stakeholders and the outcome of the participatory process.

Findings from the in-depth case studies and comparing them showed the importance of active support from the local government. The results indicate the necessity of institutional innovation in urban planning and governance in China, making room for participation from diverse societal actors and informal or temporary use of spaces by various stakeholders in urban regeneration practices. Currently in Chinese megacities like Shanghai and Shenzhen, such practices are emerging in areas with fewer possibilities of large-scale urban redevelopment, or places with complex land and property ownership. However, these practices have not yet been mainstreamed or institutionalized. Therefore, the local government still needs to play a pivotal role in promoting socially oriented participative approaches in urban regeneration, as it involves new ways of planning, design and implementation. The policy instruments from the Yangpu District Government that has facilitated the micro-regeneration program has shown some signs of effect. From the emerging cases studied in this paper, there is not enough evidence to conclude what should be institutionalized in the planning system. Nevertheless, these cases offered diverse inspiration on what could be achieved socially and spatially, once small-scale participative practices are facilitated in the planning system.

Within these cases, mutual support and benefits among universities, developers, investors, NGOs, designers, users and the community as a whole show an entrepreneurial characteristic in the projects. This can also be seen as new forms of social innovation in solving wicked problems at hand. Compared to the market-led, large-scale profit-oriented urban regeneration projects that are still considered as mainstream in practice, the most prominent innovation of such small-scale participative projects lies in their approaches of incorporating social objectives within the urban regeneration process. As indicated in the theory chapter, such a people and process-oriented place-making concept can contribute to the social resilience in

transitional neighbourhoods in Chinese megacities. This requires a change in mindset for everyone involved in urban regeneration processes, from focusing on market-led city-branding to socio-cultural resilience with a strong involvement of civil society organizations. Lessons learned from the case studies showed that without the leading role of civil society organizations, market forces can override and terminate the participative approach, right when profit-seeking becomes possible.

Last but not least, the motivation of individual volunteers to participate and collaborate are of great importance as well, especially those who are seen as part of the target groups or end users. In Chinese megacities under the context of rapid urbanization, there are various types of social groups whose voices are hardly heard in the massive urban redevelopment process, such as the migrants, the young talents, the elderly, and etc. The case studies in this paper showed active participation of individuals in urban regeneration practices, from the professionals who intend to take a lead to the young migrant workers who are eager to contribute. In these cases, being actively involved in regeneration process reflects the interests of these social groups, which were considered by the leading parties when setting the scene for place-making in urban regeneration. Voices of these target groups and end users are heard and represented by civil society organizations and professionals in the decision-making and design process. Researchers of participatory planning may question whether this is the highest level of participation, in terms of power relations among stakeholders in the decision-making process. However, it is not the purpose of this paper to evaluate the levels of participation in these emerging practices in China. Instead, the focus is on how such practices emerged in a well-known top-down planning system and what inspirations did they bring to place-making theory and practice, which are more relevant to the current debate on urban regeneration in Chinese megacities.

This paper introduced emerging participative urban regeneration practices in two Chinese megacities, which are seen as a new phenomenon of urban planning and development. It offers a very basic description and comparison among the chosen cases, as well as a preliminary understanding of the enabling factors behind. Due to the nature of these projects as ‘experimental’, the authors find it too early to conclude them as results of structural changes in urban planning and governance, or socio-economic policies. Nevertheless, according to the contextual analysis of this paper, some ongoing shifts of focus in the policy level did provide an enabling environment for such participatory approaches. For example, the newly implemented planning policies of Chinese megacities have shown increasing emphasis on improving existing built-up areas, instead of only focusing on developing new towns/districts. Within such a policy framework, cities like Shanghai experiencing industrial upgrading are making more efforts to promote cultural and creative industries in combination with urban regeneration; while others like Shenzhen facing tremendous social challenges brought by rural-urban migrants started to facilitate social upgrading and community development in the neighbourhood level. To fully explain policy changes as enabling factors for the emergence of participative urban regeneration practices in China, more in-depth case studies and causality analysis is needed for future research.

Data Availability Statement

All data used during the study appear in the submitted article.

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Table 1: comparison of the participative urban regeneration approaches in Yangpu and Dalang

Aspects of Comparison		Yangpu (Shanghai)			Dalang (Shenzhen)			
		Yangshupu Creative Park	Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC)	Siping Road Neighborhood	Youth Dream Centre	Shi'ao village		
Actors taking lead	Active support from the local government		X	X	X	X		
	Strong involvement of civil society organizations			X	X	X	X	X
	Private developers take the lead		X					
	Professionals actively facilitate	X	X	X	X			
Participation model	Initiator	Enthusiastic individual professional	Private developer	University and community organization	Local government	Local government & NPO	Local community	NGO
	Participants	Property owner	Local district government, local community, professional activist	Community residents	NGOs, research institutes, Industrial Park	Local community	Community residents	Community residents
Place-making	Target group	Design studios and design companies	Innovative enterprises	Local residents	Young migrant workers in Dalang	House wives in Shi'ao	Children in Shi'ao	Residents in Shi'ao
	Inclusiveness of the place	Private space	Private-owned public space	Open public space, innovation centre and community workshop	Open public space for a target group	Community workshop space for a target group	Community recreational space for a target group	Community workshop space for all