Dan Narita

Emancipatory Urbanization

On the Independence of Mountain Territories
in relation to
Mega – City clusters:
A Transect Approach

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by

Dan Narita.

Biography:

Dan Narita is an architect, urbanist and researcher based in Hong Kong. He holds a Ph.D. in Urbanism and Regional Planning from the Università Iuav di Venezia and conducted research under Prof. Paola Vigano at the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne. He joined Prof. Vigano's Research group focusing on Urban Design, Territories & the Horizontal Metropolis and was co-supervised by Prof. David Grahame Shane at Columbia University, New York. With an interest in Research by Design, he balances academic and practice-based knowledge by collaboration with international architecture & urban design practices from Beijing, Hong Kong, London, Paris and Vienna since the past 18 years. Prior to specializing in sustainable urbanization in the Asian context and in particular China, he has completed a MSc. in Advanced Environmental and Energy Studies at the Centre for Alternative Technology – Graduate School of the Environment in the UK, and a Diploma in Architecture at the Architectural Association in London. He is a lifetime member of The International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP). As part of his current research commitments, he studies the potential of rural territories as cities and their relationship to mega-city regions. His research interest in urbanism include; nature-based urban restoration, emerging concepts of urbanity, ecological regeneration & resilience, multi-functional landscapes and sustainable development.

Preface

Discussing the development of remote mountain communities requires interdisciplinary thinking and acknowledges the interrelatedness of different fields of knowledge. Coming from the perspective of an architect and urbanist, in this book a project-based and propositional approach was chosen to engage with social and environmental issues in inhabited territories. The work is organized in five main parts. The Research by Design studies is considered the main body of this research. As part of the baseline research for the design charrettes, extensive on the topic literature review, two dimensional cartographic analysis, fieldwork interviews and analytical essays have been generated.

As the title of the work indicates, a transect approach as a methodology for regional design is emphasized. There are two key reasons for opting for a design-led approach to the rural-urban discourse in China: Firstly, during conducting the baseline research, it became evident that the National New Type Urbanization Plan 2014 – 2020 (NTUP) promulgated for a five-year period, is too short for transforming urban development in the PRC. Hence, discussions beyond the year 2020 were needed. Furthermore, there is hardly any research work which tries to construct design scenarios for how to implement the objectives of China's NTUP. Some of the Alibaba Poverty Alleviation projects in rural areas suggest that e-commerce delivery platforms could lift communities out of poverty (see Fig.1.01). This book explores alternative approaches to the notion that online retailing ecologies could solve social and environmental problems in rural communities.

Secondly, a transect approach for regional design studies in the Chinese context is still relatively new. In Western rural-urban planning the transect approach has a long-standing tradition. The highly intertwined rural and urban uses of in China are a challenging but also exciting opportunity to test ways in which regional planning in transects can be applied for the rural-urban context in China.

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The design investigations and propositions are informed by the analytical and fieldwork stage of the research work. Alternative ways of engaging with and addressing sustainable development issues in disadvantaged rural territories are derived from proposals in design studies at four regional scales. The four main scales of investigation are the Pearl River Delta scale in Guangdong Province, Dongjiang River Basin including the Hakka Mei County (See Fig.1.02), and the Mountain valley scales, and community level scale of local people.

Fig. 1.01: The Chinese newspapers China Daily proclaims the rebirth of rural areas in China as E-commerce platforms offer opportunities to open new distribution channels for selling goods. The "Taobao Villages "are still a relatively new concept and it is too early to understand the positive and negative externalities, to assess whether E-commerce platforms are a solution for poverty alleviation in rural areas. Sour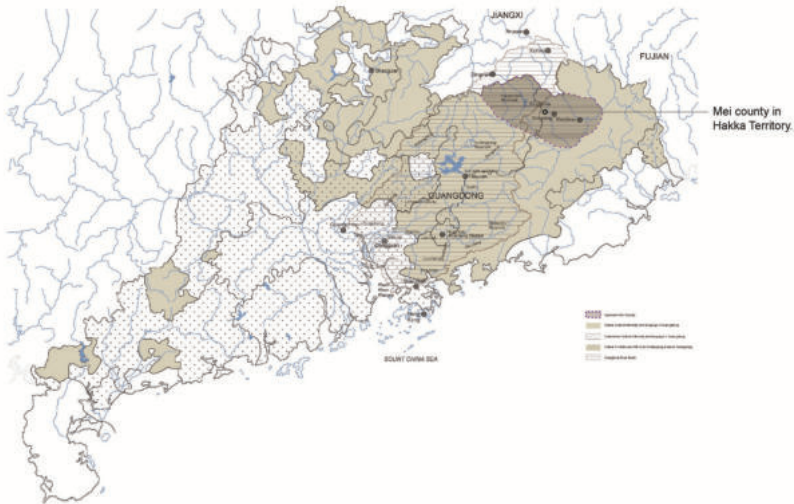ce: Song Chen, ChinaDaily, 2018. Retrieved 05.07.2019, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201801/27/WS5a6baf51a3106e7dcc137153.html

Fig. 1.02: The map of Guangdong province shows Mei County in the upstream zone of the Dongjiang River hydrological system. Additionally, the light brown area shows extent of the Hakka ethnic distribution in Guangdong. It is necessary highlight that definitive boundaries for ethnic cultural regions and hydrological systems cannot be determined. For instance, the transitions between the Hakka and Canton cultural zones are often fluid or overlapping. Source: Map elaborated by the author.

The literature review discusses rural-urban transformation in relation to urbanization in China and the potential of mountains as alternative settlement spaces. Patrick Geddes's Cities in Evolution and Terry McGee's Desakota concept underpin this inquiry. China specific knowledge such as the reforms to the Hukou household registration system, and the Communist Party of China's (CPC) National New Type Urbanization Plan 2014-2020 are introduced. Perspectives from different researchers studying development issues in China such as Hou's notion of Community Capitalism in China, as well as work on 'Taobao Villages' are presented. The literature review has helped to define the hypothesis and research questions for this study.

Fieldwork excursions to the Dongjiang River Basin, Fengshuba Reservoir, Xingning, Mei County, Yannanfei Tea Plantations, including several visits to remote Mountain Hakka Village communities were integral for the mapping and data collection stage in the territories. The site visits also gave opportunities to conduct formal and informal interviews with the local residents providing primary sources of in-formation.

In summary, the book comprises of the following five main parts:

Part One, which includes the literature review presents the problem field, the main hypothesis and research questions laying out the research objectives. This part introduces the idea of mountains as an underestimated resource and back-bone territory for metropolitan areas.

Part Two provides a macro-scale overview of the urbanization process in China and its system of mega - city corridors (see Fig. 1.07). It illustrates how this network of urbanization corridors is intended as a framework for the development of landlocked territories in the PRC. However, despite the country-wide development strategy such as the Road and Belt Initiative, remote territories remain underdeveloped. This part is devoted to the contextualization of the research area in the Dongjiang River Basin with its Hakka Territory in Guangdong. The subsection on the Opportunities and Challenges of the Dongjiang River Basin & the surrounding Hakka Territory introduces the dependencies between the study areas in Mei County and the Pearl River Delta metropolitan agglomeration.

Part Three is dedicated to the notion of the design project as a knowledge producer. Scenario constructions at the Dongjiang River Basin scale, at the mountain valley scale and grassroots level scale of five individual local characters have been studied. The knowledge and insights for the scenario constructions have been gathered through interviews with local inhabitants. Alternative livelihood scenarios are proposed. The synthesis of potential environmental and welfare-oriented interventions in mountain valley communities and street transformations in the settlements are then presented at the end of this part. The objective of the design interventions is to enable improved livelihood

independence for communities in upstream mountain regions. In summary, a potential repertoire of possible long-term interventions for 2050 and beyond for disadvantaged territories is exemplified. The propositions are not intended as prescriptive or absolute conclusive scenarios. There is neither a particular sequence nor a set of combined interventions suggested as the only problem-solving answer. Instead of giving a definitive resolution to social and environmental problems, the idea of having repertoires of possible interventions prepared for communities to maintain economic and resource independence is the culminating recommendation.

Part Four is dedicated to the Transect as a planning method. Some of the influential planners, designers and scientists who used the transect method for their research or design projects are presented. An overview of the concept of regional design is provided. The necessity to work at the regional scale to address global concerns including urbanization, climate change, food insecurity, migration and environmental pollution is highlighted. Parallels to post-WWII Europe are drawn when 'Géographie Volontaire' as a field of knowledge emerged out of the need for large-scale national reconstruction projects. Furthermore, the transect as a method for the analysis and design of territories is treated in this part. Additionally, contemporary large-scale urban ecology reconstruction and planning projects conceived during the New Type Urbanization Plan 2014 – 2020 in China are presented. The projects shown are influenced by Ecological Urbanism concepts, the Garden City movement, and the idea of rural-urban hybrid territories.

Part Five is the concluding part, discussing the reassessment of the transect method for regional design projects. The current popularized approaches to rural development by online retailing corporations in China are compared to planning questions addressed by the Patrick Geddes and New Urbanist Movement transect methods. Regional development issues such as the 'relationship of people in their geographic context' and the 'rural-urban continuity' as themes of transect methods underscore the relevance of transect planning equally pertinent for the Chinese context. Moreover, the rethinking of the transect method is outlined by

suggesting combining some of the key features from different 'schools of thought' into hybrid methods and application of the transect for design projects. Finally, three future research questions are outlined for further study as the next urbanization phases unfold.

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Dan Narita.

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Part One

Mountain Territories as an Alternative Urbanity.
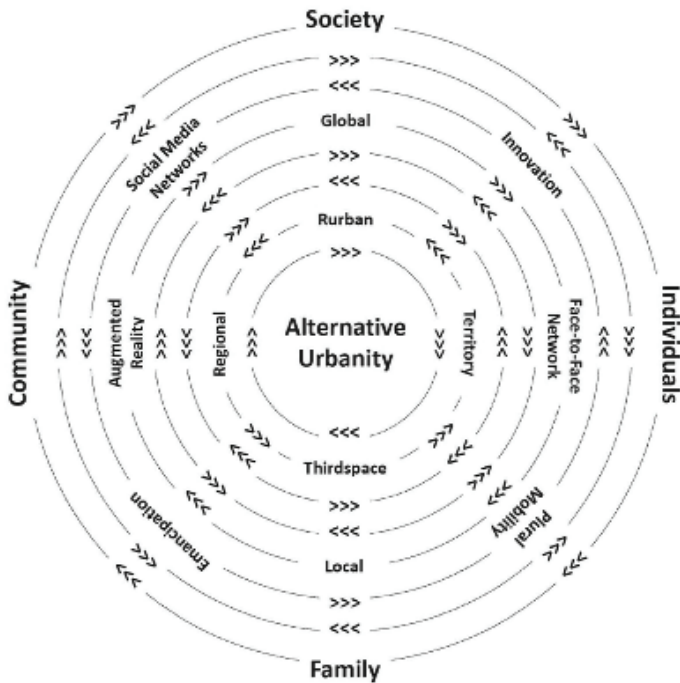
Fig. 1.03: The diagram describes the category of an 'Alternative Urbanity' in the centre of a circular diagram with subcategories relevant to this research project. Source: by the author, 2018.

1.1. Introduction:

The Research Objective:

A deeper rethinking of a people-oriented urbanity for future cities in China inevitably extends the scope of inquiry into territories which includes the countryside and mountain regions. The re-organization of regional spatial configurations is pertinent in times of social, political, economic and environmental transformations taking place. The shorter cycles, during which cities emerge and decline, reveals the brutality of the contemporary planetary urbanization (Brenner and Schmidt, 2015). The human and environmental costs of the shorter urban development cycles become more rapidly visible than in previous slower stages of urbanization. Changes in the location of population centres and shifts of the concentration of economic activities can be traced over longer durations of time. Transitions in the system of urbanization can be caused by revolutions by the citizen, climate change, environmental disasters, foreign policy & security considerations, technological innovations and migrations. In other words, changing priorities in urbanization processes can lead to the rediscovery of under -developed territories across space and time. This is not to say, that established urban centres loose their relevance or competitive advantages. It is rather, that overlooked regions can offer alternative spaces for settlement. Therefore, during periods of a regional or a national crisis, the necessity to reconstruct territories and its ecologies becomes pertinent (Cupers, 2016). Moreover, changes in the dynamics and relationships between dominant and peripheral territories become redefined. Consequently, the boundaries between what constitutes 'centre' and 'periphery' can be renegotiated.

Overtime, a slow integration of peripheral mountain areas into urban systems, in incremental steps, may establish a new order between cities in the future. The independence of mountain territories from metropolitan areas can catalyse new synergies for urbanization and alternative livelihood strategies in rural communities. The overdevelopment of the South-East coastal cities in Greater China has caused environmental degradation, unbalanced economic growth, and acute social disparities between the developed Pearl River Delta and the remote

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mountain regions in Guangdong Province. The Upstream Dongjiang River Basin in the Hakka Mei County of Guangdong has been chosen as a testing ground for research on rural-urban habitats located in the hinterland of the coastal zone. Motivated by an interest to think through an urban transition by design the investigations try to unfold the possibility of an alternative form of urbanity in the mountain territories. Planning for a phase beyond the National New-Type Urbanization Plan 2014 – 2020, the next phase of urbanization in China targets a 70% urbanised population by 2030 (see Fig. 1.04). The ambition for the following urbanization stages is to take into consideration emerging new livelihood ecologies and sustainable development goals. China during the advanced 'New Normal' development stage (see Fig. 1.05), a stage of economic slowdown, is in the process of adapting communities for the needs and interest of an aspiring middle-class society (see Fig. 1.12).

Context: Urbanization targets for China by 2030+
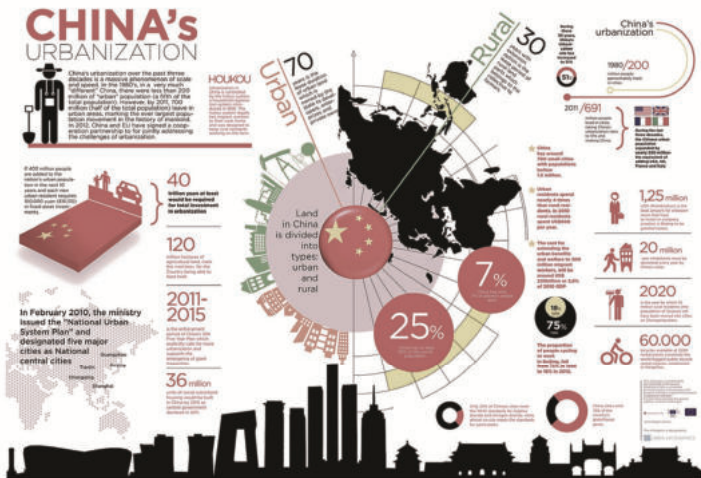
Fig. 1.04: The diagram explains the urbanization process in China since the 1980s and future tendencies. An increase of the current urbanization rate of over 50% since 2011, to an urbanised

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population of 70% may be the future path by 2030. It is expected that the approximately 200 to 300 million floating population in China will settle in new smaller and medium size cities. Source: China's Urbanization, produced by DRAGONSTAR: HUKU INFOGRAPHIC. Retrieved 06.08.2019, http://www.dragon-star.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/HUKU-INFOGRAPHIC.pdf

New Normal: Economic projections for an urbanization led growth strategy.

The development of smaller cities is expected to sustain future economic growth.
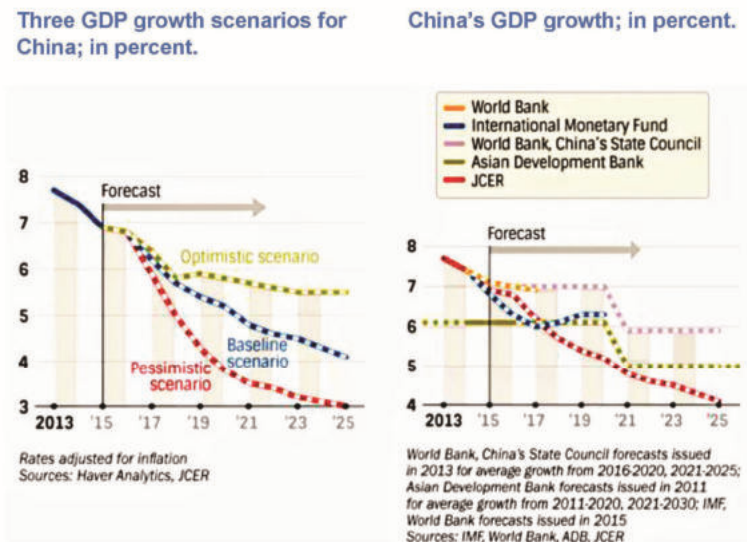
Fig. 1.05: A slower GDP growth rate referred to as the 'New Normal' will likely be experienced not only in China. The above GDP growth rate scenarios show possible trajectories of the economy, with Optimistic, Baseline and Pessimistic Scenarios. The baseline scenario indicates a rate of +/4% by 2025. Source: Nikkei Asian Review, July 2015.

From the perspective of maintaining economic growth, the increasing of the numbers of medium and small sized cities, is still regarded as an economic strategy in China (see Fig. 2.08). Furthermore, the settling of China's 'floating population' is a yet to be resolved issue (see Fig. 1.06). Equally important is maintaining the inhabitability in cities, which involves reinstating a clean 'Blue-sky', better air quality in urban areas, and the urgency for environmental remediation. Shifting the attention from metropolitan cities to settlement structures in mountain territories may imply a de-concentration of the population in established cities. The settlement of people away from the coastal cities in the not yet developed habitats requires regional design strategies sensitive to local ecologies. Dispersed, low-density settlement structures in the valleys of 'sub-alpine' territories may cater for 'urban life-style' options and environmentally-friendly production ecologies, without living in congested metropolitan areas.

Compelled by trying to search for an alternative urbanity, this research studies mountain valley settlements in Guangdong located close to the border of Jiangxi and Fujian Province. The unbalanced economic relationship between the Pearl River Delta metropolis and its mountainous hinterland is studied in a series of Research by Design explorations.

Cartographic studies look at possibilities to support independence of mountain settlements in the region. Attention is paid to basic farm land preservation, protection of the hydrological network as a shared environmental capital, and the creation of habitable settlements outside of urban areas. The global challenges of food, water and migration trigger interrelated new urban questions. The design studies construct potential scenarios considering both bottom up and top down design interventions. Respecting exiting social and new transactional networks in the territory, the design scenarios look at how to blend-in new linkages, livelihood ecologies enhanced by novel technologies, efficient mobility systems, remediated environmental resources, and green infrastructure.

Ultimately, the scenarios outline an independent urban future for the Mei County, a Hakka ethnic territory, located at the upstream region of the Dongjiang River Basin. The rediscovery of mountain territories as a habitat and environmental

resource is put forward for a new phase of urbanization in China. Emerging, liveable cities responsive to climate change, scarcity of resources, widening social inequalities and the dominance of global city networks may not be found in densely populated urban areas. The underestimated potential of mountains with dispersed settlement structures become defined as an alternative people-oriented urbanity. The superimposition of old and new transactional networks as hybrid multi-functional spaces deliver modernity and resilience for new type mountain cities.

Mountains as a Resource:

In mountain research, as a field of knowledge, the relevance of mountains as a productive ecological resource, essential for the eco-system stability of larger regional configurations cannot be overlooked. The metropolis as a dominant urban category in the study of cities overshadows mountains as settlement spaces for evolved and contemporary communities. As the environmental carrying capacities in metropolitan agglomerations continue to be exhausted, paying more attention to mountain regions as part of urban systems becomes more relevant than ever. There are two important reasons for exploring the transformations in mountains communities taking place. The transformations are linked to behavioural changes of people. Firstly, the adoption of 'urbanised' behaviour of people living in the countryside and mountain areas is increasing. Partly, this phenomenon is occurring due to the migration of family members, and information exchanges between urban and rural communities. Secondly, given the behavioural changes of how people live, work and consume resources in rural areas, it raises questions about sustainable development strategies to avoid the negative impacts of a new generation consumerist society and shorter economic cycles. Given the environmental challenges in Chinese cities, questions about how more equitable settlements can be enabled is driving this research. An urgent reason for the search for urbanity in outside of densely populated areas is the injustice of spatially compromised, and socially underprivileged segments of the population in large cities in China.

The negative externalities of market-oriented real estate developments such as land-grabs, the diminishing of arable fertile land, and the widening gap between rich and poor people are serious issues undermining society and future generations. It is also critical to reflect on how the retrofitting of the Chinese cities may be undertaken by planners and architects in 50 years' time. Will it be possible to remediate destabilized eco-systems and socially fragmented communities in cities? Will people move away from overcrowded urban areas to low density settlements in the countryside? How could such a process be further supported through development policies? New profit-driven urban development continues to engulf traditional Chinese villages, and a mosaic of mixed farming and built-up urban-rural areas are the outcome of uncoordinated large-scale development projects. Over-population, issues of 'illegal' residents in cities and the environmental pollution are the unresolved challenges requiring changes of our development pattern for sustainable urban futures.

The settlement of China's Floating Population in cities and Hukou Reforms is one of the challenges yet to be addressed in future urbanization phases in the PRC.

Fig. 1.06: Image shows Chinese migrant workers from rural areas seeking employment opportunities in cities in Greater China and South East Asian countries. Source: Aris Chan, Feb 2011, China Labour Bulletin, TWC2.

Moving beyond the binaries of 'urban' and 'rural' territories:

Hybrid descriptions for territories as 'rurban' indicate the gradual transformations taking place in cities and the countryside. Increasingly, the simplifying categories of 'urban' and 'rural' territories no longer adequately describe current urbanization processes. In particular, in the Asian and Chinese context the transformations of urbanised and rural regions manifest the emergence of novel types of polarities between the city and the countryside. The growth of mega-city regions causes concern over the longevity and resilience of urban agglomerations. The countryside, on the other hand, is steadily catering for similar life-style choices as in cities.

The challenges for maintaining resilience in cities include climate change, flood risk, social inequality, food insecurity, economic stagnation and the migration of people. The development of Chinese mega-cities was partly supported by the supply of environmental resources, land and surplus labour from the peripheral and agricultural regions. If the growth of mega-cities in China has reached a point of unsustainable overdevelopment, then vulnerabilities of urban areas inducing a potential collapse of the mega-city (Shane, 2017) requires preparation for a crisis. In a possible decline of the mega-city, remote rural areas may develop into a 'back-up' resource for larger metropolitan areas.

For instance, the remoteness of mountain regions could be turned into a competitive advantage. Hence, increasing the independence of such regions as an alternative low-density city, while minimizing its dependence on the overpopulated urban agglomerations. Mountain regions, protected by environmental policies and fairly negotiated agreements, can offer environmental capital such as water, the capturing of pollution, land for food production, sites for recreation and accommodation of populations. Such benefits could lessen the burden imposed on metropolitan areas. The transformation of regional interdependencies including ecological, community and information based linkages binding together the mega-city and the hinterland will be critical for finding more reciprocal urban-to-rural relationships.

Challenging the idea of high-density cities as the only path towards sustainability, the objective is to further extend the idea of multifunctional uses of land in the mountains, to include new networks of livelihood ecologies. Examples are illustrated in Chapter 3.4 and 3.5. Particular emphasis is placed on securing the inhabitability of settlements, social welfare provisions, preservation of environmental capital, the potential of new economic opportunities and linkages between the urban settlements and the mountains communities. The aim is to evolve a novel form of urbanity, which accommodates both urban and rural ways of living.
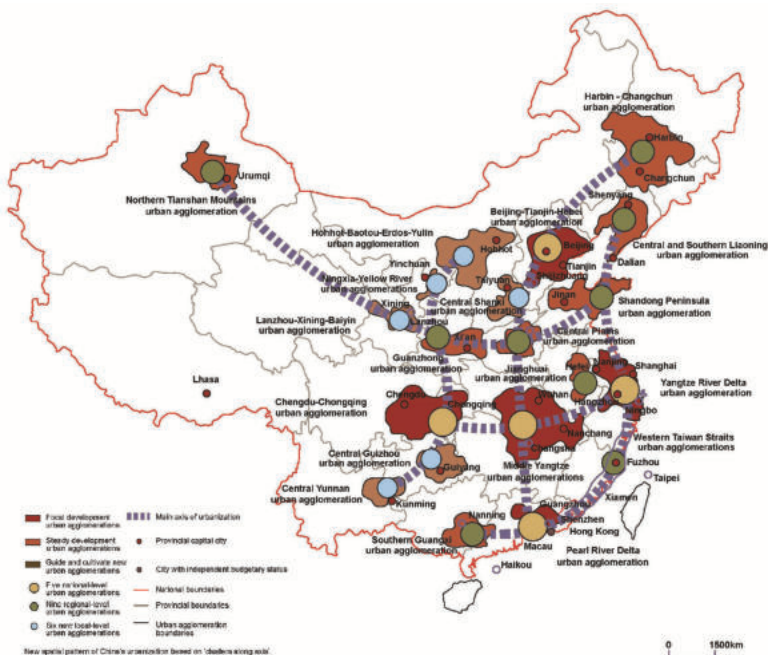
Mega-City Network

Fig. 1.07: The New Type of Urbanization phase has an underlying framework of 20 urban agglomerations. The mega-city urbanization system is organized in a spatial pattern of clusters along five main urbanization corridors or in other words 5+9+6 spatial structure. These are the coastal cities corridor axis, Yangtze River urbanization corridor, Eurasian land bridge urbanization corridor, Harbin-Beijing-Guangzhou urbanization corridor, and Baotou-Kunming urbanization corridor. As such they form a macro-pattern of urbanization for Greater China. Credits: Chuanglin Fang, Journal of Geographical Sciences, 2015, 25(8): pp.1003-1024.

1.2. The Conundrum:

The rise of Chinese mega-cities has been enabled by releasing environmental capital, land and labour from rural and mountainous regions. By providing the metropolitan regions with ecological resources from less affluent regions, peripheral territories have suffered environmental decay (see Fig. 1.08). Further, local communities have suffered a loss in social cohesion and disconnection from family farm land. Such social issues are the result of a remittance economy and the labour migration of peasants seeking employment opportunities in urban centres.

Escalating land and property prices associated with the ever growing metropolitan areas exacerbate the economic inequality between affluent and deprived communities. Due to exploitation of agriculture and industrialization in the rural hinterland, impoverished mountain territories in China fall into a state of crisis, struggling to prevail under the pressures of global urbanization.

While the exchanges of resources between mega-city regions and the countryside in China are principally benefitting the economies in urban areas, at the same time metropolitan agglomerations are confronted with acute environmental, social and public health issues, due to a consumption and growth oriented economy. Unsustainable development patterns in metropolitan areas have not adequately prepared for potential risks arising from global challenges, including food shortage, environmental disasters, and the urban population growth.

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The lack of spare ecological capacities in cities, to cope with unanticipated, catastrophic events in the environment, and the catering for the welfare security for communities, calls for a restructuring of the relationships between the metropolis and the mountains. Instead of mountains as dependent, peripheral territories, the redefinition of mountains communities, as self-sufficient settlements is crucial for a sustainable development agenda. Ultimately, more emancipated mountain communities could reinforce better relationship with neighbouring cities at a regional scale, and strengthen synergies with mega-city clusters.

Fig. 1.08: Garbage covered in green protective nets shown as traditional Landscape Paintings reminds the viewer of nostalgia about the countryside and the issue of environmental degradation in rural areas in China. Credits: Artwork by Yao Lu.

1.3. Literature Review: On the potential of urbanizing of mountain settlements in China.

Introduction:

Bridging the longstanding rural-urban divide requires appropriate strategies to urbanise remote mountain settlements in China. The notion of an alternative urbanity in mountain territories is an urgent proposition, as it may help to reduce poverty and a diminishing population. Contemporary architects, regional planners and policy makers should embrace a close interaction approach when developing these underappreciated regions. In particular, it is important to grow both city and environment with close interaction, as per the idea by Patrick Geddes (1915). Terry McGee's (2008) idea of 'Desakota', i.e. co-existence between agricultural and urban forms of land use and settlement is also important in urban geography (see Fig. 4.02). Strategies such as expansion of urban green spaces, zero-waste policies, energy conservation, eco-district and industrial ecology plans, and municipal renewable energy guarantee that city residents enjoy a sustainable life. The emerging cities should be human- and environment-friendly. Developing rural regions calls for commitment to rural poverty alleviation as well as for emphasis on food security for the attainment of rural development. Such approaches should ensure there is alleviation of the false dichotomy or differentiation between rural and urban, as the overall aim is to bridge the gap, considering the fact that most of the future global urbanisation will take place in Africa and Asia. Bridging the gap will require a re-examination of the existing definitions of urban and rural as the activities in the two regions are increasingly linking.

Gradual hukou reforms in Chinese cities and an incremental urbanisation in mountain regions challenge the classification system of either 'rural' or 'urban' citizen. Over time, return migrants from cities could bring direct impacts through the transfer of capital and knowledge back to their villages; hence gradual transformation of the mountainous settlements may evolve into an alternative

type of urbanity. Similarly, Internet accessibility and e-commerce in rural areas is promising as it opens up and improves the knowledge of rural dwellers, helping them embrace entrepreneurship, grassroots level income diversification and new livelihood strategies. This ultimately leads to economic growth and urbanisation of the rural areas, developing the so-called 'Taobao Villages' (Li, 2017). Emergence of Internet giants and e-commerce corporations i.e. BAT (Baidu-Alibaba-Ten-Cents) and JD.com in China has led to increased exchange of goods, services, market commodities, information and knowledge between rural and urban areas.

Literature Review:

Mountain Settlements in China as an Alternative Urbanity:

The concept of rural-urban development is best discussed in the text Cities in Evolution by Geddes (1915). Geddes has been trained as a biologist, and this has informed his idea that both city and environment need to grow with close interaction. According to Geddes (1915), the city is not an independent and closed organism as it is found inside a setting that takes and dissipates energy. Geddes has compared the idea of an evolving or urbanising city to that of an organism that is continuously changing. The Geddes explains the underlying meaning of two key concepts, i.e. Cacotopia and Eutopia, terms that describe the good and the bad city. Cacotopia dissipates energy and gains individual monetary gains, whereas Eutopia saves the energy that is later utilised to organise the environment, allowing enough evolution of both individual and collective life.

According to Geddes (1915), urban planning was an essential part of city evolution. In particular, urban planning offered volition to a permanently evolving organism. In urban planning, the past and present are two significant concepts that should be considered since they can be interpreted to assist in understanding or predicting the "nascent future" (Geddes, 1915). Geddes used the term 'biopolis' to imply that the city and its related planning endeavours are

interrelated and are a living and open system. Similarly, Geddes (1915) interpreted evolution as a process that is fundamentally driven from within the organism. The understanding was a contrast to the existing view that external factors, i.e. in Darwin's natural selection, impacted evolution. According to the author, cooperation from the level of the cells to societies was particularly crucial since it overpowered or triumphed over the competition. In this way, cities acted as the first proof or expression of social union and evolution.

The view of evolution by Geddes utilised two different forms of organic analogy that remains necessary to understanding cities as well as to practising city planning. First, the city can be conceived as an "organic" entity regardless of whether it is interpreted as a developing or 'evolving 'depending on the conditions of its environment (Geddes, 1915). The underlying meaning of this analogy of a city as a living being suggests that town planning is an integrating theoretical as well as a practical endeavour and not merely laying down roads and built form. Therefore, city planning is not a consequence of engineering and architecture projects, but rather a discipline integrating multi-disciplinary design decisions. The second analogy regards viewing the city as an environment (built environment), and its design played a crucial role in positively influencing the contained social organism. In the second analogy, Geddes (1915) asserts that urban planners have a significant role in urbanization (or evolution). In particular, the role of a planner is to influence the beneficiary of social evolution via physical design.

THE ASSOCIATION OF THE VALLEY PLAN WITH THE VALLEY SECTION
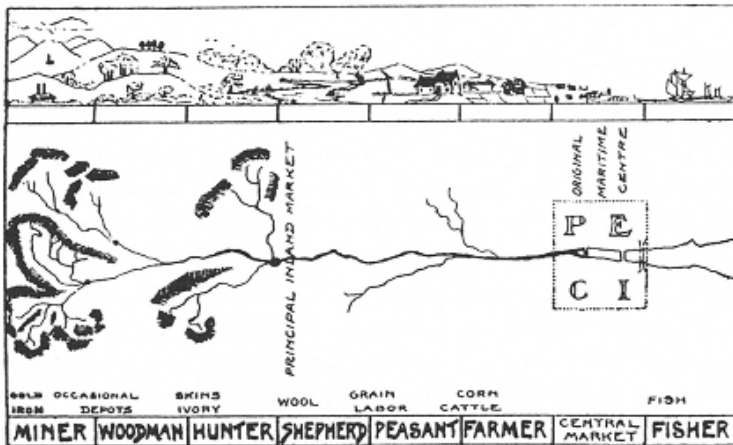
RURAL OCCUPATION & MARKET TOWN

Fig. 1.09: The Geddes Valley section: 'The Notation of Life superimposed on the Valley Region', from Victor Branford and Patrick Geddes, The Coming Polity, Published by Williams & Norgate, London,1917, pp.296.

Overall, the idea of evolutionary urbanism according to Geddes (1915) entailed part 'evolutionary' but in a non-Darwinian way, part 'developmental' that views the city as an organism, and some 'environmental' that considers the city as environment instead of an organism. The view by Geddes (1915) examines the process of urbanisation or city evolution as a combination of a different process. Such ideas remain applicable in modern-day urban and rural planning (see Fig. 1.09 & 1.18).

While Geddes' text provided relevant insights for urban planning, it not only has been out of print for more than one generation, but many planners appear to misinterpret or reinterpret his school of thought. Similarly, many leading United

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States university planning programmes do not use Geddes' works as a teaching guide. The justification for the limited teaching of Geddes' works, according to many Geddes scholars, is that he did not have a theoretical framework of planning. Besides, critiques state that the work by Geddes (1915) may be obsolete in addressing power relations in modern-day cities as well as social movements.

However, despite such critique of Geddes' work, it is increasingly receiving renewed interest (Young, 2017). Contrary to the argument by many scholars, it remains evident that Geddes had a theory of planning and power, and it is relevant and applicable in contemporary issues of urbanism. The text "Free Cities and Regions"- Patrick Geddes's theory of planning by Young (2017) advances this argument. Young (2017) notes that across Geddes's voluminous output, he framed a consistent planning theory that remains valuable and applicable in modern-day environmental planning and social movements. Young (2017) does this by focusing on Geddes' theory of planning and the goals/objectives set in the theory. In his article, the specific projects Geddes produced for communities in India, Scotland, and Israel are not the main point of emphasis.

Young (2017) provides various examples supporting his position that Geddes's theory of city and regional evolution is relevant in framing and guiding metropolitan change. Geddes's theory advocates a renewed civics defined by features such as city reconstruction, pressing ethical, economic and political change, and mutual aid. A major example is a green infrastructure which is founded on Geddes's theory that emphasised on reconstructing socially and ecologically just cities (Geddes, 1915). The same concern is evident in contemporary city planning as community groups, and municipal officials in different cities continue to grapple with multiple public and environmental health issues through an expansion of urban green amenity. Information gathered from urban greening programmes increases the effectiveness of initiatives to plant trees and vegetation. Such knowledge also increases the number of informed decision-makers. Such a strategy is a perfect example of Geddes's notion of utilising geotechnic planning to improve urban evolution (Young, 2017).

In particular, integrating neotechnic technologies of satellites, aircraft and drones with computers and photography, together with citizen-based field research fosters the ideal of the regional survey. Besides, it supports a collaborative civic culture that provides an essential guide to rural-urban development (Young, 2017). In addition to this strategy, there are several other geotechnic approaches that urban planners can apply to advance contemporary efforts. As Young (2017) further posits, the civic and technological engagement that shows synergies between urban greenery provision and metropolitan populations contribute to broadening decision-making. The strategies also include zero-waste policies, municipal renewable energy, and initiatives to conserve energy, eco-district, and industrial ecology plans.

Moreover, Young (2017) supports the idea by Geddes on the pursuit of a trans-disciplinary project. Geddes combined technology, citizenship, and ecology in a new planning strategy. For effective planning of cities in contemporary societies, researchers, planning educators and practitioners should embrace the ideas by Geddes (1915), and this is through bringing them to a more active practice in course syllabi, classrooms, policy, research projects, and also citizen involvement. The above strategies can be incorporated in contemporary rural-urban planning, and equally, for the development of emerging rural settlements in China.

Another article that specifically addresses the topic of urbanisation of rural-urban territories in Asia is managing the rural-urban transformation in East Asia in the 21st century by McGee (2008). The article assesses the special features on transformation of rural-urban in East Asia in the past three decades. The emphasis is on the strategies of development that Asian governments employ. Most policies of rural-urban changes in the region disregard the ongoing commitment to alleviating rural poverty, focus on food security and also rural development. The emphasis by the East Asian governments is on the significant role of urbanisation as the major process that leads to the growth of the economy. The focus is justified by economic theories, for instance, that the economies of scale, creating and strengthening markets in cities and the

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increased productivity in metropolis are crucial aspects or factors that lead to development.

Nonetheless, McGee (2008) argues that this approach is ineffective as it forms a false dichotomy or differentiation between urban and rural areas. Besides, McGee (2008) informs that the approach ignores the sole role of development which is to increase connections between rural and urban regions to fully transform society instead of separating the transitions in the two regions, i.e., rural and urban. The article is particularly relevant to this book as it uses a case study of China, a perfect example due to its high population, the fact that its market socialism has unique conditions, and also the ability of the country to have an impact on the rural-urban transformation (McGee, 2008). In the article, McGee (2008) incorporates the term 'Desakota,' which he had coined around 1990. The term comes from two Indonesian words desa which means village and kota for city. The term is used in urban geography to denote spatial zones or areas on the peri-urban regions of large cities, with the major features including most intense co-existence and intensive intermingling between agricultural and urban forms of land use and settlement (McGee, 2008).The other article by McGee (2009) also discusses the concept of desakota. The article by McGee (2008) details the essence of this co-existence regarding urbanisation.

According to McGee (2008), there is the need to develop spatial sensitivity while managing the advancement in both rural and urban regions in the twenty first century. The author proposes essential strategies or approaches for active growth of the rural regions, which suit the case of impoverished mountain settlements in China. In particular, McGee (2008) argues for the replacement of the old divisions between rural and urban areas, and later embracing planning that integrates or links rural and urban endeavours for successful adoption of sustainable management strategies. The strategies to be used in developing rural regions should utilise concepts of eco-systems that link activities in urban and rural territories. In this way, there will be the preservation of ecosystems that integrate extended metropolitan region (EMR). McGee (2008) argues that successful urbanisation of rural areas should ensure industry, agriculture, and other urban

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endeavours co-exist in a mixed-use landscape, provide the most effective and fruitful option for preserving ecosystems within the EMR and at the same time, creating sustainable and liveable urban areas. This planned approach to attain interaction between agriculture and industrial endeavours should be in line with the existing regulations as it is founded on the land-use zoning. Such an approach is evident in the United Kingdom, where there is a green space all around the city region, and it is an essential part of the planning practice. The coexistence of rural endeavours such as agriculture and other urban endeavours like industries is what is currently called the use of "green spaces" that has become an important component of planning urban life quality in many advanced nations (McGee, 2008). The ultimate developmental progress of such co-existence would be the creation of sustainable urban areas, cities, and societies from the rural and mountain regions also in Asian countries.

McGee (2009) advances the argument on the division between rural-urban in his article The Spatiality of Urbanization: The Policy Challenges of Mega-Urban and Desakota Regions of Southeast Asia. McGee (2009) introduces the article noting that four key facts will define our thinking about urbanisation in the 21st century. The first aspect is that the future will be characterized by a majority of the world's population living in urban areas. The second fact is that most of the urbanisation in the world will take place in Africa and Asia, two continents with two-thirds of the global population, and within which at present, the proportion of people living in urban regions in most countries is below 60 per cent. McGee (2009) also notes that the new demographic realities will require a rethinking of the embedded concept of rural and urban. The fourth fact pertains the rising global economic integration, termed as globalisation, and it is creating increased chances for economic volatility and challenging the sustainability of current urban forms (McGee, 2009).The issue of changing forms of urban and rural is the most important since it acknowledges the essence of integrating or co-existing activities in rural and city regions. According to McGee (2009), the changing nature of urban and rural is significant as the concept of the rural-urban drift is particularly entrenched in the political, institutional, and social understanding of most nations in the contemporary world. Since the location of rural and urban

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