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Bontje, Marco

DOI

[10.1080/13563475.2019.1657383](https://doi.org/10.1080/13563475.2019.1657383)

Publication date

2019

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

International Planning Studies

License

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[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Bontje, M. (2019). Shenzhen: satellite city or city of satellites? *International Planning Studies*, 24(3-4), 255-271. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563475.2019.1657383>

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Shenzhen: satellite city or city of satellites?

Marco Bontje

Department of Geography, Planning and International Development Studies, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands

ABSTRACT

The term 'satellite city' can be applied at multiple scales and with multiple meanings. In this article, the Chinese city of Shenzhen will be viewed both as a satellite city at the (mega)city-level, and as a city consisting of many sub-city satellites. In the first years after becoming China's first Special Economic Zone, Shenzhen developed as a satellite city not only of its neighbour Hong Kong, but also of Beijing, as the first zone of experiments with 'capitalism with socialist characteristics'. In later development stages the city has emancipated to also become a centre in its own right. At the same time, however, Shenzhen is a 'city of satellites', comprising many sub-centres that could also be seen as satellites themselves. After exploring Shenzhen as a whole as a satellite city of Hong Kong, Beijing and other 'external influencers', we will discuss three examples of different types of sub-city satellites: OCT, Shekou/Qianghai, and Guangming New Town.



KEYWORDS

Satellite cities; new towns; special economic zone; Shenzhen; China

Introduction

'Satellite city' is a concept lacking clear definitional boundaries. In recent academic and policy debates, the term 'satellite city' most often refers to planned new developments around existing (large) cities, meant to solve large city problems or to raise urban competitiveness, targeting specific population groups and/or economic sectors with a specific theme or 'brand'. In the introduction to this special issue, Van Leynseele and Bontje describe such developments as new property investment frontiers and status projects in settings of rapid economic and political transformation. By many national, regional and city governments, satellite cities are considered one of the main vehicles of contemporary urban and economic development. At the same time though, many satellite city developments suffer from shortcomings, often unable to bridge the gap between planned and lived realities (van Leynseele and Bontje this issue). While satellite city developments across the Global South have many things in common, the contributions to this special issue also demonstrate a range of spatial, social and economic manifestations and dimensions. This article will mainly focus on the spatial dimension of satellite city development. The satellite city concept can be applied at multiple scales and with multiple meanings, and it could be situated anywhere within a city-region. Its absolute location is less relevant than its relative location and position in city-regional networks; with any type of development called 'satellite city' one should ask the question 'what is this a satellite of?'

The Chinese city of Shenzhen could be called 'satellite city' both at the (mega)city level and at the sub-city level. Especially in its foundation years as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), Shenzhen could be seen as a satellite city of its neighbour Hong Kong, and/or of Beijing as the first zone of experiments

CONTACT Marco Bontje  M.A.Bontje@uva.nl  Department of Geography, Planning and International Development Studies, University of Amsterdam, PO Box 15629, Amsterdam 1001 NC, Netherlands

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with ‘capitalism with socialist characteristics’. At the same time, however, Shenzhen is a ‘city of satellites’: a highly fragmented city with many older and newer project development sites that could be seen as satellites in themselves. These sub-city satellites have been or will be built both within and beyond the central city area, each with different planning goals and target groups in mind.

This paper presents an explorative analysis of to what extent and in which ways Shenzhen as a whole as well as parts of that city could be seen as satellite cities, and how Shenzhen’s development so far and its future development perspectives could be interpreted from that perspective. The analysis is based on literature review, observations of the author, and research projects the author has been involved in as a researcher or supervisor.¹ Before turning to the case study analysis, the role of satellite cities and related concepts like new towns and economic zones in strategic planning in East and Southeast Asia in general, and China in particular, is discussed. Then, the satellite city concept is first applied to Shenzhen as a whole, and afterwards to three cases at the sub-city level: OCT, Guangming New Town and Qianhai – Shekou.

Satellite cities and new towns in East and Southeast Asia

Though East Asia and Southeast Asia should also be considered as separate regions with their own development trajectories, it makes sense to look at both regions combined here to provide a context for studying satellite city development in China.

Especially in the first post-colonial decades, former British colonies like Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia developed their urban and regional planning partly in the footsteps of UK traditions. Even when they increasingly developed their own planning cultures and approaches later, in which ‘world city’ strategies and US examples became more influential, the lasting influence of UK planning heritage can still be felt. ‘Typically British’ planning concepts like new towns, garden cities/garden suburbs and green belts have been developed in Singapore, Hong Kong and the Kuala Lumpur region since the 1960s. As Lai and Baker (2014) argue, the Metroplan of the last British colonial government, including several new towns and further development of an earlier wave of new towns, has continued to determine Hong Kong’s regional planning even well after Hong Kong’s return to China. In Singapore, more than 80% of its citizens live in new towns planned, built and regulated by the state (Shatkin 2014). The first of these new towns was built partly during and partly after British colonial rule. Many more new towns have followed since then, but after the British left Singapore has become an internationally recognized expert in new town development itself. New towns are one of the key elements in what can be considered as ‘one massive mega project’ of ‘urban planning under state capitalism’ (Shatkin 2014, 117), consisting of new towns, CBDs and redeveloped historic districts. More indirectly this British (and US) planning influence also reached other parts of Southeast Asia; middle-class communities resembling new towns were also developed since the 1960s and 1970s in, for example, the city-regions of Jakarta, Surabaya and Manila (Dick and Rimmer 1998).

In Japan, the first sub-centres and satellite cities were developed in the Tokyo metropolitan region already in the 1920s and 1930s. This initially happened mostly as a suburban market-driven development in which private railway companies became the leading real estate developers around stations and railways. Local and metropolitan government incorporated these new developments in their strategic plans later. Influences from the UK and Europe like the garden city movement were equally influential here as in Southeast-Asia (Sorensen 2001). However, although several satellite city projects have also been realized since the 1960s, in recent decades ‘(...) urbanization proceeded mostly through innumerable tiny, scattered increments of a handful of houses, rather than by large-scale projects that imposed their own design logic and rules’ (Sorensen 2016, 137). The ‘green belt’ that was supposed to restrict urban sprawl and concentrate the dispersal in the satellite cities proved ineffective and was abolished in the late 1960s. Still, multi-polar development would remain a key element of Tokyo’s metropolitan planning (Sorensen 2001).

In South Korea, several waves of new towns have been realized since the 1970s, most of them in the Seoul Metropolitan Area. Initially, the main reasons for these new towns were to solve Seoul’s

housing shortage and to provide affordable housing. These first new towns were planned and realized through a highly centralized, developmental state (Lee and Shin 2011). Later generations of new towns were planned and built under a more decentralized governance system, in which local governments and private partners gained influence. These private partners were often companies closely related to the national and/or local government, though. Next to the changing governance of the new town programme, its planning goals and development targets also changed: the later new towns were planned to be more complete cities. However, Lee and Shin (2011) doubt whether this aspired 'self-containment' is a realistic goal; most of the new towns will probably rather develop as satellites subordinate to the metropolitan core, even though the Seoul region has become more polycentric. Meanwhile, another generation of new development hubs has been developed that could be considered as 'satellites of the satellites', like New Songdo City, developed as part of a 'Free Economic Zone' on the edge of Incheon, which in turn once started its development as a satellite city of Seoul (Kim 2010; Kim 2014; Rughkapan and Murray this issue). These projects are not about affordable housing (or housing more in general) anymore, but rather focus on competitiveness, experiments with neoliberalism and twenty-first century city concepts like the 'smart city'. New Songdo is proudly presenting South Korea as an advanced capitalist economy (Kim 2014), but is also criticized as '(...) a segregated and exclusive space, catering for the rich and powerful and becoming their own version of an urban utopia' (Shin 2017, 99).

The earlier experiences with city-regional development strategies in Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and South Korea in general, and the development of satellite cities and new towns as an important element in particular, were inspiration sources for China when it started its urban and economic transformation in the late 1970s (Zhang 2012). Neighbouring countries in Southeast Asia where economic growth, urbanization and modernization took off later were also following those, as well as the Chinese, examples, resulting in a considerable and still growing number of satellite cities, new towns and similar types of development across all of East and Southeast Asia. While each country or city may add some of its particular characteristics, these developments show many parallels in terms of the built environment, urban design, planning process, stakeholders etc. Satellite city concepts, designs and imaginaries 'travel' across East- and Southeast Asia's borders in many ways; partly because architects, planners, consultants and/or developers increasingly work across national borders, partly also because of mutual referencing and rivalry between emerging mega-city regions aspiring to become 'world class' (Zhang 2012; Ong 2011). Examples include the private-sector development of satellite cities in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in which master planning consultants from Singapore and developers from South Korea and Indonesia were involved (Percival and Waley 2012), and several megaprojects in the peri-urban area south of Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam), developed by firms from amongst others South Korea, Malaysia and Hong Kong (Douglass and Huang 2007). While a first wave of new towns or satellite cities (Tokyo 1920s/1930s, Southeast-Asia 1960s/1970s/1980s) were initially planned rather monofunctionally, either as residential commuter suburbs or as industrial towns, the most recent wave of new towns and satellite cities seems to have a different character, more in line with what is currently happening across the Global South. 'Themed' new towns and satellites have become very popular. Keeton (2011), for example, distinguished the new town categories 'eco-cities', 'political cities' (new national or regional capitals), 'enclave cities', 'economic cities' (to develop new sectors to diversify a national or regional economy), 'hi-tech cities', and 'shelter cities'. Only shelter cities are reminiscent of 'traditional' new towns built to accommodate population deconcentration from the central cities. The other categories are most often designed and developed as mixed-use live-work environments, having the ambition to become complete cities, more than just sub-centres or satellites of their 'mother city'.

SEZs, satellite cities and new towns as strategic elements of China's urban and economic transformation

China's first generation of new towns was already planned in the early socialist era. This first generation of new towns was planned in support of large state-owned industrial complexes and

new economic corridors at the edges of Shanghai and Beijing. Inspiration was found in a curious cross-over of Western and Soviet examples, like the Greater London Plan of 1944 and the industrial satellite towns in the former Soviet Union. However, attracting residents to these new towns appeared difficult since they were unattractive and inconvenient places to live. Further development of these new towns and economic corridors stagnated in the Cultural Revolution years (1966–1976) when strategic planning was out of grace. Strategic planning revived when the reform and open door policy was introduced in 1978; this also meant a renewed interest in the development of new towns and economic corridors (Wu 2015). New towns were developed to stimulate and facilitate economic growth and to create new opportunities for real estate development. Although some new towns and satellite cities are rather of neighbourhood or small town size, more often they are planned for hundreds of thousands or sometimes even more than a million inhabitants. They are usually also planned as high-rise, high-density developments, a feature they have in common with several other East Asian and Southeast-Asian new towns. Most of the new town categories that Keeton (2011) distinguishes in Asia have become popular in China too. In recent years especially ‘eco-cities’ and/or ‘low-carbon cities’ are very fashionable (Yu 2014; Morera 2017). We will return to this type of development later when we discuss the case of Guangming New Town.

Many recent new towns originated as ‘development zones’, zones with reduced regulations to attract industries and foreign direct investment (FDI) from specific sectors. The first generation of such zones were the SEZs. Shenzhen was the first SEZ, soon followed by three others. SEZs were the areas where China’s first experiments with ‘capitalism with Chinese characteristics’ took place. The SEZ locations were strategically chosen at China’s south-eastern coast in the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian: close to Hong Kong (Shenzhen), Macau (Zhuhai) or Taiwan (Shantou and Xiamen). All four SEZs combined nearness to these role models of capitalist development and strategic planning with ‘safe distance’ from the political centre in Beijing, in case the experiments would go wrong. Moreover, Guangdong and Fujian had a long history of trade and kinship relations with Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan and large overseas diasporas across the globe. The FDI and expertise to be attracted should mainly come from those relations and diasporas initially. This strategy worked particularly well for Shenzhen, which clearly became the most successful SEZ, mostly thanks to massive flows of FDI and lots of strategic economic and spatial planning expertise from neighbouring Hong Kong. The other early SEZs lagged behind in their development, since the ‘Macau effect’ on Zhuhai was much more modest and the tensions between China and Taiwan negatively impacted Shantou and Xiamen (Yeung, Lee, and Kee 2009). Still, overall the SEZ experiment was seen as successful and several elements of this approach were expanded to other parts of China in the 1980s and 1990s.

Recently a new generation of development zones has been created. Free Trade Zones (FTZs) are the next step of the Chinese government towards opening up its economy to attract additional FDI. Just like with the SEZs in the 1980s, China has chosen to first experiment with this in a few areas, after which the model could possibly be spread throughout the country. FTZs have less customs control, allow financial experiments and have more possibilities to attract investment than the rest of mainland China. The most important task for FTZs is to be a testing ground for institutional reforms and innovations, which is considered more important than actual trade growth (Yao and Whalley 2016). The first FTZ was opened in Shanghai in 2013. In 2015, three more were added, one of which is in Guangdong. One of the cases to be discussed later, Qianhai-Shekou, is the Shenzhen part of the Guangdong FTZ.

Shenzhen, the ‘instant megacity’

What is currently the city of Shenzhen was the mostly rural Bao’an County until the late 1970s. When Vogel (2017) first visited Shenzhen in 1973, it was a small border town of about 30,000 people, while the rest of Bao’an County (with about 300,000 inhabitants) consisted of farmland, villages, scattered farms and nature areas. In 1979, an area of about 400 km² within Bao’an County was

designated China's first SEZ. Shortly ahead of this, a first capitalist experiment had already started in Shekou (Huang 2017): ships from Hong Kong were torn down and the scrap was used for new ship-building. The initiator was the China Merchant Steam Navigation Company from Hong Kong, a subsidiary of China Merchants Group that would later become one of China's leading state-owned conglomerates. By 1987, Shenzhen's SEZ development was well underway, starting from two initial cores: Shekou, where meanwhile more industries were added around the shipyards, and Luohu, at the border crossing with Hong Kong. Luohu became the first business centre of Shenzhen, where overseas Chinese and foreigners willing to invest in the emerging city were welcomed in modern hotels and offices (Vogel 2017). Shenzhen's next development steps mostly took place in-between those two initial cores, as a 'clustered linear development' (Zacharias and Tang 2010) along the coast of Shenzhen Bay. This resulted in amongst others Shenzhen's new CBD Futian, the mixed-use area OCT (one of the cases to be discussed later), and the high-tech/higher education cluster of Shenzhen University and High-Tech Park.

Even though Shenzhen's development was guided by masterplans from the very first years, it can only partly be called a planned development. While infrastructure was planned at city level, the development of factory complexes, residential areas and facilities rather took place in a piecemeal fashion. Multiple new development cores were realized parallel to each other by different investors and developers, and Shenzhen's population growth, especially the 'floating population' of labour migrants, continuously outpaced the targets set by politicians and planners (Ng and Tang 2004; Zacharias and Tang 2010; Vlassenrood 2016a; Huang 2017). Moreover, Shenzhen was no 'tabula rasa', as the new city had to be built around the already existing villages. As an exception to the general rule of state-owned land, the villagers had collective land use and property rights. They were allowed to start Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs), described by Oi (1999) as a form of 'local state corporatism'. Next to the FDI from Hong Kong and overseas, these TVEs were the main driving force behind Shenzhen's early transformation phase; and also elsewhere in China they contributed to a massive 'rural industrialisation' (Lin 1997). The TVEs built factories and residential complexes to accommodate the millions of labour migrants moving to Shenzhen from all over China. They also sold much of their farmland to investors and developers. The villages were transformed into 'urban villages', described by O'Donnell, Wong, and Bach (2017, 8) as 'exceptional spaces within an already exceptional SEZ (...) a zone within the zone, playing a critical role in shaping the city'.

In 2004, all of the former Bao'an County became part of the City of Shenzhen. In 2010, the Shenzhen SEZ was also expanded to include the entire city area. The Shenzhen City Government inherited a chaotic, largely unplanned urban fringe. Redeveloping this fringe and connecting it better to the central city areas is no easy task since government agendas at multiple scales (district, city, province, country) as well as developers' strategic agendas are often at odds with each other. Despite this huge expansion, not much new development land could be added, since much had already been developed before it became part of Shenzhen City and the expansion included large nature areas unfit for urban development as well. By then, more sustainable ways of urban and regional development had become a policy priority too (Ng 2019). In the 2010–2020 masterplan, an 'Ecological Control Line' was introduced, largely prohibiting development on almost 50% of Shenzhen's land. Shenzhen's development strategy focus has shifted from extension and new development to redeveloping the existing built environment, increasing redevelopment pressure on the most centrally located urban villages in particular. This change of spatial development strategy ran parallel to Shenzhen's economic transformation. After the first decades of growth were based on low-cost industrial mass production, Shenzhen shifted its economic focus to light industries, high tech industries, and commercial services (Bontje 2014). These spatial and economic development strategy changes were unavoidable to deal with the 'growing pains of hyperactive economic growth' (Chen and de'Medici 2010, 143), including the shortage of land, energy and water, environmental problems and population growth outpacing service supply.

Shenzhen as a satellite city

When Shenzhen started its fast growth as a SEZ, in the 1980s and 1990s, it could definitely be seen as a satellite city, tightly related to and dependent on at least two ‘parents’ in complex and sometimes conflicting ways: its immediate neighbour Hong Kong, and the Chinese national government in distant Beijing. Other external influencers on Shenzhen’s development, though less influential, were the province of Guangdong and investors from Singapore, Taiwan and the US. We will now briefly explore Shenzhen’s relations with these external influencers and the extent to which the more mature Shenzhen of the early twenty-first century should still be considered as a ‘satellite city’.

Shenzhen, Hong Kong, Guangdong and Beijing

Shenzhen as we know it today would have been impossible without Hong Kong. The location of China’s first SEZ adjacent to Hong Kong was a deliberate choice. Arguments included Guangdong’s history as an international gateway to China; a ‘safe’ place to experiment far from Beijing; maximizing potential profits from Hong Kong; and a possible step towards full integration of Hong Kong into China (Yang 2005; Campanella 2008). Shenzhen’s growth was largely financed by capital from Hong Kong, and many of the first Shenzhen factories moved from Hong Kong or were set up by Hong Kong entrepreneurs (Ng 2003). After Hong Kong had profited from cheap labour force from mainland China to develop a low-cost mass production economy in the 1960s and 1970s, Shenzhen became the preferred low-cost mass production site for Hong Kong investors and companies in the 1980s. Hong Kong investors, developers, consultants and policy-makers have strongly influenced and inspired Shenzhen’s earliest development stages in many ways, including the introduction of market-based flexible labour contracts, land market regulation through leasing and auctions, and the stock exchange (all ‘Shenzhen firsts’ in communist China); the ‘Hong Kong model’ of strategic metropolitan planning; and commercial real estate development. As China’s first and most successful SEZ, Shenzhen’s pioneering experiences were afterwards often ‘copied’ into national economic and urban development policies and strategies. However, when Shenzhen moved ‘from creating capitalism to governing capitalism’ (Zhang 2012), the example of Hong Kong became increasingly problematic. Rights and principles like democracy, freedom of speech and expression and public participation in the planning process, as limited as these may all be in Hong Kong, were rather seen as a potential threat than as an example by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The lack of long-term single-party rule and the large influence of local tycoons and foreign investors on Hong Kong’s development were probably also not seen as an example to follow. Instead, the authoritarian regime of Singapore became a more attractive inspiration source for Shenzhen and China. Meanwhile, Hong Kong’s relatively privileged status after its return to China, as a ‘special administrative region’ under the ‘one country, two systems’ regime, is increasingly under pressure. The fear of ‘mainlandization’ in Hong Kong is troubling the Hong Kong–Shenzhen relations (Kwong 2016).²

How Shenzhen is related to ‘Beijing’ (the Chinese national government and the CCP) and the province of Guangdong and how this changed since 1979 is a complicated question to which probably only CCP insiders know the right answer. Direct influence of the highest CCP ranks was of course obvious in Shenzhen’s first years as a SEZ. Deng Xiaoping himself was one of the founding fathers of China’s SEZs and has promoted and encouraged Shenzhen’s development on several occasions. Zhang (2012, 2854) describes Shenzhen as ‘the flagship laboratory of Deng Xiaoping’s reform and open door policy’. Beijing’s influence on Shenzhen’s development can be traced in both direct and indirect ways. Different pieces of Shenzhen were developed in the late 1970s and the 1980s by different stakeholders, all somehow related to Chinese national government and/or the CCP: state-owned developing companies, joint ventures of state-owned industrial companies with foreign investors, national ministries, companies related to the Chinese armed forces, etc. This ‘enclave logic’ of development (Huang 2017) contributed to Shenzhen’s fragmented structure as a ‘city of satellites’

that we will get back to in more detail in the next section. Shenzhen's development stagnated in the late 1980s and early 1990s, though, when in the aftermath of 'Tiananmen' and Deng's loss of power the 'reform and open door policy' fell out of grace. Deng's 'Southern Tour' in 1992 restored the Shenzhen – Beijing relations and gave a new impetus to the further development of the SEZs. More recently, a new sign of Shenzhen's prominent position in China was Xi Jinping's first visit outside of Beijing shortly after becoming China's new leader in 2012. He visited Shenzhen to honour the 20th anniversary of Deng's 'Southern Tour'. Around that time, as O'Donnell, Wong, and Bach (2017, 3) remark, 'Shenzhen had become the poster city for the success of official planning and policies'. In recent years most national strategic urban and economic development programmes included Shenzhen as one of the pioneering participants; examples include China's eco-city programme and the FTZs. However, how much direct influence do the national and provincial governments still have on Shenzhen's affairs? Local governments have become more autonomous in China and Shenzhen's local government even more than most others. In the mid-1990s, Shenzhen got the 'vice-provincial city' status, meaning that although it is still part of Guangdong province, its economic planning and administrative powers are equal to those of the provincial government (Zacharias and Tang 2010; Shen 2007). Still, despite Shenzhen's growth from small town to megacity and its increasing local autonomy, 'Beijing' will probably remain sufficiently in control. Shin (2014) makes clear that increasing local autonomy and central state control do not exclude each other. The Chinese central state is still very influential in local development agendas, also in China's largest cities: 'China's local–central state relations may indicate a dualist process of strong central statism and local state autonomy in times of state restructuring, decentralization and global exposure of localities'. (Shin 2014, 2964).

To complicate governance matters further, there are also several formal and informal regional governance levels to take into account. In recent decades several attempts to encourage regional collaboration have been initiated, at varying scale levels and with varying success. The most influential of those so far is the Greater Pearl River Delta, a collaboration of Hong Kong, Macau and their immediate neighbours in Guangdong (including amongst others Guangzhou and Shenzhen). At a much higher scale level, the Pan-PRD regional cooperation involves nine Chinese provinces as well as Hong Kong and Macau. This '9 + 2' collaboration seems less influential and less successful so far, amongst others because its range of goals is too wide and diverse, the collaboration is only loosely organized, commitment of the regional partners is weak, and the huge and highly diverse area covered is not a single integrated market (Yeh and Xu 2008). At the lower scale level of the Greater PRD, it is easier to find common interests, though there is at least as much competition as collaboration. Guangdong and Hong Kong both lobby for prioritization in central government strategic plans, and depending on their interests they sometimes do this together but sometimes also individually (Cheung 2012). Moreover, also within Guangdong, municipalities are constantly rivalling with each other for investments and projects of the central government, provincial government, developers and foreign investors.

Other external influencers

The limited space of this article does not allow a more detailed discussion of Shenzhen's many other external influences and influencers, but some of them should be mentioned briefly at least. Shenzhen's city officials were encouraged to travel across the globe to potentially inspiring examples of urban and economic development and governance. In recent years, Singapore became one of their favourite destinations. Singapore was seen as a 'best practice' of 'urban planning under state capitalism' (Shatkin 2014), realizing its urban and economic development in conditions comparable to how the CCP leaders saw China's longer-term future: steady single-party authoritarian rule and a leading role for the state in socio-economic development. Added attractions were the strong presence of ethnic Chinese, shared cultural traditions and Singapore's experience in industrial upgrading and innovation (Zhang 2012). Next to these trips abroad to Singapore and elsewhere, many foreign urban and economic development experts have also been invited to Shenzhen and many projects

across the city show that they have been, and partly still are, very influential in how Shenzhen has developed and will continue to develop. China is keen to show its 'model city' to the world, and Shenzhen is even more keen to present itself. Finally, the significant influence of foreign investors beyond Hong Kong should be mentioned. Next to direct investments from Hong Kong, indirect investments via Hong Kong and Taiwan also played an important role in Shenzhen's industrialization in the 1980s and 1990s. This included Taiwanese companies like Foxconn, the major outsourcing partner of Apple with a notorious reputation of exploitative labour circumstances (Chan, Pun, and Selden 2013). Although Foxconn has meanwhile partly left Shenzhen (and other East China cities) and moved to other interior China locations, it still has a significant presence in Shenzhen's outer districts. Its Shenzhen base shifted focus to research and development while mass component production and assemblage have mostly moved to interior China, in line with Shenzhen's shift towards a more innovative and knowledge-intensive economy. Not only through the Foxconn-Apple connection, but also through many other channels, also Silicon Valley no doubt has been and still is very influential in Shenzhen's economic development; Shenzhen is sometimes even called 'the Silicon Valley of hardware' (Lindtner 2015; Nylander 2017).

Shenzhen 2017: still a satellite city?

Meanwhile, Shenzhen has become a megacity and a serious competitor of Hong Kong and Guangzhou, and to a lesser extent of Beijing and Shanghai. After the expansion of Shenzhen's city government and the SEZ, Shenzhen no doubt has strengthened its political and economic power vis-à-vis central and provincial government. It seems to make sense therefore to see Shenzhen as a megacity in its own right, and not as a satellite of any external influencer anymore. Or is it still too early for Shenzhen to really stand on its own feet? The city and its economy still seems quite dependent on support from higher state levels, especially the national state, and external public and private influencers from Hong Kong and overseas. Shenzhen has meanwhile become the 4th mainland Chinese city in population size and economic importance, and may in some sectors even claim to be China's 3rd city. But despite being home to some of China's most prominent financial and ICT companies, Shenzhen's market is much more domestic than international. In China's financial centre network, Shenzhen still has to settle for a modest position in the shade of Asia's leading financial centre Hong Kong and its own financial sector is still heavily dependent on Hong Kong (Meyer 2016). In the 'World City Network' of advanced producer services, Taylor and Derudder (2016) present Hong Kong as one of Asia's most prominent 'globalist cities', and Shenzhen as a 'localist' city oriented mostly on China and Pacific Asia instead. Next to Hong Kong's lasting influence and dominance, Shenzhen also is repeatedly confronted with direct and indirect interference of the CCP and the national government, sometimes enabling but sometimes also frustrating its development.

Shenzhen as a city of satellites

After discussing to what extent Shenzhen as a whole could be seen as a satellite city, we will now shift scales towards the sub-city scale to explore to what extent Shenzhen can also be seen as a 'city of satellites'. Shenzhen is a highly fragmented city; so fragmented even that one may wonder whether it is really one city or rather a loose collection of smaller cities and neighbourhoods. Shenzhen's development started at two locations quite distant from each other: Shekou and Luohu. The next development phase (1980s/1990s) also consisted of several cores developed largely independent from each other even though they were also part of a comprehensive city plan. Some of these projects were developed as 'cities within the city', with one developer or a developing consortium in charge of developing and managing areas of significant size. Huang (2017) argues that in Shenzhen's earliest development phase, this was a deliberate choice of both the local planners and the Chinese national government; he refers to it as the 'enclave logic'. The first case discussed below, OCT, is a good example of such a 'city within the city'. Shenzhen's fragmentation is increased by the presence of

urban villages. In the early 1980s there were probably about 1500 villages on Shenzhen's current territory; meanwhile, most villages have disappeared, but there are still about 200 left. Most of these have redeveloped as 'urban villages', and Shenzhen's urban projects had to be developed around these villages initially. The villagers, organizing themselves in TVEs, became developers themselves too, or decided to 'sell out' their village to the best-paying developer.

This highly fragmented city structure, with many sub-centres connected by networked infrastructures on the one hand and many rather disconnected 'urban villages' in-between on the other, fits quite well in Graham and Marvin's conceptualization of twenty-first-century urban development as 'splintering urbanism'. Graham and Marvin (2001, 122) describe SEZs like Shenzhen as

(...) massive archipelagoes loosely laced together by huge new infrastructure networks (...). In such places position and centrality are configured less by geographical location with respect to "downtown" than by the conditions of buildings and places with respect to global-local networked infrastructures (...).

Seen from such a perspective, Shenzhen's sub-centres may be better connected to each other and to other Chinese cities and/or the rest of the globe than to their immediate surroundings. The other side of this coin are what Graham and Marvin (2001) call 'marginalised spaces' or 'interstitial spaces': spaces largely ignored by the sub-centres and disconnected from the networked infrastructures. Many of Shenzhen's 'urban villages' may indeed qualify as such 'marginalised' or 'interstitial' spaces – until they are redeveloped into new sub-centres or incorporated by neighbouring sub-centres. Also referring to infrastructure networks, Huang (2017) argues along similar lines: attempts of Shenzhen city government to integrate the city more through citywide transportation networks seem to have resulted in creating even more and smaller enclaves instead of connecting these enclaves better.

Adding to the fragmentation of Shenzhen is its administrative structure, with district governments that can operate rather autonomously within the city. While Shenzhen's central city authorities are of course trying to overrule the districts and integrate them into a more coherent whole, the most recent plans for new towns at the city edge and redeveloping existing city parts into new centres may add to the fragmentation instead of overcoming it. The three cases discussed below can be seen as representatives of types of 'satellite cities of Shenzhen': OCT, Guangming New Town and Qianhai-Shekou. While OCT is representing an older generation of satellites within the city (1980s/1990s), the other two cases belong to Shenzhen's most recent (re)developments at the city edges.

OCT: a developer-led city-within-the-city

The OCT Group is one of the largest and most influential developers of the city and meanwhile also elsewhere in China, but most Shenzheners will probably associate it mainly with their two main development sites, OCT and OCT East. Sized 5 km² (OCT) and of 9 km² (OCT East) respectively, and largely governed by their developer instead of by the city or district government, they can be considered 'cities-within-the-city' or 'satellite cities' within Shenzhen. In the following we will focus on the company's first and most successful site, OCT in Nanshan District (Figure 1).

OCT is short for Overseas Chinese Town. Until the late 1970s this area was a state-owned farm with five small peasant villages. In 1981, the farmland was transformed into a 'economic development zone' to attract foreign direct investments from Hong Kong and overseas Chinese investors. The Shahe Overseas Chinese Business Corporation was founded, holding the land development rights of the former farmland and attracting investors, initially mainly for labour-intensive manufacturing (Liang and Bao 2015). Next to factories, also some working-class communities were built on the former farmland. The five peasant villages, meanwhile, remained outside this economic development zone, and transformed into urban villages to accommodate the housing needs of the labour migrants; this urban village area is presently known as Baishizou.

In 1985, SOCBC became the state-owned enterprise OCT Group. Since then the former farmland area is known as OCT. As a state-owned developer, the OCT Group got the privileged status it still



Figure 1. View of OCT and Shenzhen Bay. Photo by author, 2013.

has today: it is not only the leading land developer, but also acts as the 'local government' of the OCT area (Liang and Bao 2015; O'Connor and Liu 2014). Even though OCT is part of Nanshan District and Shenzhen City, the OCT Group takes care of the community's administration, security, maintenance and public services. Initially, OCT was required to develop not only commercial projects to attract investments, but also public housing. To make the area more attractive for foreign investment, OCT also invested in public space and facilities. Already in the late 1980s, OCT's focus shifted from factories and working-class communities to tourism and housing and facilities for the emerging middle and upper classes. A series of theme parks was developed: Splendid China (1989), China Folk Culture Village (1991) and Window of the World (1994), soon accompanied by several hotels, malls and other tourist facilities. Encouraged by the success of these theme parks and the significant increase of capital after being listed on the Shenzhen Stock Exchange, two more major tourist attractions were added later: yet another theme park, Happy Valley (1998), and the entertainment complex OCT Bay (2011). Several middle-class and upper-class residential complexes were built, mostly in a 'gated community' style with almost all services and facilities for daily life included. Since the late 1990s, some of these complexes have been upgraded or expanded and new even more luxurious areas have been added, like Portofino, the Shenzhen replica of the Italian seaside town.

Despite increasing tourism activities and the gradual shift from working-class to middle- and upper-class residential projects, the number of factories in OCT also still increased until 2004 (O'Connor and Liu 2014). Since then, manufacturing has gradually left OCT though, moving to Shenzhen's city-edge and beyond. Many vacant factory buildings and warehouses were left behind. This coincided with Shenzhen's plans to shift its economic focus from low-cost mass production to high-tech, innovation and advanced services, and China's plans to encourage knowledge-intensive and innovative sectors, including the cultural industries (Bontje 2014). Both Shenzhen's city government and the OCT Group also started to recognize the economic potential of cultural industries, in particular the design sector in which the city had already become one of the leading hubs in China.

The vacant factories and warehouses in OCT offered a good opportunity for redevelopment as a ‘creative hotspot’. The first two editions of the Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture (2005 and 2007) took place in former factories and warehouses in OCT, and these events contributed to launching OCT-LOFT as one of the first and most prominent ‘creative clusters’ in Shenzhen (Bruijning 2016; van Dulm 2017).

All these developments targeting tourists as well as middle- and upper-class residents went at the expense of the (former) industrial workers still living in OCT. Nowadays some pockets of working-class public housing can still be found throughout OCT, but it is questionable how long they can still last. After some years of relatively moderate development in the area, several new luxury residential projects have started in recent years. Recently also, one of the last remaining factories in the area, the KONKA electronics factory (a company also owned by the OCT Group), has left OCT and its former site has been cleared for redevelopment. It all fits well in the longer-term process that Liang and Bao (2015) described as ‘tourism gentrification’.

Meanwhile, OCT is also developing new projects elsewhere in Shenzhen. Its second major Shenzhen site is OCT East, a resort complex in Yantian District, consisting of among others theme parks, hotels, a spa, parks and a golf course. Future plans in Shenzhen include a project in Guangming New Town, the case we will turn to next. In Guangming, OCT will develop a ‘Small Town’ in which rural and urban lifestyle should meet in a ‘town with special characteristics’. The plan consists of a combination of urban agriculture, ecotourism and a park. With this plan OCT aims to join China’s development trend of eco-cities on the one hand, and to continue its successful ‘city as a theme park’ development strategy on the other.

Guangming new town: Shenzhen’s satellite, Beijing’s pioneer, or city in its own right?

Until July 2010, Shenzhen’s SEZ consisted of the districts Luohu, Futian, Nanshan and Yantian. However, ever since Shenzhen’s rapid development took off in the 1980s, a significant part of developments took place across the SEZ border in a largely unplanned and chaotic fashion. After extending Shenzhen’s municipal area in 2004 and the SEZ area in 2010, Shenzhen’s city government could start to bring some more order in the chaos at its northern edges. In Shenzhen’s Masterplan 2010–2020, four new towns were designated to regulate the further development of the city’s outskirts and limit further sprawl: Guangming, Longhua, Dayun and Pingshan. The plan for the four new towns was combined with the designation of ‘ecological protection areas’: nearly half of Shenzhen’s land area, including a large part of Guangming New Town District, is protected from further urbanization by ecological control lines (Vlassenrood 2016a).

Guangming (Figure 2) once was a state-owned farm, but became the scene of scattered industrialization and urbanization. Until recently it mainly consisted of a mix of factory complexes, urban villages, and (rapidly declining) pieces of farmland and nature in-between. For long it was seen as too distant from central Shenzhen and Hong Kong and too isolated for profitable redevelopment. However, in the mid-2000s, its strategic location along important infrastructural corridors connecting Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Dongguan and Guangzhou put it on the Shenzhen long-term planning map as the future northern gateway to Shenzhen (Cales 2014). This redevelopment ambition was combined with offering room for experimental and innovative planning ideas. In 2007, the Shenzhen city government announced Guangming’s redevelopment as a ‘low-carbon eco-city’. In 2012, Guangming became one of China’s first eight ‘Demonstrating Green Ecological Urban Built-up Areas’ (Yu 2014). Meanwhile, yet another label has been added: in line with the latest Chinese planning fashion and fitting in its reputation of a pioneer in planning pilots and experiments, Guangming is now also supposed to develop as a ‘sponge city’: a city in which the absorption, storage, drainage and purification of water is optimized (Vlassenrood 2016b; de Geus 2017).

Many development and redevelopment ambitions from several government levels come together in Guangming. So far the economic, spatial and ecological ambitions seem to be at odds with each other. Can one new town be (re)developed as a regional transport hub, high-end industry and service



Figure 2. Guangming New Town. Photo by author, 2017.

centre, upscale housing site, university campus, low-carbon eco-city and sponge city at the same time? To what extent can highly abstract and complex planning concepts like ‘eco-cities’ be worked out in a coherent strategy including practical solutions applied to the city as a whole (de Jong, Wang, and Yu 2013)? And how do these developments impact Guangming’s current population (mainly low-educated labour migrants without local *hukou*) and settlement pattern (mainly factories, urban villages, *danwei* housing of the former state-owned farm and farmland)? So far, these (re)developments rather take place in a pragmatic, piecemeal and short-term fashion in poorly connected parts of the city (Vlassenrood 2016b; Tan 2015). de Jong, Wang, and Yu (2013) pointed at the lack of comprehensive strategic plans that (beyond abstract goals and fashionable labels) can actually be applied. The solution that the district planners found so far, dividing Guangming in three zones (traditional-industrial, high-tech industrial and ecological-industrial), may be a first step towards upgrading and integrating Guangming’s fragments, but much planning work remains to be done. The ‘sponge city’ ambition, for example, initially will only be applied to the ecological-industrial zone (‘Phoenix Town’), not to the new town as a whole. While an integrated plan combining all pieces of the Guangming puzzle seems to exist on paper, online and in state-of-the-art models and multimedia shows, a truly integrated strategic planning policy and practice still seems a far-fetched dream.

Qianhai and Shekou: satellite of Shenzhen, Hong Kong and/or Beijing?

Qianhai (Figure 3) is one of Shenzhen’s most recent new developments. It is situated in the west of Shenzhen, adjacent to Shekou, the area where Shenzhen’s first capitalist experiments started in 1978. Its location is very strategic, between the airports of Hong Kong and Shenzhen and well connected to Shenzhen’s current CBD in Futian. In 2010, China’s State Council approved the ‘Overall Development Plan of Qianhai Shenzhen – Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Cooperation Zone’, a plan issued by the province of Guangdong. Such direct involvement of the higher government levels in



Figure 3. Qianhai under construction. Photo by author, 2018.

Shenzhen's development happens more often than in most other Chinese cities because of Shenzhen's pioneering role as the country's first SEZ (Polo 2016).

Together with neighbouring Shekou, Qianhai is Shenzhen's part of the Guangdong FTZ. Even though Qianhai's development has just started (it became part of Guangdong's FTZ in 2015), FTZs are already rapidly becoming less special in China. In 2016, 7 new FTZs were announced, and probably many more will follow soon. Chinese media present Qianhai as a success story, reporting impressive statistics: for example, in 2015 already more than 61,000 companies were registered and the annual growth rate would be 265% (China Daily 2016). Most of these registrations (if not exaggerated) probably rather are 'mailbox companies' than 'real' offices, vehicles to profit from tax exemptions, customs-free trading etc.

The Qianhai project seems to have changed course quite drastically in recent years. Initially intended to encourage further collaboration and integration of Shenzhen and Hong Kong, it now rather seems to become a new CBD of Shenzhen, next to (or replacing?) the already existing CBD in Futian/Luohu. The 2010 development plan presented three main functions for the area: it should become an innovative advanced services hub, a Hong Kong – mainland cooperation zone, and a facilitator for the industrial upgrading of the Pearl River Delta. What seems to be built eventually, however, looks more like a modernized 'copy' of the already existing CBD of Shenzhen, and the collaborative/integrative dimension of the project with Hong Kong seems to have largely vanished and replaced by competition. Despite its initial good intentions (at least on paper), the Qianhai project has not managed to break through the institutional barriers. The four governments involved (Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Guangdong and the Chinese central government) are hesitant to let the project succeed (Chan and Zhao 2012). Meyer (2016) adds that Hong Kong financial firms and foreign firms are reluctant to open more than a modest local branch office in Qianhai. Hong Kong seems to stay East Asia's leading financial centre, Shenzhen will not be able to threaten that position and will not profit much from Hong Kong's nearness.



Figure 4. Sea World Culture and Arts Center, iconic element of Shekou's redevelopment. Photo by author, 2018.

Meanwhile, neighbouring Shekou is also in a process of rapid and ambitious redevelopment linked to the FTZ programme. Shekou's ambitions are quite different from Qianhai's, though: it aspires to become Shenzhen's prime hub of culture, creativity and design. Two recent editions of the Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture (2013 and 2015) were used as incentives for urban regeneration in Shekou (van Dulm 2017). A prestigious design museum was opened in 2017, linked to a 'Design Society' aiming to put Shenzhen on the international map as city of design, and collaborating with London's Victoria & Albert Museum (Figure 4). Parts of Shekou's former industrial and harbour areas have been redeveloped in luxury residential, shopping and entertainment districts like Sea World. Comparable to the leading role of the OCT Group in OCT and OCT East, the main driving force behind Shekou's redevelopment is developer China Merchants Group. Shekou and Qianhai may well be on their way to become yet another 'satellite', or maybe two 'twin satellites', within the fragmented 'city of satellites' Shenzhen.

Conclusion

Both 'satellite city' and 'new town' are elusive concepts which can be applied at multiple scales and with multiple policy targets and meanings. While the satellite city/new town literature so far is mainly dominated by case studies focusing on either one scale level or one policy dimension or a specific category of actors/stakeholders (or the combination of those three), this article aimed to rather advocate a multi-scalar, multi-dimensional and multi-actor perspective on satellite city and new town development. The development of satellite cities and new towns are better understood in their context (within, but also beyond their own city or region) and when viewed from a relational perspective. Shenzhen is a good place to demonstrate this. In addition, the development of Shenzhen as a whole as well as the satellites and new towns within it also shows how development strategies, aims, target groups and 'brands' of satellite city/new town development have changed in the past decades. Both the city of Shenzhen as a whole and several of its elements at sub-city level have

been, or will be, developed in ways comparable to many other satellite city and/or new town projects across the Global South, such as those analysed in other contributions to this special issue. At the same time, there are several distinctly Chinese and/or East Asian elements in Shenzhen's development, as well as elements that make Shenzhen a unique case. In its earliest years as a SEZ, Shenzhen could certainly be seen as a satellite city, though the question 'a satellite of what?' may not get a straightforward answer: Hong Kong, Beijing, or both, and/or maybe also other external influencers like Guangdong, Singapore, or ICT companies from Taiwan and Silicon Valley? At the same time, Shenzhen developed as a 'city of satellites'. In the limited space of this article we could only address three examples, but there are many more of such sub-city projects, each with their own development history, governance context, planning goals and ambitions. The three cases discussed could be seen as representatives of different types of satellites, corresponding with different development phases of Shenzhen. OCT is a prime example of what Huang (2017) calls the 'enclave logic' of Shenzhen's earliest development phase: a live-work-entertainment complex developed and managed comprehensively by one project developing company. Guangming is an example of the 'new towns' Shenzhen is developing since it extended its municipal and SEZ territory, in an effort to restructure the chaotic outskirts and integrate them better in the city as a whole. Shekou and Qianhai are in fact a 'cross-over' of Shenzhen's oldest and newest development phases. Shekou's development even already started shortly before Shenzhen became a SEZ, but is now being redeveloped, while neighbouring Qianhai is one of the newest additions to the city. Shekou and Qianhai combined got the status of FTZ, which gives them an even more preferred status for investment and development than the rest of the SEZ area already had.

When exploring the area called Shenzhen it is often hard to see it as a coherent whole; is it really one city or rather a loose collection of fragments? After starting the SEZ at two locations instead of one and then continuing its development by creating additional centres and building around the urban villages, Shenzhen was destined to become the fragmented city it now is. There is still a huge challenge ahead for the city planners to integrate all these 'satellites' and realize the 'world class city' ambition. However, Shenzhen has stunned the world many times before, so maybe in some decades from now, it may have caught up with or even surpassed its neighbours Hong Kong and Guangzhou to be the leading centre of the Pearl River Delta.

Notes

1. The author has been involved in a study about Shenzhen's changing economic profile from low-cost manufacturing to creative, knowledge-intensive and innovative industries and the attractiveness of Shenzhen as a place to live for people working in such sectors. This research was part of the 'New New Towns' project of the International New Town Institute. In addition, the author is also one of the supervisors of the MSc Thesis Project Shenzhen of the University of Amsterdam, and has recently worked on a book chapter about the cross-border relations between Hong Kong and Shenzhen.
2. The limited space of this article unfortunately does not allow for a more detailed discussion about the many ways in which Hong Kong and Shenzhen are related and influencing each other. A book chapter (Bontje, 2018) discusses their cross-border relations in more detail.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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