

## Article

# Community Participation Strategy for Sustainable Urban Regeneration in Xiamen, China

Jinkun Yang <sup>1</sup>, Linchuan Yang <sup>2</sup>  and Haitao Ma <sup>3,\*</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> School of Cultural Industry and Tourism, Xiamen University of Technology, Xiamen 361024, China; yangjk5@mail3.sysu.edu.cn

<sup>2</sup> Department of Urban and Rural Planning, School of Architecture, Southwest Jiaotong University, Chengdu 611756, China; yanglc0125@swjtu.edu.cn

<sup>3</sup> Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing 100101, China

\* Correspondence: maht@igsnr.ac.cn

**Abstract:** Urban regeneration is an important strategic choice in promoting urban development globally. Existing research on urban regeneration mainly focuses on the community's economic benefits. However, less research concentrates on how community participation contributes to the sustainable development of communities. The aim of this study is to explore the community regeneration approach in the context of urban regeneration in a typical village community in China. This study finds that participatory planning, which is mainly characterized by public participation, can be an effective way of communication and cooperation. The collaborative workshops provide a participatory platform for stakeholders and promote sustainable community development. Therefore, traditional planning approaches may need to be changed. The contribution of this article is to develop a collaborative planning approach for sustainable community development, which can serve as a reference for community governance in China and other developing countries.

**Keywords:** community participation; collaborative workshop; sustainable urban regeneration



**Citation:** Yang, J.; Yang, L.; Ma, H. Community Participation Strategy for Sustainable Urban Regeneration in Xiamen, China. *Land* **2022**, *11*, 600. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land11050600>

Academic Editors: Baojie He, Ayyoob Sharifi, Chi Feng and Jun Yang

Received: 22 March 2022

Accepted: 17 April 2022

Published: 20 April 2022

**Publisher's Note:** MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



**Copyright:** © 2022 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

Urban regeneration has been an important strategic choice in promoting urban development globally. The concept of “sustainable development” first introduced by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972 and first approved at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 through the ambition of Agenda 21 to promote the sustainable development of human settlements. Sustainable development is crucial to understanding the impacts of urban regeneration. Sustainable development has also been widely studied within academic scholarship, and this concept has been of particular importance in the study of urban and regional economic development, urban sprawl, urban population growth, and socioeconomic activities. Because urban regeneration is so inextricably linked to social, economic, and environmental sustainability, it is commonly acknowledged that it must be handled within the context of a broader discussion of sustainable development [1].

Cities currently face numerous challenges [2]. Population growth and urban drift are two processes that heavily impact the quality of life of residents. In this context, urban regeneration has emerged as a key driver of the sustainable development of cities. Sustainable urban regeneration (SUR) aims to improve the physical, social, economic, and ecological aspects of abandoned urban areas through various actions, which include redevelopment and rehabilitation [1].

Sustainable urbanization is of great significance in the context of China [3]. After nearly four decades of urbanization, China has achieved enormous growth in urban space and the construction of infrastructure. Many policies and actions have been developed

and implemented in response to the inefficient use of land resources, which resulted from rapid urbanization. However, the country still faces an arduous task in the promotion of high-quality development and still has a long way to go in new urbanization [4]. The implementation of sustainable renewal strategies constitutes an important means for achieving high-quality urban development. Such strategies are of great significance for actors seeking to improve urban functions and optimize urban structures.

Urban regeneration has been an important strategic choice in promoting urban development and thus an important research interest within the fields of urban geography and urban planning, both in China and abroad. Existing studies mainly focus on the pattern and process of urbanization, land property rights, land finance, government interventions, and power relations. These studies have highlighted the roles played by the “growth machine” of political economy, the theory of land rent, and mechanisms of benefit distribution between subjects. Existing research has thereby focused on economic regeneration rather than environmental or social regeneration, promoting urban economic development without addressing its many problems [5–7]. Studies have also addressed critical gaps in the process of sustainable urban regeneration by examining qualitative and quantitative factors [8–10] and the role that sustainable land use plays in sustainable urban regeneration [11–13]. The latter group of studies has pointed out that because land redevelopment is a form of resource reuse, adaptive reuse should be considered as a strategy for both building conservation and urban regeneration [14,15].

The aim of this study is to explore the community regeneration approach in the context of urban regeneration in China. Compared to other cases of community property-led regeneration, which lead to community demolition, the community regeneration in Zengcuan takes the approach of promoting sustainable community development through community participation in workshops without changing the previous land ownership. In this article, we attempt to answer the following question: what is the role of collaborative participation in community regeneration. The contribution of this research is that Zengcuan community development is based on collaborative workshops between the government, village collectives, and business people. This study provides a meaningful practice for future urban regeneration development in China, which can provide a reference in sustainable urban regeneration policy-making.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 briefly reviews current studies on urban regeneration, including those addressing urban growth coalitions and the impact of urban regeneration on urban development. Section 3 introduces the research methodology. Section 4 analyzes the urban regeneration in Zengcuan, Xiamen, China. Section 5 concludes this paper and discusses policy implications.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Urban Regeneration and Sustainable Urban Development

Urban regeneration is considered an effective way to increase land values and improve the quality of the environment. It can help to ameliorate urban decay and achieve various socioeconomic goals [16,17], as well as strengthen existing social networks, improve the inclusiveness of vulnerable groups, and change the living environment in a significant way. For these reasons, urban regeneration constitutes an important strategy for the development of the world’s major cities today [18–21]. A great deal of research has been carried out in this field. Urban regeneration projects in the UK and the USA are operated under a mature market system and against the backdrop of largely private ownership of urban land. Gotham has analyzed the role of the structure of the state as a driver of urban growth (e.g., the relationship between the political interests of urban planners and officials) and highlights an important “up-link” dimension of the growth machine, which links the local government legal process to the macro-structure of the national economy [22].

Urban regeneration has had a positive impact on the development of many cities. At the same time, it is necessary to observe the phenomenon of gentrification that is induced by urban regeneration, which gives rise to social inequity and the neglect of

concerns of disadvantaged groups. Some Western scholars have questioned and debated the role of urban regeneration in local economies, particularly in contexts of global crisis and globalization. It has been argued that while urban regeneration has contributed to the development of local economies under conditions of globalization, it has been used as a tool by international capital to accumulate and plunder resources on a global scale. Urban regeneration has brought about improvements in the spatial infrastructure of inner-city areas, which has led to rapid growth in the urban economy; it has nevertheless also brought about gentrification, which has resulted in an unequal distribution of wealth among different interest groups.

Urban regeneration offers an important way to promote local economic development, which in turn can attract talent and innovative businesses to settle in cities by updating dilapidated spaces and industrial structures [23,24]. As China's economy shifts from a high economic growth stage to a high-quality development stage, the country faces a shift in dynamics and approach, and new tasks present themselves in the form of development transformation, modal shift, and structural adjustment. Urban regeneration policy and actions also need to be strengthened in accordance with new and emerging institutional arrangements. While urban regeneration is seen as an important tool in enhancing land values and promoting economic development, in practice, however, most urban regeneration policies in China tend to focus on the promotion of singular economic factors, such as land reuse, land appreciation, and redistribution of stakeholder value, while neglecting the social values at stake in urban regeneration—in particular, the social and environmental factors of urban functional rejuvenation and urban industrial upgrading.

Because land is scarce in urban centers, redevelopment through urban regeneration represents a way to reuse resources. Compared to demolition, urban regeneration, which maintains the original property rights but changes the use functions, is a less costly, faster, and less destructive option that meets the demand for land resources [25]. From a land-use perspective, "urban regeneration" is generally understood as the restructuring of the nature of land use within cities in order to meet the demand for new capital investment. This creates a huge rent gap, resulting in capital being attracted to land redevelopment [26]. There is a need to efficiently design urban resources, particularly in big cities [27,28]. From the perspective of urban function, the industrial upgrading of the inner city is addressed in terms of the changes that it makes to the spatial structure of the inner city, whereby the spatial requirements of new forms of capital accumulation are accommodated, barriers to urban capital circulation are reduced, and local capital accumulation is accelerated [29,30].

"Sustainable urban regeneration" is a concept that is applicable in societal contexts that seek to introduce more inclusive and diverse lifestyles after a period of economic development. The main objective of urban development has shifted: rather than economic growth, the pursuit of sustainability is now motivating urban land-use change. In recent years, China's economic and social development has moved from a stage of rapid growth to a stage of high-quality development and from a focus on economic productivity to a focus on unbalanced and inadequate social development. In this context, the revitalization or regeneration of urban areas through community participation has become one of the key strategies for urban development.

## *2.2. Community Regeneration and Community Participation*

Participatory planning is widely understood as an approach to development that involves the active and comprehensive involvement of development agents in the decision-making process related to development processes or development projects that affect people's living conditions [31,32]. The scope of participatory planning refers to the main aspects of the theory and practice of participatory planning. The theoretical, institutional, social, economic, ethical, and practical spheres of participatory planning form the overall framework of the theory and practice of participatory development. Participatory planning is a rethinking and rejection of the traditional top-down approach to development. Participatory planning takes place through the full participation of the target group in

the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of development projects and activities [33–35]. The essence of participatory planning is empowerment. At the heart of empowerment is the empowerment of communities and socially disadvantaged groups to participate in the process of development interventions so that the target groups in the community can consciously participate in the development and achieve development sustainability [36–38].

The Charter for Participation, issued by the European Project for Sustainable Urban Development in 2000, proposes that urban planning should focus on public participation methods, suggesting that residents and urban land users should be actively involved in the affairs of urban planning. In Western countries, participatory planning is the involvement of individuals or organizations in the planning and decision-making process to varying degrees through the use of various tools to meet the interests of stakeholders [39–41]. In China, participatory planning was introduced from abroad in the 1990s and is a new planning paradigm. Participatory planning emphasizes the full participation of all stakeholders in community planning, including community affairs, community development, community management, environmental improvement, and public space enhancement. It is a new paradigm of top-down planning [42–45].

Traditional urban planning models involve experts, academics, commercial property companies, and government departments, and they are characterized by centralized discussions and decision-making. This top-down planning approach often ignores the needs of the residents living in the community. By contrast, community participatory planning is a bottom-up approach to planning. It is an approach to community regeneration through extensive stakeholder collaboration and consultation with many stakeholders to address real community issues. Participatory planning helps strike a balance between equity and efficiency in development and contributes to sustainable community development.

### 3. Research Methodology

Zengcuan, literally meaning “the village of the Zeng family”, is at a crossroads stage of development. In order to better explore the Zengcuan Collaborative Workshop, we conducted several visits and surveys. We interviewed government administrators, community leaders, and various businesses on their suggestions for the development of the community. The authors made several visits to the Zengcuan community to see the changes in community development through field research. Interviews were conducted with the leaders of the Zengcuan Workshop to understand the problems and future challenges of community development. The authors have reviewed the effectiveness of the workshop in coordinating stakeholders.

With the introduction of the concept of high-quality development by the central government, China has entered a new period of coordinated economic and social development. The traditional model of solving problems purely through economic development is no longer able to accommodate the requirements of social development, and the traditional methods and approaches to solving problems have become ineffective. Urban space is the place to transform the modernization of China’s national governance. Governance needs to be integrated with space in order to have a good effect.

With the support of the Xiamen Municipal Government, the government of Siming District and professional experts from universities were invited to form a workshop team to build a tripartite interactive platform between the government, planners, and the public. The new path of the village’s development will be discussed later.

The workshop is an exchange platform with public participation as its core and problem-oriented and spatial environmental transformation as its means. It relies on the government, the public, planners, associations, and other stakeholders (Figure 1). The workshop guides various stakeholders to participate in numerous aspects of village development in a diversified manner and facilitates the stakeholders to reach a consensus on the development. Through stakeholder consultation and governance, the workshop

develops planning solutions that meet the visions of multiple parties and explores methods and strategies to promote sustainable community development.



**Figure 1.** Stakeholders in collaborative planning. Source: Drawn by the authors.

This study uses fieldwork to understand the problems of Zengcuoan during the development of the village. Based on this, the workshop collaborates with the community and mass organizations in Zengcuoan to invite the owners (i.e., villagers) and business owners in the village to attend a seminar to learn more about the development of the village and its current business situation and to guide them to talk about the problems they think exist in the village’s development and their outlook and ideas for the future development of the village. Apart from the seminars, the team also conducted questionnaires and interviews with a larger group of business owners and tourists to understand more about the development of the village.

#### **4. Reproducing Community Revitalization for Urban Regeneration in China**

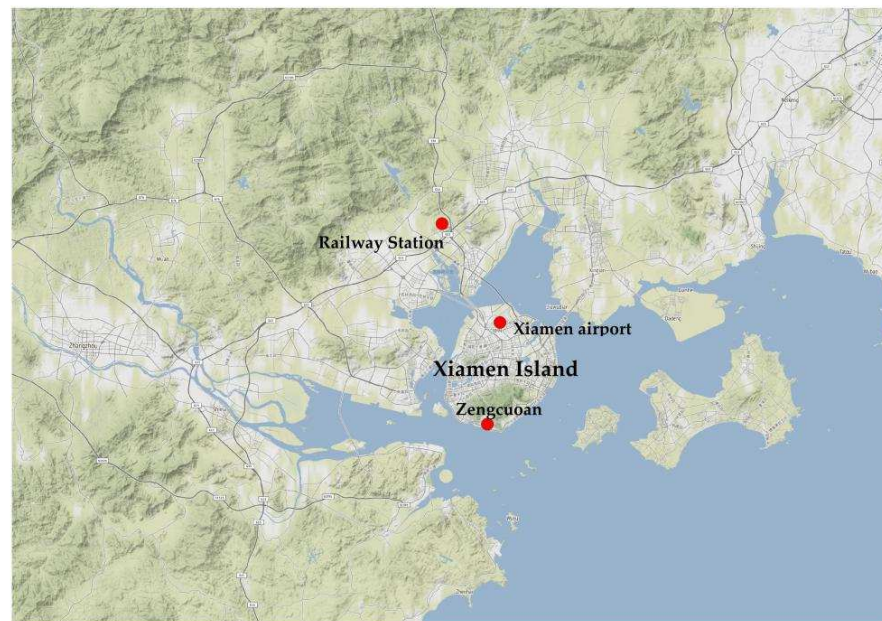
##### *4.1. Transition Period in Urban Regeneration*

###### **4.1.1. Location of Xiamen**

Xiamen, also known as “Garden on the Sea” and “Heron Island”, is one of the first four special economic zones to open up along the southeast coast of China. Xiamen is on the southeast coast of China, in the south of Fujian Province, connected with Zhangzhou and Quanzhou, and located in the middle of the Golden Triangle of Southern Fujian. Xiamen consists of Xiamen Island, Gulangyu Island and its many small islands and Tongan, Jimei, Haicang and Xiang’an. Xiamen has convenient transportation conditions, which attracts a large number of tourists to visit the city (Figure 2).

###### **4.1.2. Challenges to Xiamen’s Urban Development**

Xiamen has been described as being at the forefront of reform and opening up and even as having witnessed a “miracle” in its economic development. Over the past 40 years or so, the rapid economic development of the city has stimulated the expansion of urban land. With the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposing a high-quality growth approach, including transforming growth dynamics, changing development modes, and optimizing economic structures, the Chinese central government has strictly delineated the growth boundary of construction land in large cities in China, requiring strict control of urban land growth and demanding the revitalization of existing land use.



**Figure 2.** Location of Xiamen City. Source: Adapted by the authors from Stamen map.

Xiamen’s urban development has gone through the following three development stages: (1) the period of the formation of the Special Economic Zone; (2) the period of trans-Xiamen Island development; and (3) the period of the Bay City. We use a random forest algorithm to extract construction land from Landsat remote sensing images and analyze the change in urban construction land in Xiamen from 1980 to 2005. Transformations in the city’s economic development and policies have seen urban land in Xiamen go through three phases: a low growth phase (1990–2000), a rapid growth phase (2000–2010), and a slow growth phase (2010–2015).

China’s urban regeneration has entered a transition period, and the focus is now people-centered, high-quality development. The high-density core areas of cities are inherently dense and multidimensional, which poses difficulties in relation to the goal of sustainable human settlement development. The core areas of China’s developed coastal cities are important sites of regional economic development, and their centrality is not only reflected in their economic and population density but also in their physical and spatial forms, which are often highly concentrated. In the context of high-quality development, the renewal of land use in high-density core areas is important for improving spatial quality and achieving sustainable urban development.

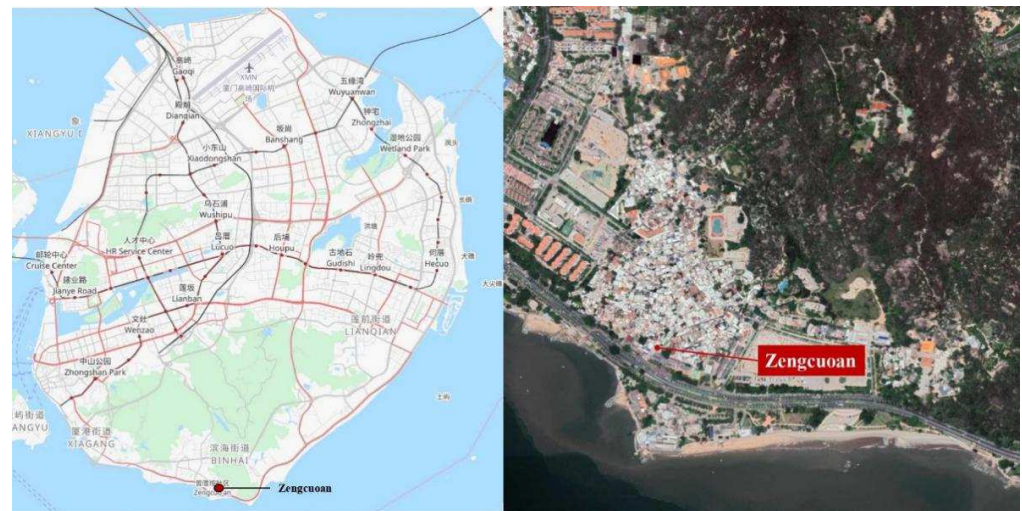
## 4.2. Utilizing Community Public Participation for Rural Regeneration in Zengcuoan

### 4.2.1. Location of the Village

Zengcuoan is located in the southeastern part of Xiamen Island and belongs to the Siming District of Xiamen. The village is 15.5 km from Xiamen Airport and 6.8 km from Xiamen Railway Station (Figure 3). It has attracted many tourists and has been named by internet users as “the most artistic village in China”. Its favorable good natural environment (e.g., mountains and the sea) has attracted many B&B (bed and breakfast) operators and cultural creators to the village. Today, it is a typical coastal tourist resort.

At the beginning of its development, the village attracted several teachers at Xiamen University to set up studios and give lectures because of the low price of land. Sculptors and painters started their businesses in the village. At the same time, a number of operators offered unique local restaurants and accommodation services, complementing the cultural and creative industries. The increasing land capital is the result of the rapid commercialization of the village. Driven by economic interests, villagers in Zengcuoan have continued to increase their rents. Some of the original artists felt unable to bear the pressure of the rents

and moved away. The rapid development of the area for tourism was supported by the government, and the town attracted more and more visitors. Meanwhile, the landowners became more focused on the current economic benefits and continued to raise the rent of their houses and expand the floor area of their original houses. Driven by the interests of the landowners, illegal construction prevailed.



**Figure 3.** The location of Zengcuoan in Xiamen city. Source: Adapted by the authors from Open-StreetMap and Google Earth.

#### 4.2.2. Overview of the Stages of Development in Zengcuoan The Stages of Development as a Traditional Fishing Village

The years between 1997 and 2003 mark an early stage in the development of Zengcuoan (Figure 4). With its beautiful seaside scenery and unique village architecture, teachers and students from Xiamen University were attracted to the town, moving their sculpture and painting studios to private residences in the village. The small population, large spaces, and external environment inspired the art world. During this period, the village attracted a large number of teachers and students from colleges and universities. The oil painting industry developed rapidly. As a result, Zengcuoan initially made a name for itself as an “oil painting village”. Later, as rents rose, the oil painting industry was forced to move out.

At the same time, writers, famous directors, and filmmakers all came to Zengcuoan, publishing stories about the village on the internet; it became famous in the sense that it was both familiar to and longed for by middle-class people in major cities across the country, and its popularity in the country gradually increased. Zengcuoan’s low rents attracted many students. The development of homestays, in turn, led to the improvement of commercial facilities, and the commercial atmosphere of Zengcuoan gradually became more established.

The period 2004–2011 represents a formative stage in the history of this cultural and creative fishing village. Between 2004 and 2005, a number of inns or B&Bs moved to Zengcuoan. Due to the high tourist traffic on the nearby Gulangyu Island, inns in this village were cheap; in combination with the beautiful natural environment, they attracted many tourists. Due to safety issues, such as fire prevention, the government tightened control and management over the B&Bs. The year 2010 saw the rapid development of the B&B industry in Zengcuoan due to the increasing number of tourists. Although the government still cracked down on B&B operations in the early stage, it gradually adopted a more accepting attitude towards B&B operations.



**Figure 4.** Satellite map of Zengcuoan in 2003 and 2017. Source: Adapted by the authors from Google Maps.

#### Stages of Development in Cultural and Creative Fishing Villages

The development of Zengcuoan and its prosperity from 2012 also presents a dilemma. Based on the development of inns and bookstores and the promotion of online platforms, “the most literary fishing village in China” continues to attract more and more tourists (Figure 4).

#### 4.3. Utilizing Collaborative Workshops for Reproducing Community Vitality

##### 4.3.1. Challenges and Difficulties in the Development of Zengcuoan

With the development of Xiamen’s tourism industry, an increasing number of tourists continue to visit Zengcuoan, which has led to the rapid development of the hospitality industry and increases in the value of the land. However, the creative industry is subject to a notoriously long incubation period, and its short-term benefits are not obvious. Some businesses could not bear the pressure of rising rents and had to withdraw from Zengcuoan. Due to rising rents, villagers were driven by profits; the original pleasant streetscape was destroyed; and public space was insufficient. Infrastructure construction lagged behind economic development.

While Zengcuoan has developed rapidly to become a hometown of cultural creation, music, homestays, and dining, which is deeply loved by people, especially young people, the rapid development of villages like this one also brings a host of new problems, including: (1) increasing pursuit of land rent by villagers; (2) erosion of the peaceful artistic atmosphere by way of excessive commercialization and intensive in-flows of capital; and (3) traffic



chaos. If the living environment of the village is destroyed, the sustainable development of Zengcuan will lose its foundation.

People make choices in accordance with the arrangements of the urban and rural planning management system that they operate within. In China, rural areas are subject to certain ambiguities within the planning system due to land property rights. In order to clarify this ambiguity, in Zengcuan, the original homesteads (*zhai jidi*) were redesignated as being subject to commercial land use. Under the premise of a given basic institutional environment, people make choices in accordance with institutional arrangements, and villagers take the initiative to choose the industry with the highest returns in order to maximize their interests. The transformation of Zengcuan from the original homestead into shops and hotels was an innovation supported by the government management system. This change in land use was the basis for continuous urban regeneration. The oil painting village was replaced by a resort village and then again by a cultural and creative village.

The development of Xiamen's tourism industry has continued to attract more tourists to Zengcuan. The commercial development of catering and other businesses has grown strongly, and the value of land has continued to rise; in the blind pursuit of profit maximization, commerce has eroded the laneways and public areas of Zengcuan. The boom in the number of tourists has increased the land rent in Zengcuan and pushed up the price of the shops. As a result, the original cultural and creative activities and bookshops continue to withdraw from Zengcuan because of the pressure from high rents. Commercial stores now occupy the streets and lanes of Zengcuan.

On the one hand, the villagers violated the rules and built to maximize their interests, destroying the originally pleasant streetscape. The façades of buildings are chaotic; the electrical wiring is disorderly; and there is a lack of public space. As rents continue to rise, driven by profits, villagers continue to breach contracts with businesses driven by rent benefits. A frantic rush to build and construct additions has taken place, even though the deteriorating living environment affects the atmosphere of literature and art. Young writers and artists cannot bear the rising rents and are leaving Zengcuan.

On the other hand, in the process of Zengcuan's renewal, the capital was also restrained by government forces and social and cultural forces. A large amount of capital has flowed into Zengcuan. In order to maximize profits, hospitality businesses have continued to be developed and expanded. The industry has a low threshold. Small stalls, such as barbecue and fruit hawkers, continue to occupy street space and shops, causing problems such as mess, hygiene issues, and noise pollution. The government encourages tourism development in Zengcuan by a range of means, including guiding the introduction of commerce into the space, improving infrastructure, managing shops and hotels, and constructing the village culture. Under the common regulation and guidance of multiple subjects, the capital has become an important force in maintaining the protection and development of ancient villages under the conditions of a modern market economy, working to realize the transfer of house use rights through leasing relations, maintaining artists' balance of payments through commerce, and realizing traditions such as the preservation of food culture and creative culture (and thus the sustainable development of the ancient village economy). Through the lease relationship, artists have obtained the identities of "shop owner", "original owner", and "library owner" and become legal users of space. Driven by their respective values, artists make use of the space, in this way forming a new space.

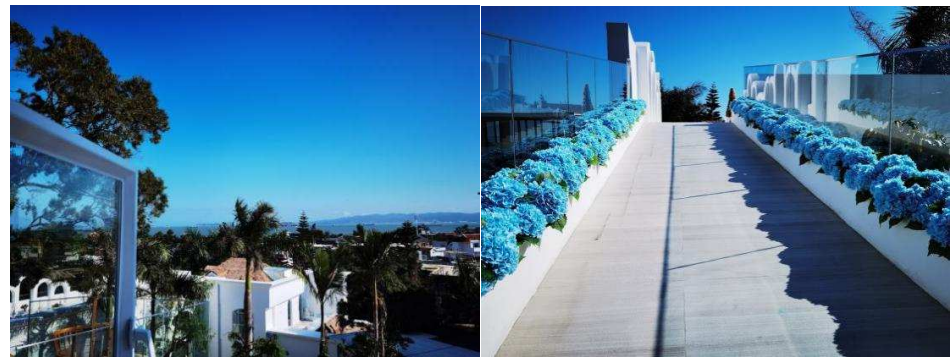
#### 4.3.2. Collaborative Workshops for Community Participation

In order to address the problem of encroachment on the village's public space and the increasing wave of commercialization, the village set up the "Zeng Chuan Collaborative Workshop" with the support of the government, inviting professional planners, community organizations, and residents to come together. This platform thus combines the interests of businesses, residents, and the government and creates a platform for dialogue between multiple stakeholders to reconcile conflicting interests.

Through the workshop, the two village committees and representatives of various organizations were able to discuss the development status of Zengcuoan. The core innovation of the resulting “Zengcuoan management model” lay in its focus on delivering autonomy, supplemented by government management. In this way, government departments jointly formulated a hotel management system, an illegal construction management system, and a sanitation management system; and they clarified the responsibilities of each group. The resulting comprehensive community system used public powers in order to promote top-down and bottom-up coordination. In this case study, governance emerges as an institutional force able to promote the renewal of Zengcuoan. Family hotels in Zengcuoan are rapidly developing and forming a landscape of distinctive architecture (Figures 5 and 6). The cultural and creative industries are also growing rapidly in the villages, forming clusters of cultural industries (Figures 7 and 8).



**Figure 5.** A seaside-style holiday hotel. Source: Taken by the authors.



**Figure 6.** High-quality hotels and outdoor spaces. Source: Taken by the authors.



**Figure 7.** Creative Products Street and Commercial Street. Source: Taken by the authors.



**Figure 8.** Traditional residential buildings converted into leisure spaces. Source: Taken by the authors.

Based on the development difficulties of Zengcuan, public toilets, fire hydrants, and other facilities were added to Binhai Street, improving firefighting and sanitation facilities and thus the overall environment. The subsequent construction of the “fishing bridge” opened up a direct connection between Zengcuan and the sea. Such a project integrated culture and physical design. The fishing bridge has become not only a viewing corridor but also a typical landmark building in Zengcuan, which improves the convenience of reaching surrounding beaches.

The workshop mechanism is a platform for all stakeholders to maximize the balance between the rational needs of all parties and mediate conflicts through autonomous systems and autonomous conventions. Under the workshop mechanism, the interests of villagers, businesses, and the government are balanced, overcoming the dilemma of collective action.

Looking back at the evolution of its space, we find that Zengcuan presents an example of the formation of a prosperous cultural and creative village—and of a transition process that overcame the dilemma of collective action. There were many factors at work in this process: the surplus of land rents generated by the incentive of the dual land system, the loose management system and development controls, the influx of artists, and the integration of foreign capital into the local area. Here, urban regeneration emerges as the result of a combination of various (spatial and other) factors.

In Zengcuan, the surplus of land rents encouraged the continuous reconstruction of property rights, forming a gradual process wherein the renewal of businesses was also continuous. The town’s spatial evolution can be attributed to a restructuring of space caused by the opportunity for profit generated by an imbalance of the system, which is manifested in the continuous renewal of the spatial format. When development encounters difficulties, through the establishment of workshop mechanisms, the villagers’ self-governance conventions and government departments were able to combine “top-down” and “bottom-up” perspectives in order to overcome the dilemma of collective action and thereby induce spatial renewal.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

This paper has investigated the urban regeneration process as a sustainable development strategy in China. Existing research on urban regeneration largely focuses on the economic benefits of community regeneration, paying limited attention to the question of how sustainable community regeneration might be promoted from collaborative participation. This study addresses this gap and aims to explore the community regeneration approach in the context of urban regeneration in China. In stark contrast with property-led regeneration, which leads to community demolition, the community regeneration in Zengcuan takes the approach of promoting sustainable community development through community participation in workshops without changing the previous land ownership.

With the modernization of China’s governance capacity and system, the role of individuals, organizations, and groups in traditional communities has changed, leading to the creation of many community problems. The complex and diverse environments of

communities determine the complexity and diversity of their evolution [46]. However, traditional planning cannot cater to the needs of new developments, and a reformed approach to planning is needed. In this context, traditional planning approaches need to be changed, and participatory planning, which is mainly characterized by public participation, can be an effective way of communication and cooperation. Collaborative workshops provide a participatory platform for multiple actors and facilitate participatory planning. The collaborative workshop is a new form of participatory planning. With the diversification of social governance actors, the collaborative workshop can effectively facilitate the formation of a collaborative governance pattern between governmental and civic organizations to solve the dilemma of community development and achieve a rational path to sustainable development [47–50].

In the face of China's current demand for quality economic development, the Zengcuan community practice emphasizes that the government and citizens can work together through collaborative workshops to solve the problems facing community development and to change the ineffective community governance brought about by the top-down approach of the government in the past. As the community is the basic unit of social composition, the innovation in community governance in Zengcuan helps to promote the development of the community. It provides a valuable reference for the local government in the formulation of community management policies, changing the previous situation of destroying the original social structure of the community through demolition and re-building.

Collaborative planning has played an important role in the development of Zengcuan. Previously, the village failed to reach an effective consensus among various stakeholders, leaving them in a fragmented status. The development of villages has been driven by market interests, and the erosion of public space and inadequate public facilities has led to unsustainable development in the community. In the face of these challenges, the government has limited binding power and decision-making authority over the development of the village, and it is difficult to promote village management in a top-down approach. In this context, collaborative workshops bring stakeholders together on a consultative platform to establish a common goal for village development and to address current development problems in order to promote sustainable village development.

The collaborative workshop in the Zengcuan community has proved to be an important mechanism in resolving conflicts between stakeholders in the urban regeneration process. The collaborative workshop takes a top-down and bottom-up approach to mutual promotion. It forms a new mechanism for regeneration, and community participation plays an important role as a driving force for sustainable community development. The community participatory approach changes the traditional planning mechanism where decisions are made by the government. Community participation takes into account the needs of stakeholders and focuses on the coordination of stakeholders as the key element of innovation in the community regeneration approach. Community participation offers references for adapting to the transformation of urban regeneration in the context of sustainable development.

In this paper, we have addressed the transformation of Zengcuan from a traditional fishing village to a tourism and cultural village. Due to the initial allocation of collective land ownership, the government had limited control over the development of the village, which provided an opportunity for community participation in this village. The conversion from peasant dwellings on collective land to shops and B&B hotels led to the adoption of a community participation approach to maximize benefits. This brought about a situation wherein hotels, cultural and creative shops, and commercial shops all coexist and contribute to the prosperity of the village.

The policy implications of this case study suggest that future community regeneration in China can be attempted in the form of a "collaborative workshop", which will be determined through the government system. The contribution of this article is to present a collaborative planning approach for sustainable community development that can serve as a valuable reference for community governance in China and other countries.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, J.Y., L.Y. and H.M.; methodology, J.Y.; writing—original draft preparation, J.Y. and H.M.; writing—review and editing, L.Y.; funding acquisition, H.M. and J.Y. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This study is supported by the Third Xinjiang Scientific Expedition Program [grant number: 2021xjkk0905], and the National Natural Science Foundation of China [grant numbers: 42121001 and 41971209], Fujian Social Science Fund [grant number: FJ2021C036], Fujian Provincial Department of Education Fund [grant number: JAS19312].

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## References

- Zheng, H.W.; Shen, G.Q.; Wang, H. A review of recent studies on sustainable urban renewal. *Habitat Int.* **2014**, *41*, 272–279. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Yang, L.; Ao, Y.; Ke, J.; Lu, Y.; Liang, Y. To walk or not to walk? Examining non-linear effects of streetscape greenery on walking propensity of older adults. *J. Transp. Geogr.* **2021**, *94*, 103099. [[CrossRef](#)]
- He, B.-J.; Ding, L.; Prasad, D. Relationships among local-scale urban morphology, urban ventilation, urban heat island and outdoor thermal comfort under sea breeze influence. *Sustain. Cities Soc.* **2020**, *60*, 102289. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Tan, Y.; Xu, H.; Zhang, X. Sustainable urbanization in China: A comprehensive literature review. *Cities* **2016**, *55*, 82–93. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Wang, X.; Chan, C.K.C.; Yang, L. Economic restructuring and migrant workers' coping strategies in China's Pearl River Delta. *Third World Q.* **2021**, *42*, 812–830. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Sharifi, A. Urban sustainability assessment: An overview and bibliometric analysis. *Ecol. Indic.* **2021**, *121*, 107102. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Huang, L.; Zheng, W.; Hong, J.; Liu, Y.; Liu, G. Paths and strategies for sustainable urban renewal at the neighborhood level: A framework for decision-making. *Sustain. Cities Soc.* **2020**, *55*, 102074. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Zhou, Y.; Lan, F.; Zhou, T. An experience-based mining approach to supporting urban renewal mode decisions under a multi-stakeholder environment in China. *Land Use Policy* **2021**, *106*, 105428. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Valeriu, I.; Ristea, A. Commercial facilities and urban regeneration. *Amfiteatru Econ. J.* **2010**, *12*, 99–114.
- Chiesura, A. The role of urban parks for the sustainable city. *Landsc. Urban Plan.* **2004**, *68*, 129–138. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Adams, D.; Hastings, E.M. Urban renewal in Hong Kong: Transition from development corporation to renewal authority. *Land Use Policy* **2001**, *18*, 245–258. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Abu-Dayyeh, N. Prospects for historic neighborhoods in atypical Islamic cities: The view from Amman, Jordan. *Habitat Int.* **2006**, *30*, 46–60. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Li, Q. Resilience thinking as a system approach to promote China's sustainability transitions. *Sustainability* **2020**, *12*, 5008. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Boyko, C.T.; Gaterell, M.R.; Barber, A.R.; Brown, J.; Bryson, J.R.; Butler, D.; Caputo, S.; Caserio, M.; Coles, R.; Cooper, R.; et al. Benchmarking sustainability in cities: The role of indicators and future scenarios. *Glob. Environ. Chang.* **2012**, *22*, 245–254. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Brinkerhoff, J.M. Government-nonprofit partnership: A defining framework. *Public Adm. Dev.* **2002**, *22*, 19–30. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Bromley, R.D.; Tallon, A.R.; Thomas, C.J. City centre regeneration through residential development: Contributing to sustainability. *Urban Stud.* **2005**, *42*, 2407–2429. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Bryson, J.R.; Lombardi, R. Balancing product and process sustainability against business profitability: Sustainability as a competitive strategy in the property development process. *Bus. Strategy Environ.* **2010**, *18*, 97–107. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Bügler, R.; Stauffacher, M.; Kriese, U.; Pollheimer, D.L.; Scholz, R.W. Identifying stakeholders' views on sustainable urban transition: Desirability, utility and probability assessments of scenarios. *Eur. Plan. Stud.* **2012**, *20*, 1667–1687. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Couch, C.; Dennemann, A. Urban regeneration and sustainable development in Britain. *Cities* **2000**, *17*, 137–147. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Couch, C.; Sykes, O.; Borstinghaus, W. Thirty years of urban regeneration in Britain, Germany and France: The importance of context and path dependency. *Prog. Plan.* **2011**, *75 Pt 1*, 1–52. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Hastings, A. Unravelling the process of 'partnership' in urban regeneration policy. *Urban Stud.* **1996**, *33*, 253–268. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Gotham, K.F. Growth machine up-links: Urban renewal and the rise and fall of a pro-growth coalition in a US city. *Crit. Sociol.* **2000**, *26*, 268–300. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Yang, J.; He, Z.; Ma, H. Comparison of collective-led and state-led land development in China from the perspective of institutional arrangements: The case of Guangzhou. *Land* **2022**, *11*, 226. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Zhang, W.; Zhang, X.; Wu, G. The network governance of urban renewal: A comparative analysis of two cities in China. *Land Use Policy* **2021**, *106*, 105448. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Turcu, C. Local experiences of urban sustainability: Researching Housing Market Renewal interventions in three English neighbourhoods. *Prog. Plan.* **2012**, *78*, 101–150. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Liu, G.; Chen, S.; Gu, J. Urban renewal simulation with spatial, economic and policy dynamics: The rent-gap theory-based model and the case study of Chongqing. *Land Use Policy* **2019**, *86*, 238–252. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Yu, H.; Yang, J.; Li, T.; Jin, Y.; Sun, D. Morphological and functional polycentric structure assessment of megacity: An integrated approach with spatial distribution and interaction. *Sustain. Cities Soc.* **2022**, *80*, 103800. [[CrossRef](#)]

28. Xie, P.; Yang, J.; Sun, W.; Xiao, X.; Xia, J.C. Urban scale ventilation analysis based on neighborhood normalized current model. *Sustain. Cities Soc.* **2022**, *80*, 103746. [[CrossRef](#)]
29. Pan, W.; Du, J. Towards sustainable urban transition: A critical review of strategies and policies of urban village renewal in Shenzhen, China. *Land Use Policy* **2021**, *111*, 105744. [[CrossRef](#)]
30. Lai, Y.; Jiang, L.; Xu, X. Exploring spatio-temporal patterns of urban village redevelopment: The case of Shenzhen, China. *Land* **2021**, *10*, 976. [[CrossRef](#)]
31. Smith, R.W. A theoretical basis for participatory planning. *Policy Sci.* **1973**, *4*, 275–295. [[CrossRef](#)]
32. Cilliers, E.J.; Timmermans, W. The importance of creative participatory planning in the public place-making process. *Environ. Plan. B Plan. Des.* **2014**, *41*, 413–429. [[CrossRef](#)]
33. Legacy, C. Is there a crisis of participatory planning? *Plan. Theory* **2017**, *16*, 425–442. [[CrossRef](#)]
34. Szetey, K.; Moallemi, E.; Ashton, E.; Butcher, M.; Sprunt, B.; Bryan, B. Participatory planning for local sustainability guided by the Sustainable Development Goals. *Ecol. Soc.* **2021**, *26*, 16. [[CrossRef](#)]
35. Salter, J.D.; Campbell, C.; Journeay, M.; Sheppard, S.R. The digital workshop: Exploring the use of interactive and immersive visualisation tools in participatory planning. *J. Environ. Manag.* **2009**, *90*, 2090–2101. [[CrossRef](#)]
36. Cao, Y.; Tang, X. Evaluating the Effectiveness of Community Public Open Space Renewal: A Case Study of the Ruijin Community, Shanghai. *Land* **2022**, *11*, 476. [[CrossRef](#)]
37. Wang, Z.; Xiang, S.; Zhu, J.; Guo, S. The method and practice of street renewal based on innovative design thinking. *J. Landsc. Res.* **2020**, *12*, 23–27.
38. Wang, X.; Aoki, N. Paradox between neoliberal urban redevelopment, heritage conservation, and community needs: Case study of a historic neighbourhood in Tianjin, China. *Cities* **2019**, *85*, 156–169. [[CrossRef](#)]
39. Nasca, T.F.; Changfoot, N.; Hill, S.D. Participatory planning in a low-income neighbourhood in Ontario, Canada: Building capacity and collaborative interactions for influence. *Community Dev. J.* **2019**, *54*, 622–642. [[CrossRef](#)]
40. Natarajan, L.; Lock, S.J.; Rydin, Y.; Lee, M. Participatory planning and major infrastructure: Experiences in REI NSIP regulation. *Town Plan. Rev.* **2019**, *90*, 117–139. [[CrossRef](#)]
41. Katsui, H.; Koistinen, M. The participatory research approach in non-Western countries: Practical experiences from Central Asia and Zambia. *Disabil. Soc.* **2008**, *23*, 747–757. [[CrossRef](#)]
42. Zhang, J.; Yang, X.; Wang, H. Age-friendly regeneration of urban settlements in China: Game and incentives of stakeholders in decision-making. *Land Use Policy* **2021**, *111*, 105745. [[CrossRef](#)]
43. Li, Y.; Fan, P.; Liu, Y. What makes better village development in traditional agricultural areas of China? Evidence from long-term observation of typical villages. *Habitat Int.* **2019**, *83*, 111–124. [[CrossRef](#)]
44. Li, J.; Krishnamurthy, S.; Roders, A.P.; Van Wesemael, P. Community participation in cultural heritage management: A systematic literature review comparing Chinese and international practices. *Cities* **2020**, *96*, 102476. [[CrossRef](#)]
45. Li, X.; Chen, W.; Cundy, A.B.; Chang, A.C.; Jiao, W. Analysis of influencing factors on public perception in contaminated site management: Simulation by structural equation modeling at four sites in China. *J. Environ. Manag.* **2018**, *210*, 299–306. [[CrossRef](#)]
46. Yang, J.; Yang, R.; Chen, M.H.; Su, C.H.; Zhi, Y.; Xi, J. Effects of rural revitalization on rural tourism. *J. Hosp. Tour. Manag.* **2021**, *47*, 35–45. [[CrossRef](#)]
47. Warburton, D. *Community and Sustainable Development: Participation in the Future*; Routledge: London, UK, 1998; pp. 1–276.
48. Wondirad, A.; Ewnetu, B. Community participation in tourism development as a tool to foster sustainable land and resource use practices in a national park milieu. *Land Use Policy* **2019**, *88*, 104155. [[CrossRef](#)]
49. Cheng, T.M.; Wu, H.C.; Wang, J.T.; Wu, M.R. Community Participation as a mediating factor on residents' attitudes towards sustainable tourism development and their personal environmentally responsible behaviour. *Curr. Issues Tour.* **2019**, *22*, 1764–1782. [[CrossRef](#)]
50. Rahman, M.K.; Masud, M.M.; Akhtar, R.; Hossain, M.M. Impact of community participation on sustainable development of marine protected areas: Assessment of ecotourism development. *Int. J. Tour. Res.* **2022**, *24*, 33–43. [[CrossRef](#)]