

BEYOND GROWTH: A STUDY ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF URBAN RENEWAL GOVERNANCE IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE OLD CITY OF NANJING, CHINA, BASED ON THE URBAN REGIME THEORY

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ABSTRACT

With the transition of China's urbanization to a medium speed, urban renewal has gradually become a new hot spot in China's urban movement recently. It brings new motivation to study China's governance model and urban renewal transformation. The "urban regime" theory has been widely used in studying urban governance because of its solid explanatory function. However, in the past, "growthism" made urban regimes have inevitable convergence, and the research of single time nodes and projects cannot explain the transformation characteristics of the recent urban renewal governance mode in China. Therefore, based on the long-term tracking of the renewal practice in the Southern Part of the Old City of Nanjing (SPOCN), this paper profoundly analyzes the urban renewal governance model of the SPOCN in different periods using the "urban regime" theory and attempts to refine the transformation characteristics of the new urban regime in recent renewal movement. The study found that the practice in SPOCN experienced three different stages of "rapid growth", "opposition to growth", and "exceeding growth", corresponding to the "developmental regime", "progressive regime", and "expanded regime". In the new period of renewal practice in SPOCN, the rise of residents' consciousness and intellectuals has led to the expansion of social power, the transformation of government power, and the withdrawal of market power, forming an "expanded" governance system for the organic renewal. Also, historical culture and people-oriented values have become the core value orientation that dominates renewal movements, and residents' proposals have become the dominant factor affecting the renewal paradigm and policy innovation. However, the current "expanded" regime in SPOCN focuses too much on the will and welfare guarantee of disadvantaged groups, which puts forward new practice and research needs for a sustainable financial guarantee and policy innovation system in this regime.

Keywords: urban micro renewal, urban regime theory, urban renewal, governance, transformation, China.

1 INTRODUCTION

Affected by the turbulent external environment caused by the global financial crisis in 2008, economic globalization has entered a period of "de-globalization", and China's economic development has also entered a new normal of medium and low-speed growth. Over the past decade or so, with the advent of a new stage of sustainable development of human society, such as "carbon reduction", China has actively guided the transformation of its social and economic development model through policies. It successively puts forward the overall development strategies for the new era, such as "Scientific Outlook on Development", "Ecological Civilization", "Two Mountains Theory" [1], "A Community with a Shared Future for Mankind", and "High-quality Development". Among them, space is an essential practical carrier for realizing transformation and development, and the innovation of space production mode is an important starting point for promoting social and economic development power transformation. Therefore, since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, China has ushered in a brand-new strategic positioning of its



operation mode on three spatial scales: regional, urban and rural. The “regional coordinated development” was proposed at the regional scale, and the “rural revitalization” strategy was proposed at the rural scale, while the latest “14th Five-Year Plan” proposed a new strategy of implementing “Urban Renewal Action” at the urban scale [2]. This is the first time since the founding of the People’s Republic of China and the reform and opening up that the concept of urban regeneration has been placed in the discourse system of national governance that represents China’s highest authority, facing a new development transformation from growth-oriented to improvement-oriented.

A large number of studies in the past believe that the main reason why China’s social economy has become the world’s second-largest economy in just 40 years and has maintained high growth all year round is due to the development model of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The realization of a highly concentrated industrialization and urbanization process through the nationwide incremental land expansion movement is an essential support for China’s ultra-high social and economic growth. Therefore, it can be seen that in the 2000s, after China entered the WTO, many domestic and foreign studies on urban China focused on researching spatial governance under the “growth orientation” [3]–[8]. For example, the critical findings of “Growth Machine”, “Growth Coalition” [9], [10], “Urban Regime Theory” [11] and “Re-scaling Theory” [12] are introduced from American urban studies in studying urban China, as well as the urban studies on European cities, such as the perspective of “Entrepreneurialism”, “Good Government vs. Good Governance”, and “New Public Management”. These studies focus on the central–local relationship, inter-government relationship, government–enterprise relationship, and other dimensions of Chinese characteristics in the urban movement. It demonstrates the applicability of the neoliberal approach in the spatial governance of socialist countries. Also, it refines the characteristics of the neoliberal space governance path with Chinese characteristics under the growth-oriented development discourse, including “State Entrepreneurialism” [13], “(pro-) Growth Coalition” [5], and “Government–Enterprise Coalition” [14].

It can be seen that whether it is the construction of new cities or the renewal of old cities, the paths and movement patterns, as well as a governance mechanism in China’s urban space during the period of “growthism”, are based on the core benefit distribution of exchange values from commercialized urban land. The so-called “old city renewal” is based on the same “(pro-) Growth Coalition” organization (government and real estate developers) and the same incremental construction model (“massive demolition and construction” and “land appreciation income”) under different policies. There are only minor differences in the construction of the new city, such as different geographical locations. Therefore, China’s ultra-high-speed urbanization process has also witnessed the destruction of many historical urban areas, buildings’ demise, and communities’ disappearance. These are not conducive to the future sustainable development of Chinese cities. In the new era, with the gradual development of the national power-led “Urban Renewal Action” strategy, the emergence of new arguments, such as “protecting historical and cultural values” [15], “people-centered urban development” [16], and “prohibiting large-scale demolition and construction” [17] all require in specific projects. It pushes local governments to change the extensive incremental path of real estate in the past, and explore the new path of urban renewal that is satisfactory to the people and needs of the times. From the few new practices in Shanghai, Nanjing, and Guangdong, it is found that this new path is the “Urban Micro-Renewal” (*weigaizao*) [18], which bases on the reorganization of existing property rights and constructs based on the willingness of property owners. The practice of the new model has made a significant breakthrough in the value orientation and governance mechanism of the government–enterprise “Growth Coalition” and real estate path used in urban development in the past. It



brings new insights into the deepening of related research on urban spatial governance in urban China and theoretical update. The academic significance also brings guiding significance for further improving the practice path with new academic research.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND CASE SELECTION

2.1 Research methodology: Pluralism and Urban Regime Theory

The development of urban governance research mainly comes from analyzing two central concepts, namely the struggle between elitism and pluralism [19]. In the 1950s, influenced by the strong demand for urban reconstruction after World War II, urban space became an essential container for regulating social development. At that time, research on spatial governance focused on how to control and organize society. Therefore, the earliest research focused on the question of “who rules” in the spatial governance system, and two theoretical camps (elite-dominated and public-dominated) emerged, respectively. With the rise of neoliberalism in the 1970s, a large number of emerging market forces entered the urban governance mechanism ruled initially by political elites, and the theory of the “urban growth machine” emerged [10], [20]; in the 1980s, the non-economic value has been significantly improved, and a large number of diverse values and subjects have participated in urban spatial governance. The “Urban Regime Theory” (URT) representing pluralism has further developed into a fundamental theory for studying urban spatial governance mechanisms based on absorbing the former pluralism theories [11]. Therefore, after China has guided plural values into the overall context of urban development through policies in the past ten years, this paper believes that it has particular applicability to use the URT representing pluralism to analyze the current governance mechanism of Urban Micro-Renewal.

URT generally believes that the spatial production of cities is controlled by a governance mechanism (that is, “regime”) composed of three forces: government, market, and social. While its academic research focuses on how to effectively integrate the three forces to achieve the maintenance and stability of the regime in urban development. Stone, as a master of the theoretical research on URT, divides it into “maintenance regime”, “development regime”, “middle-class progressive regime” and “lower-class opportunity expansion regime” according to the different effects of the three forces operating in urban spatial governance [11]. The integration of government and market forces to form a development regime can well explain the characteristics of governance mechanisms such as the “urban growth machine” or “social cybernetics” in the industrial age [19]. Many existing studies on urban spatial governance in China during rapid development are mainly analyzed from such perspectives. With the continuous influence of economic globalization and the rise of civil society, the research pays attention to the spatial production model and the redistribution of the multi-value resources such as wealth, employment, and culture in spatial production. However, there is a lack of relevant research on China from such a perspective. The reasons that, on the one hand, China is just in the initial stage of a new transformation, and there is still a “growth-oriented” path dependence in local practice; on the other hand, under the long-term influence of the “growth orientation”, civil society forces are relatively lacking, which needs practice and time to correct. Therefore, when using the three-dimensional perspective composed of government, market, and social forces in the URT to analyze the practical cases of urban micro-renewal in China, this paper pays special attention to the different urban regimes from the traditional (pro-) growth coalition, and the evolution characteristics of the new regime under the guidance of plural values, and the relevant changes in the type of urban regimes in the overall process.



In addition, this paper uses long-term semi-structured interviews with the competent Planning Bureau, Housing and Urban–Rural Development Bureau, Economic and Information Bureau, Housing Administration Bureau, Culture and Tourism Bureau, and state-owned platforms in the Southern Part of the Old City of Nanjing (SPOCN) to obtain critical analytical data. Taking qualitative analysis as the primary method, it empirically analyzes the changes in the urban renewal regime in the SPOCN.

2.2 Case selection: Southern Part of the Old City of Nanjing

Nanjing is the capital of Jiangsu Province on the east coast of China, and together with Shanghai and Hangzhou is the central city in China’s most important Yangtze River Delta Region. Nanjing, as one of the first state-list famous historical and cultural cities in China, has a civilization history of 7,000 years and has been the capital of China six times in history. SPOCN (Fig. 1) was built in the Six Dynasties (222 years) and revived in the Southern Tang Dynasty (937 years). It has always been a gathering place for urban civilians and business people, with profound folk culture and commercial culture, and is regarded as the birthplace of Nanjing’s urban space and culture [21].



Figure 1: Location of SPOCN in city of Nanjing. (Copyright by Authors.)

There are three main reasons why the SPOCN is chosen as the case site for this article to analyze the micro-renewal of Chinese cities in the new era: (1) Nanjing is one of the 11 pilot cities in the new strategy of “Urban Renewal Action”. (2) Compared with the foreign-investment dependence of Shanghai, policy dependence of Beijing, and financing dependence of Guangdong, Nanjing does not rely too much on a particular means of production but is more or less affected by these all. Therefore, Nanjing could represent the most typical common cities in mainland China. (3) SPOCN has been the most important regeneration of the Old City of Nanjing since the early days of reform and opening up. It has participated in the urban renewal movement in China in different eras and contexts, which can reflect the governance characteristics and changes in the “micro-renewal” movements. Therefore, it can fully support the research on the urban spatial governance mechanism changes and contribute to the existing findings on URT in China.

3 THE RESCALING OF URBAN REGIME IN SPOCN

The urban renewal of SPOCN began with the state land and housing marketization reform in the 1990s. With the commercialization of the two, the exchange value surrounding the land market was gradually discovered and operated on a large scale. In general, the urban regime in the process of urban renewal in SPOCN has undergone three necessary rescaling processes: (1) From the 1990s to 2005, the reconstruction of ancient areas under the Development Regime with deeply aligned government and market forces. (2) From 2006 to the 2010s, the “SPOCN Incident” marked the rise of urban cultural elites’ awareness of protecting the old city and formed a Middle-Class Progressive Regime under the alliance of social forces and government forces. (3) From the early 2010s to the present, it has formed a Lower-Class Opportunity Expansion Regime with the alliance of government and social forces and the return of “people-oriented” plural values.

3.1 Rapid growth: Reconstruction under Development Regime

3.1.1 Massive demolition and reconstruction

In 1992, Nanjing promulgated the “Reform of Housing System”, which promoted the rise of Nanjing’s real estate industry, and a large amount of market capital entered the construction of urban infrastructure and the built environment. Subsequently, in 1995 and 1998, Nanjing adopted policies to stimulate the further development of the real estate market, put forward the urban construction goal of constructing 100 high-rise buildings in the main city, and formed the construction model of “replacing dwellings with roads (*yilu daifang*), offsetting the construction cost of roads by the exchange value of dwellings (*yifang bulu*), and offsetting the construction cost of roads by the exchange value of lands (*yidi bulu*)” [22]. During this period, more than 20 billion yuan of the government budget was invested in regenerating old cities such as roads, housing, and infrastructure. Many old urban landscapes in SPOCN were replaced by skyscrapers, commercial housing and commercial blocks with modern scenes, to meet the general requirements for urban landscape upgrading in the early 2000s.

“Massive demolition and reconstruction” were a standard method for the regeneration of SPOCN during this period. Its rapid transformation efficiency and simple method of an overall replacement of property rights significantly improved the city’s overall image for a while and was greatly supported by the government, enterprises, and even the general public. The Confucius Temple, Zhongshan South Road, both sides of Zhonghua Gate, Mendong District, Taiping South Road, Sanshan Street, Santiaoying, Nanpu Hall, Ganxi’s Former Residence, and other well-known attractions in SPOCN were all demolished and rebuilt at that time. SPOCN, composed of traditional Jiangnan streets and residential houses, has been



replaced by new buildings and fake antiques, such as large shopping malls and commercial historical blocks. However, it has also completely changed the reality of the dilapidated appearance of the SPOCN and improved the city's overall appearance.

3.1.2 The alignment of government and market forces

The deep alliance between government and market forces has formed a “growth coalition”, which is the governance basis for the rapid promotion of landscape renewal in SPOCN during this period. The government and real estate developers formed a “Development Regime”, centering on the redevelopment of land operations and the redistribution of exchange value (Fig. 2).

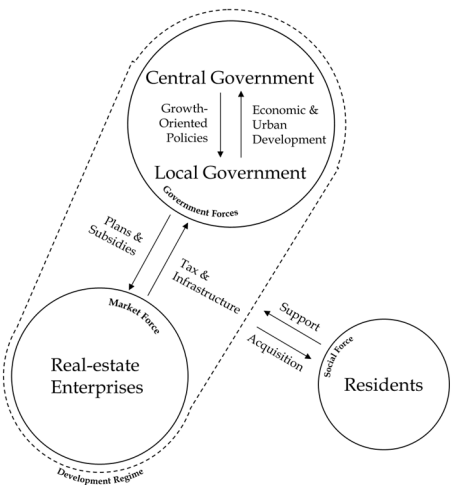


Figure 2: Development Regime in SPOCN under rapid growth discourse. (Copyright by Authors.)

The organization, policy, and planning of land incremental binding are the primary means for the government to promote the practice and attract market power in a “Development Regime”. First, in the face of the fundamental problem of the lack of an exchange value market mechanism caused by the massive public ownership of urban land in China, the Nanjing Municipal Government promulgated two rounds of significant housing system reforms from 1992 to 1998 to provide legal support for land and housing. Secondly, the Nanjing Municipal Government has further revised the “Administrative Measures for the Demolition of Urban Houses in Nanjing”, established a “Demolition Management Office”, legalized the nature of the urban expropriation demand of “due to the needs of urban construction”, and moderately reduced the needs of individuals during the demolition process. Finally, by compiling and revising the key indicators that can promote incremental urban transformation in the Development Control Plan of the SPOCN, such as the change of land use from residential to commercial or the increase of plot ratio. It successfully guided the massive demolition and reconstruction movements in SPOCN at that time.

The return of land value income and the internalization of supporting infrastructure are the endogenous driving force for real estate enterprises to form a market force and accelerate spatial production in the “Development Regime”. Behind the government’s vigorous efforts

to remove the institutional barriers of “demolition and reconstruction” is the appeal for the financial benefits generated by the exchange value of urban land. However, as urbanization brings many new urban populations, there is a real need to provide a more significant amount of urban infrastructure and housing supply. For these multiple reasons, real estate was regarded as the mainstream urban renewal path then, and real estate enterprises became the core market force in this Development Regime. Through an effective alliance with the government, it has monopolized urban land’s primary and secondary development. In most areas of Nanjing, including SPOCN, many demolition and reconstruction projects are undertaken by real estate companies supported by the government. The government obtains land value income through land procedures of “bidding, auction, and listing”, and returns 17% of it to real estate companies as tax subsidies. While real estate companies were responsible for the infrastructure investment and construction in real-estate development projects for exchange. In this way, the government obtained considerable fiscal revenue and released some pressure on public services and facilities. Such a smooth and reasonable alignment path significantly accelerated the “Development Regime” spatial practice during this period.

3.2 Against growth: Protection under middle-class progressive regime

3.2.1 SPOCN incident and reconstruction guerrilla

From the 1990s to the early 2000s, the efficient alliance of government and market has damaged a large number of historical buildings and blocks in SPOCN. In 2006, five historic districts along the Qinhuai River, including Pigment Square, Diaoyutai, Chuanbanxiang, Mendong, and Anpin Street, in SPOCN, were listed as new demolish missions, which made cultural scholars and aborigines vehemently oppose. They believed that it is a disaster for Nanjing and even the Chinese nation’s cultural heritage. Therefore, Wu Liangyong, Xie Chensheng, and other 16 significant intellectuals in China drafted the article “Urgent appeal for preserving Nanjing’s Historic Old Town” [23] to the Premier of the State Council, hoping that high-level forces would intervene to restrain local sabotage. This is the “SPOCN Incident”.

With the intervention of the central forces in the local demolition and reconstruction behavior, a “guerrilla war” was staged in SPOCN for the four years from 2006 to 2010. The central government proposed to the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, the Jiangsu Provincial Government, the Legislative Affairs Office, and other relevant authorities to revise the new requirements for the protection of historical and cultural cities and put pressure on the Nanjing local government through vertical administrative management. In the face of heavy pressure from the top, the Nanjing local government decided to take an initial roundabout tactic. On the one hand, the local government of Nanjing went to Beijing many times to report the progress of renewal movements in SPOCN and responded to the pressure from the upper level with the new “16-character” renewal policy of “Overall protection (*zhengti baohu*), Organic renewal (*youji gengxin*), Government-led (*zhengfu zhudao*), and cautious use of the market force” (*shenyong shichang*). On the other hand, in the face of the urgent land demand and financial pressure on the local development, the demolition and rebuilding of the old city were still promoted in the form of the “Development Regime”. While waiting for the “SPOCN Incident” to stabilize slightly, the Nanjing local government once again promoted a new round of demolition in SPOCN. In 2008, eight districts of Nanjing in the southern area of the Yangtze River launched a large-scale housing regeneration and replacement. The only remaining four historical sites in SPOCN (Nanpu Hall, Mendong, Menxi, and Cangxiang) were once again included in the scope of the



demolition and reconstruction project. In April 2009, 29 cultural personnel in Nanjing again alerted the State Council’s Prime Minister with a letter of “Urgent protection of Nanjing historical and cultural city” [24]. In this way, the central government has increased the degree of administrative intervention and dispatched a central monitoring team to the SPOCN to stop the demolition and replacement movements.

3.2.2 The alignment of social and upper government forces

Through the well-known “SPOCN Incident”, a social force composed of the middle class represented by the urban cultural elites took the initiative to intervene in the local renewal behavior. With the support of the central high-level government in a way that crosses the administrative level. The “Development Regime” that was popular in the previous renewal process has evolved into a “Middle-Class Progressive Regime” (Fig. 3).

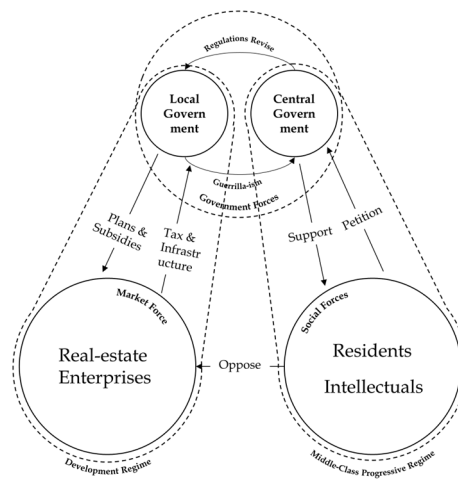


Figure 3: Middle-Class Progressive Regime in SPOCN under Anti-Growth Discourse. (Copyright by Authors.)

The static protection of the cultural, spiritual, material, and other diverse values contained in the historical heritage of SPOCN is the core driving force for social forces to intervene strongly and oppose the original “Development Regime”. The rise of the social force composed of cultural elites is an anti-growth force formed by the folk from the “bottom-up” after suffering colossal damage caused by the “growth-oriented” development. Using Polanyi’s “Two-way Motion” theory, the dynamic logic behind such phenomena can be well explained. A large number of market stimulation mechanisms formed in the “rapid growth stage” in SPOCN make the market forces. But at the same time, the active protection of social factors such as nature and culture issues also form a balancing force against the market’s laissez-faire development.

Successfully crossing the administrative management level and gaining strong support from high-level government forces are the critical factors for the “Middle-Class Progressive Regime” to form the “anti-growth” protest movement in SPOCN. It is difficult for a single social force to intervene in the government-led urban development process, especially in China’s strict administrative hierarchy and policy-oriented urban governance mechanism. On

the contrary, China's unique inter-government management system effectively enables social forces to intervene in local development through higher-level government forces. However, nor are all "bottom-up" protests able to alarm the central government. The social force in the "SPOCN Incident" represents the top intellectual group in China's current society, and only then can higher social resources be used to exert the restrictive role of social force in the urban governance mechanism.

3.3 Beyond growth: Micro-renewal under Lower-Class Opportunity Expansion Regime

3.3.1 Dilemma: Both depressions of population and landscape

The governance of urban renewal movements in SPOCN has experienced the "Development Regime" and the "Middle-Class Progressive Regime", respectively, which has brought an embarrassing dilemma to the actual situation of the historic area. On the one hand, from the 1990s to the early 2000s, only about 10% of the Old City of Nanjing was left under the rapid advancement by the "Development Regime". On the other hand, the "Middle-Class Progressive Regime" overemphasizes the static material protection of historic heritage and cultural relics. As a result, although SPOCN has experienced ten years of stability, it forms a strong contrast with the surrounding bustling urban landscape.

After the SPOCN Incident, the only remaining historic district has gradually become depressed in population and urban landscape as the forgetting time. Under the "Middle-Class Progressive Regime" intervention, the government has accelerated the formulation of policies and plans related to historical and cultural protection. The "Regulation on the Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages" have been formed across the country, and the old city area of Nanjing has formed a protection grading system. SPOCN has also stepped up the preparation of the "Preservation Planning and Urban Design of the SPOCN". On the one hand, this series of new governance forces centered on protecting history and culture by controlling indicators such as height limit, floor area ratio, and land use limit. These have strongly protected the only remaining historic blocks in SPOCN, however, caused the exclusion from the incremental development process of the city for many years. Continuous decline has turned the initially prosperous SPOCN into a landscape depression in the center of Nanjing. For example, the quality of life in the designated historical districts is in the frozen time of 1980s. Most residences lack independent facilities such as kitchens, toilets, and showers. On the other hand, the decay of physical space also forced many aborigines to move out of SPOCN due to their longing for a better quality of life. While cheap rents and a decaying environment have attracted a large influx of lower-class residents over time. Through visiting and investigating the historical areas such as Xiaoxihu, Hehuatang, and Diaoyutai in SPOCN that have not been renewed, it is found that the population structure of these areas is dominated by low-income households, prisoners of labor reform, the elderly, and other urban vulnerable groups.

3.3.2 Process: Stay, adapt or demolish by willingness of vulnerable groups

Facing the contradiction between the increasingly strict protection of historical urban areas and the increasingly severe living environment of the old city, the renewal paradigm must be transformed to bring hope to these urban depressions. Whether it is the "massive demolition and reconstruction" guided by the previous "Development Regime" or the static protection guided by the "Middle-Class Progressive Regime", neither is an excellent way to change the double depression of population and landscape, which needs innovation.

The needs of the vulnerable groups are the core content of the new renewal plan in SPOCN, and it has evolved into the new renewal procedure of "Stay-Adapt-or-Demolish"



rather than direct “Demolition–Reconstruction”. Taking the Dayoufang project as an example, a large amount of social work was placed at the beginning of the project, communicating with 810 aboriginal households in the plot for one year. The project finally formed the content of the detailed plan in which 402 households chose to keep the original property rights, and 408 households chose to relocate and exchange their original property. Most of the 402 aboriginal households who choose to retain the property rights are in the form of private dwelling (*Sifang*). Under the overall positioning of no demolition, the renewal plan provides many new ideas for how to stay and in what form to update by holding design competitions and other methods. Therefore, in the specific practice of the project, the adaptive reuse of old buildings such as “shared courtyard” and “community cafe” appeared. In the face of 408 households who chose to relocate, the new model did not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach to suburban resettlement as before but went deeper into the types of residents. According to the different properties of public housing, private housing, and unit housing, as well as the living and economic conditions of the residents themselves, the new plan formulates three types of options: “translational resettlement”, “nearby resettlement”, and “suburban resettlement”. For the buildings left by the aborigines after the relocation, the district government, design, and development companies shall purchase and protect them or demolish them for other purposes according to the requirements of historical protection. Overall, the relocation released 48 building spaces (including preservation and demolition), all of which were used to improve the quality of public space in the neighborhood and stimulate the vitality of traditional blocks.

Governments’ active transformation of the real estate-led market force is the objective factor in ensuring the emergence of a “Lower-Class Opportunity Expansion Regime” in SPOCN (Fig. 4). In the previous “Development Regime”, the market power composed of real estate enterprises could join voluntarily because of the value surplus in the operation of the urban land. However, in the face of the “SPOCN Incident” and the new development melody from the central government, the Nanjing Municipal Government proposed a new strategic orientation for “cautious use of market force” (*shenyong shichang*). This has

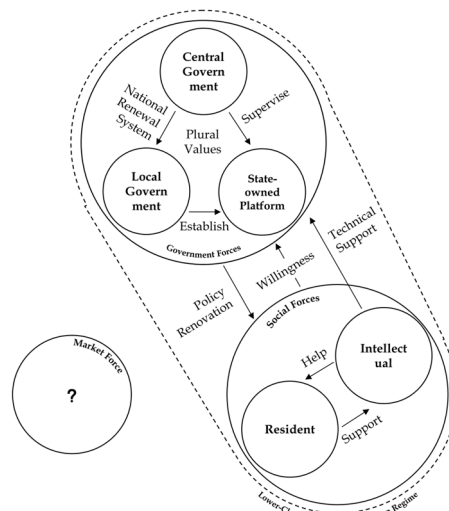


Figure 4: Lower-Class Opportunity Expansion Regime in SPOCN under Beyond Growth Discourse. (Copyright by Authors.)



dramatically reduced the residual value in the land operation. As the most profit-seeking market force, it is impossible to participate in a micro-renewal activity such as Dayoufang. Therefore, government forces began to integrate the real estate enterprises scattered in the market but with a government nature through the state-owned platform. It re-incorporated them into the government agencies through the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission. This ensures the smooth implementation of the “Stay-Adapt-or-Demolish” micro-renewal method centered on considering the vulnerable groups’ living and livelihood needs.

3.3.3 Result: “Good film, but small audience”

For a while, the Dayoufang project has received unanimous praise from all walks of life in Nanjing, the media, and the central government. After extensive publicity by various media, the government’s image, which was previously labeled as “violent demolisher”, has been completely changed. At the same time, the domestic architectural academic journal *Architect* also specially organized an academic interview to discuss the new micro-renewal method in SPOCN. However, if we look at the new paradigm under the guidance of the “Lower-Class Opportunity Expansion Regime” in SPOCN from a more objective and rational perspective in reality, it creates a strange circle of “Good film, but small audience” (*jiaohao bujiaozuo*).

From the perspective of the government and the public, the micro-renewal paradigm in SPOCN has indeed largely solved the longtime difficulties of the dilapidated appearance and brought opportunities to vulnerable groups in the historic district. It is a triumphant work for people’s livelihood and public services. However, from the perspective of sustainable replication and promotion of the project, the micro-renewal model that appears on the surface has the embarrassing situation of the infinite investment from the government side. It still has the color of planned distribution under the strong spatial Keynesianism, which increases the pressure on the fair redistribution of government finances and public welfare. In particular, establishing a state-owned platform to incorporate government enterprises pushes away the market force in the renewal movement (Fig. 4). It causes Vanke and other large enterprises and NGOs cannot enter the urban renewal market in Nanjing. The core of the contradiction is that the micro-renewal paradigm does not generate surplus value or new value that can attract or create new market forces, and there is a stage dilemma of sustainable promotion.

4 THE POWER SHIFTS OF URBAN REGIME IN SPOCN

Based on the trinity framework of government force, market forces, and social force in the URT, this paper analyzes the transformation of the urban renewal governance model in SPOCN since the 1990s. It finds that under the combined effect of different era policies and internal contradictions, its governance model has changed from “Development Regime”, “Middle-Class Progressive Regime”, to “Lower-Class Opportunity Expansion Regime”. The internal driving force for this transformation comes from the successive shifts of government, social, and market forces in facing new development discourses.

4.1 Transformation of government force: Coordinated development of plural values

Government power is the main driving force for the change of the urban regime in the renewal process of the SPOCN, and it also reflects the change in the government’s values of the renewal and the production of urban space under the development discourses of the new era. In the context of the 1990s, continuous reform and opening up created a “growth-oriented” urban expansion strategy across the country. Therefore, in the early reconstruction of



SPOCN, the government regarded urban land and space as the critical carrier to promoting growth. The role of government was to focus on breaking the institutional barriers that hinder the rapid circulation of growth factors. With the deepening of marketization, the highly compressed urban development process has exposed many social problems that damage the ecological and human environment, which led to the awakening of internal social forces to balance the disorderly expansion of the market during the renewal process of SPOCN in the early 2000s. However, local government force was highly dependent on the growth path, and its acceptance and integration of new values initially showed resistance and coping, making it appear to be a common differentiation phenomenon in the early stage of transformation. While with the recent high-level government's correction of plural values such as culture, ecology, history, landscape, and humanism in urban development, local governments have also taken the initiative to start a new round of transformation and exploration of governance models. The government force in this period differed from the "growth-oriented" period, turned to serve multiple values and people-oriented governance exploration. However, there has also been a staged dilemma of blindly pursuing political achievements and disregarding costs.

4.2 Expansion of social force: The gradual return of people-oriented value

The changes in the urban regime in SPOCN have witnessed the evolution of social forces in China's urban renewal governance, from the marginalization of the discourse system to the centralization. It has also witnessed China's unique form of an anti-growth coalition between senior intellectuals and high-level governments. Under the influence of the "growth orientation" formed since the 1990s, because of lacking production factors, social forces are often in a weak position in the old city renewal governance system. The owners who make up the social force are often passively arranged by the system and the market, being resettled far away from the urban area. However, with the improvement of the quantity and quality of intellectuals, the non-economic values of culture, history, ecology in urban construction have been continuously strengthened in social consciousness. The progressive values representing the middle class began to speak in the governance of the old city renewal, forming the initial form of social force. Universities and experts have joined in formulating urban renewal plans, ensuring it is no longer just a tool for profit-seeking under the coalition of government and market forces. With the re-recognition of cultural, ecological, social, and other non-economic values in urban space by the central government, the relatively vulnerable groups and residents have returned to the core position of governance, realizing the proper return of people-oriented values in social forces.

4.3 Withdrawal of market force: The continuous decline of economic value

The market power of real estate enterprises was the main body for implementing most of the old city reconstruction in SPOCN. After forming a real-estate growth machine with government forces, market forces not only provide new living space for the old city but also provide infrastructure support. However, with the transformation of government forces and the continuous strengthening of social forces in the reconstruction of SPOCN, the plural values of space, such as the use-value, cultural value, and historical value, have gradually surpassed the exchange value surrounding the operation of land and space. Therefore, urban micro-renewal projects in SPOCN are all undertaken by government developers on the government's state-owned platform. Moreover, developers with market capital have selectively withdrawn from many community, historical and residential renewal projects.



The most significant difference between government developers and market developers is that the investment funds of government developers come from the government's fiscal or fiscal transfer revenue. The essence of fiscal revenue is for general social service expenditures, not for improving the quality of life of a particular area or even some owners. Moreover, compared with the method of demolition, reconstruction, and re-sale, the micro-renewal based on the residents' willingness have very little profit, and it is impossible to achieve a balance of payments. This transformation has brought severe hidden dangers to the financial sustainability of old city renewal, and the efficient implementation of the micro-renewal paradigm requires further exploration.

5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

With the increasingly tense global environment and the new era of urgent transformation, China's urban development has officially entered the exploratory stage of new regime of urban regeneration. In the practice of Shanghai, Beijing, Guangdong, Nanjing, and other pioneering areas, micro-renewal project practices have different from the traditional growth-oriented demolition and reconstruction. They spontaneously changed the previous urban growth machine (aligned with government and market forces), and formed a new governance regime by government and social forces. This paper selects SPOCN in Nanjing City as the research object and analyzes the evolution process of this governance transformation and the changes of forces from the perspective of URT.

This paper finds that the renovation of the old city in the SPOCN, has experienced the changes in governance modes of "development regime", "middle-class progressive regime", and "lower-class expansion regime" in different contexts of times. Government force has played a leading role in this transformation process, showing distinct Chinese characteristics. Through the continuous evolution and improvement of its development concept, the government's understanding of urban space has gradually evolved from a single economic value that was "growth-oriented" in the past to a plural value composed of economic, ecological, cultural, historical, and social, and other people-oriented values. The changes of government forces has dramatically promoted the transformation of the local urban regime. The most noticeable feature is the continuous expansion of social force in the urban regime, from the marginalization in the early "Development Regime", to the intense confrontation in the mid-term "Middle-Class Progressive Regime", and then to the centralized position in the current "Lower-Class Opportunity Regime". It ensures that people-oriented values return to social forces and urban regime. The new renewal project governed by the "Lower-Class Opportunity Regime" has won unanimous praise from the public, believing that it is a new trend of future urban regeneration governance. However, in reality, such models have fallen into the problematic situation of "Good film, but small audience". The core contradiction is the regime's weakening or even the absence of traditional market forces. It brings enormous financial pressure to the government, and it has become a new era problem in the renewal of old cities, primarily residential and community types. Further research on related governance mechanisms and policies needs to address these issues.

It can be seen that this paper once again proves the applicability of the "Urban Regime Theory" with the characteristics of Western localism in the study of urban development with Chinese characteristics. It also exposes the inner laws of the government's ability to mobilize social and market resources to achieve a stable governance regime [25]. Meanwhile, this study also proves the absolute leading role of government forces in development and transformation of urban China.



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