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"Inspiring" Policy Transfer: Analysis of Urban Renewal in Four First-Tier Chinese Cities

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Abstract: Most Chinese cities have spent decades achieving urbanisation. So far, rural urbanisation has shifted to urban renewal. However, the distinction between a rapidly changing social environment and the establishment of an institution has led to the failure of urban renewal policies to sustainably achieve complete transformation through urban modernisation involving many stakeholders. Owing to the top-down political system in China, the formulation and implementation of urban renewal policies are carried out in a closed-loop process in which "decisions are issued by the central government to the local government which gives feedback to the centre". This seems to affect urban renewal through a transfer of renewal policies in a local area. Therefore, it is essential to explore the differences between the urban renewal policies at different government levels and to analyse these policies in diverse urban contexts with multiple stakeholders. Based on the policy transfer theory, this paper selects 216 core policy texts at the state level and at the level of four first-tier cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen), and uses the methods of text mining and semantic analysis to form open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Furthermore, it discusses the policy transfer and impact mechanism of urban renewal policy at different levels with diverse characteristics of policy subsystems. We found that the transfer of urban renewal policy occurred in China through top-down coercive vertical transfer, bottom-up combination reverse transfer, and voluntary horizontal transfer among cities. Finally, we suggest that "inspiration"-type policy transfer is an effective method to promote urban renewal in China.

Keywords: urban development; urban renewal policy; policy transfer; coercive vertical transfer; combination reverse transfer; voluntary horizontal transfer

1. Introduction

Urbanisation that achieves rehabilitation of the physical environment and economic rejuvenation of urban space has various purposes and contents, such as "urban renewal" [1], "urban redevelopment" [2], "urban reuse" [3], "urban renaissance" [4,5], "urban regeneration" [6], and "urban revitalization" [7].

After World War II, urban renewal began to proliferate worldwide. Unlike some developed countries, China has simultaneously experienced urban renewal and urbanisation. To assist urban expansion, early urban renewal took the form of demolishing dilapidated buildings, renovating architectural styles, constructing and maintaining public facilities, and redeveloping industrial structure and spatial quality [8–11]. Thereafter, urban renewal has started to address material problems that have stemmed from the speedy urbanisation process, the relationship between people and land, and social fairness and justice [12–15]. Overall, the essence of urban renewal is the optimisation of urban functions and the enhancement of spatial quality for the endogenous improvement of the constructed land without increasing the scale of urban land under the tight constraints on resources and the environment, thereby promoting the sustainable development of cities [16].

In 2019, the Central Economic Working Conference proposed the strengthening of urban renewal and the upgrading of housing stock [17]. In 2020, the fifth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee emphasised urban renewal as the direction of urban work for the "14th Five-year Plan" and the future [18]. This shows that a comprehensive improvement of the quality of urban development has far-reaching significance, including continuously meeting the ever-growing expectation of people for a better life and promoting the sustainable and healthy development of the economy and society.

So far, several policies have been introduced for urban renewal at the state and city levels, such as "the City Planning Law of the People's Republic of China" [19], "Regulation on the Dismantlement of Urban Houses" [20], "Provisions on the Economical and Intensive Use of Land" [21], "Notice of Beijing Municipality on the Relevant Issues for the Reconstruction of Urban Dilapidated and Aged Houses" [22], and "Several Opinions of Shanghai Municipality on Accelerating the Renovation of Dangerous Sheds and Shabby Houses of Central Parts of Shanghai" [23]. These policies have made ground-breaking progress in management measures and renewal operations, and have vigorously promoted urban renewal in China and improved its efficiency [24–26]. To promote China's decentralisation reform, the bottom-up model of policy formulation for urban renewal has gradually prevailed over the original top-down model.

Faced with the constantly changing requirements of urban renewal in China, local policies seem to be insufficient to solve difficulties, such as the imbalance of interest patterns among urban population; the use of the changed land and coordination of property rights; the functional conflict between public departments; and the appearance of "market failure" [27–32]. These difficulties are characterised by various institutional dilemmas, such as the insufficient importance given to the operability of policy content for urban renewal, as well as an urban renewal policy system that lacks a systematic and flexible approach. These inevitable challenges hinder the process of urban renewal.

Therefore, to set the prerequisite for sustainable implementation, a fundamental task is to formulate and implement effective and diverse urban renewal policies to improve institutional arrangement. This study evaluated the current situation and institutional changes in the urban renewal system in China based on the policy transfer theory, with the purpose of showing ways to achieve sustainability, a standardised and transparent implementation process, and an in-depth public participation. This study also aimed to explore the effective path for the transfer and development of China's urban renewal policy to realise the balance of multiple interests in urban renewal.

Besides, as the world's second-largest economy, China's successful experience in urban renewal will offer a model of a viable urban development process and enlighten other countries and regions in the world in this rapidly changing era.

2. Literature Review

Policy research on urban renewal has shown an increasing trend in recent times. Existing literature on urban renewal can be classified into four groups.

The first group of studies focuses on a single policy, such as land use [33–36] and housing policy [37–41]. The second type analyses the policies of specific cities, such as Shenzhen [42], Guangzhou [43], Shanghai [44], and Beijing [45]. The third type compares the policies of different cities [46–51]. The fourth type of studies evaluates policies from the perspectives of different disciplines, such as economics [52–57] and management [58–64].

Though these studies are wide-ranging and offer helpful suggestions for solving the institutional dilemma, we think that they have mainly studied individual renewal policies, local urban policies, and different disciplinary perspectives. However, to promote efficient governance, it is also necessary to analyse renewal policy from a multi-dimensional perspective. This requires a study on the methodology that is involved in the analysis, as well as policy tools.

In policy research, policy transfer is an essential tool [65,66]. Policy transfer means that the government of a country or region uses or compares its ideas or models with

those in other countries or regions, in order to solve a perceived real policy problem or policy failure in its own context, and to promote new laws and policy initiatives [67]. In general, governments have limited capacity to solve complex problems and lack sufficient resources to develop new solutions from scratch. They must learn the lessons from other governments that have attained a desirable outcome or have implemented a particular policy instrument to meet a similar or related challenge [68]. More importantly, appropriate policy transfer not only saves the time and cost of a government in a similar policy research environment, but it is also helpful for the improvement of the efficiency of governance.

With the development of globalisation, policy transfer is gaining popularity [69]. When studying the impact of European policies on national administrations, Knill [70] insisted on the domestic systems and incorporated the European themes which had followed their own institutional logics. Westney [71] showed how Japanese experts in the Meiji restoration were sent out by their political overlords to various European countries to study policy-making solutions in order to choose and bring useful experiences back home. From the democratic revolution to the application of opening up and reform policies, the Chinese leaders, Sun Yat sen, Mao Zedong, and Deng Xiaoping, had always hold on to a strong national foundation, and adopted forms of republicanism, democracy, and market principles to learn from foreign examples; this is because the only way to surpass the West is to learn from it, just as the Japanese had begun to do so several decades ago [72]. After a comparison of the regulatory change in the railways in Britain and Germany, Lodge [73] argued that an institutional approach enhanced the understanding of the "learning" and "transfer" processes, and suggested that it was the structure of the political–administrative nexus that was centrally responsible for why particular policy options were selected whereas others were neglected. Greener [74] analyzed the health policy in the U.K. during the formulation of the "internal market" reforms of the late 1980s and early 1990s from the perspective of policy transfer, and illuminated the actors, processes, and constraints involved in the health policy reform. Padgett [75] evaluated the institutional capacity of the EU for policy transfer based on research into the liberalisation and re-regulation of the European electricity sector.

It can be seen that the policy transfer literature has formerly focused on the processes between countries or states [76], while recent studies have turned their attention to active knowledge learning between cities. A notable example is the "Manhattan Transfer", wherein many cities in the Asian–Pacific region intended to learn from the spectacular high-rise skyline urban design from New York City [77]. de Jong and Edelenbos [78] tried to uncover policy lessons that are being transferred among seven European cities that have joined the expert network on European sustainable urban development. Bunnell and Das [79] tracked a case of urban policy transfer from Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) to Hyderabad (India), and believed that the former became an inspiration and model for the latter to build a high-tech city. de Jong [80] took ecocity development as an example to introduce the phenomenon of the transfer of China's policy system, and explained how Chinese policymakers chose useful experience and ensured that it was suitable for the local institutional context when importing policy advice from abroad. Miao [81] conducted a study on the Sino-Singapore Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP), a government-to-government collaboration in promoting industrial development, and revealed that two parallel policy transfer networks were developed in the early stage of the SIP. Their relationship affected the policy transfer outcomes for the SIP and revealed the important governance and temporal dimensions in transnational policy transfers. Some scholars also studied the policy transfer to accelerate smart city development by collecting useful cases of urban planning and governance lessons [82,83]. In addition, in order to meet the sustainable challenges in the field of urban transport, some scholars suggested that, in the specific context of a city, the practice of policy transfer might be leveraged to facilitate both the policymaking process and the application of knowledge [84–86].

To sum up, most of the existing research studies on urban renewal policies are from the perspective of a single dimension, instead of studying from a multi-dimensional aspect and including a systematic analysis on the changes of renewal policies. However, urban

renewal is a complex engineering system. A single-dimensional perspective is not enough to explain and solve the conflicts and contradictions in the deep development period of urban renewal, and it cannot make a policy inclusive. Meanwhile, existing policy transfer mainly focuses on institutional transfer at the national level. Although research on policy transfer in urban areas (such as ecocity and smart city) is gaining attention, there is a lack of application towards the transfer of urban renewal policies. Since there is a lack of systematic research on urban renewal policy changes, and policy transfer is a useful policy research tool, why do we not use policy transfer to systematically study urban renewal policies?

Therefore, the main contributions of this paper include the following:

(1) Adopting the policy transfer theory to systematically study urban renewal policies in an all-round and multi-dimensional way, analyse the transfer of renewal policies, and explore the policy transfer mechanism between the "state-city" and "city-city" levels.

(2) Clarifying the type, content, and degree of the urban renewal policy transfer in four case cities, and briefly assessing the feedback to other policymakers and implementation effect. We also provided suggestions for an effective transfer approach for urban renewal in China.

The rest of the sections in this study are as follows: Section 2 introduces the data sources and research methods. Section 3 describes the policy transfer theory. In Section 4, co-word analysis and the Gephi software are used to analyse 216 urban renewal policy texts sorted out at the state level and at the city level, including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen. Section 5 evaluates transferred policies between "state-city" and "city-city" based on the above classification of the four types. Finally, this study proposes an effective approach for policy transfer for urban renewal in China.

3. Methods and Data

3.1. Data Sources

China has accumulated rich experience in urban renewal, which provides examples for the world and has gained wide attention. Therefore, this paper studies the urban renewal activities in China, and uses the urban renewal policies at the national level and regional levels (including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen) as the research objects. As the world's first-tier cities, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen all rank in the forefront of the country in terms of total economic development and urban built environment [87]. Additionally, the four cities are pioneers of urban renewal practice in China. At present, they have shown systematic and comprehensive developmental characteristics in urban renewal system construction. Specifically, they have set up special departments and institutions to manage urban renewal affairs, such as the Urban Renewal Bureau. In addition, policy documents on urban renewal have been issued, such as the "Urban Renewal Regulations" and the "Urban Renewal Measures". Meanwhile, as the central cities of political, economic, and cultural development in China, the urbanisation rate of these four cities has exceeded 80%. According to relevant experience, they have entered the deep development stage of urban renewal, and their urban renewal path which fits the characteristics of urban development is being accelerated.

This paper adopts the main line of argument of the Central Urban Work Conference to assess China's urban renewal policy in four stages. Then, from the law database of Peking University, we collected 202 policy texts at the state level from 1949 to 2021, including laws, administrative regulations, regulatory documents of the State Council, departmental rules, intra-party regulations, departmental working documents, and local working documents.

Additionally, city-level policies were collected from the law database of Peking University and local government official websites, including local regulations and rules, working documents, and administrative licenses. The number of renewal policies in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen are 165, 272, 72, 122, and 194, respectively.

These policies were sorted into 216 policy texts after excluding those that are not highly related to urban renewal—77 policies were obtained at the state level, 28 policies in Beijing, 41 policies in Shanghai, 29 policies in Guangzhou, and 41 policies in Shenzhen.

There needs a specific explanation about the reason for focusing on urban renewal rather than on the renovation of "the three-old" policy in Guangdong Province. As shown in Figure 1, the renovation of "the three-old" policy originated from the practice in Foshan. It is a unique transformation mode in Guangdong Province of China, which refers to the renovation of old towns, old factories, and old villages. The implementation of "the three-old" renovation is to alleviate the contradiction between supply and demand of land resources, to realise the redevelopment of urban stock of inefficient construction land, and to implement the national strategy of economical and intensive use of land. With the comprehensive opening of "the three-old" renovation, Shenzhen issued the "Urban Renewal Measures of Shenzhen Municipality" in October 2009, which was the first time that the concept of "urban renewal" was put forward by a local government. In 2014, the focus of China's urban work shifted to the renovation of shanty areas. In December 2015, the People's Government of Guangzhou Municipality issued the "Urban Renewal Measures of Guangzhou Municipality", which included land acquisition and dismantlement, renovation of "the three-old", renovation of shanty areas, renovation of dilapidated old houses, and comprehensive improvement. It can be seen that "the three-old" renovation is a form of urban renewal, which is a special exploration of urban renewal in a specific period and region. Therefore, this paper adopts the "Urban Renewal Measures of Guangzhou Municipality" as the policy research sample of Guangzhou.
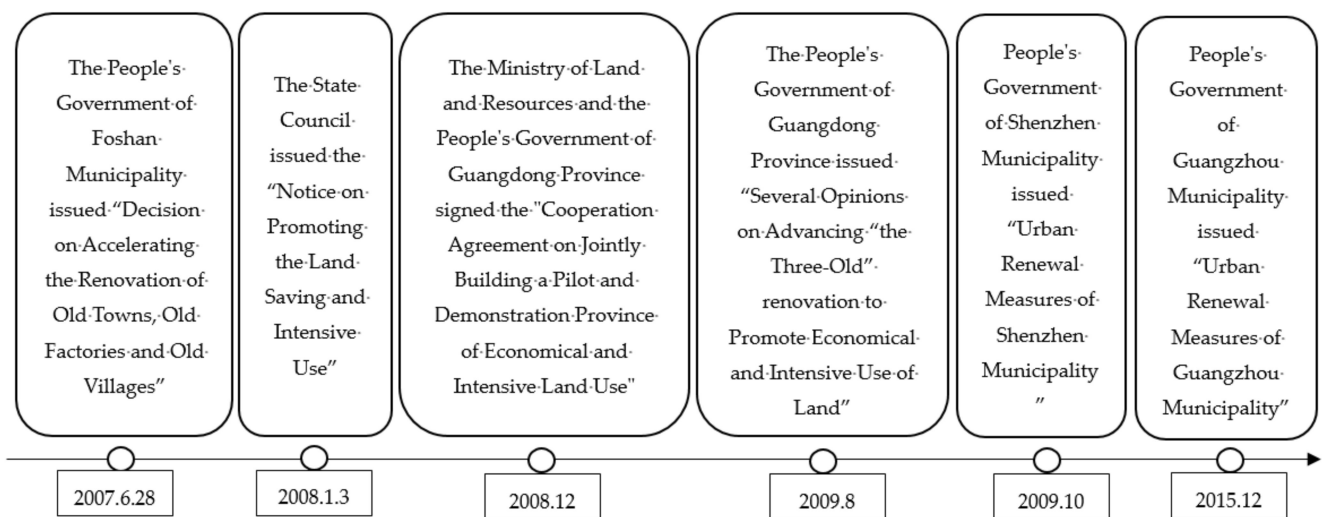

Figure 1. Historical evolution of urban renewal policy in Guangdong Province.

3.2. Research Methods

The four steps and techniques of policy analysis are shown in Figure 2 and are described below.

In the first step, this study used co-word analysis and the Gephi software to analyse word frequency statistics and extract theme keywords, and to complete the open coding of policy texts to form a lexicon [88]. Since synonyms could be found among the initial open-coding data, we merged and refined the extracted high-frequency keywords to ensure their scientific and effective validity. We then performed data cleaning by eliminating the high-frequency keywords that were not closely related. Thus, the final open coding of the policy text at both the state and city levels were obtained.

In the second step, to gain insight into the transfer and correlation of China's urban renewal policies, this study performed a more profound axial coding and selective coding for the theme keywords extracted from the open coding [88]. Axial coding reorganises the themes of a text that has been divided into coherent wholes and explores the internal connections between them. By analysing, comparing, classifying, and categorising the

meaning of theme keywords, we derived the axis category, which formed the axial coding of this paper.
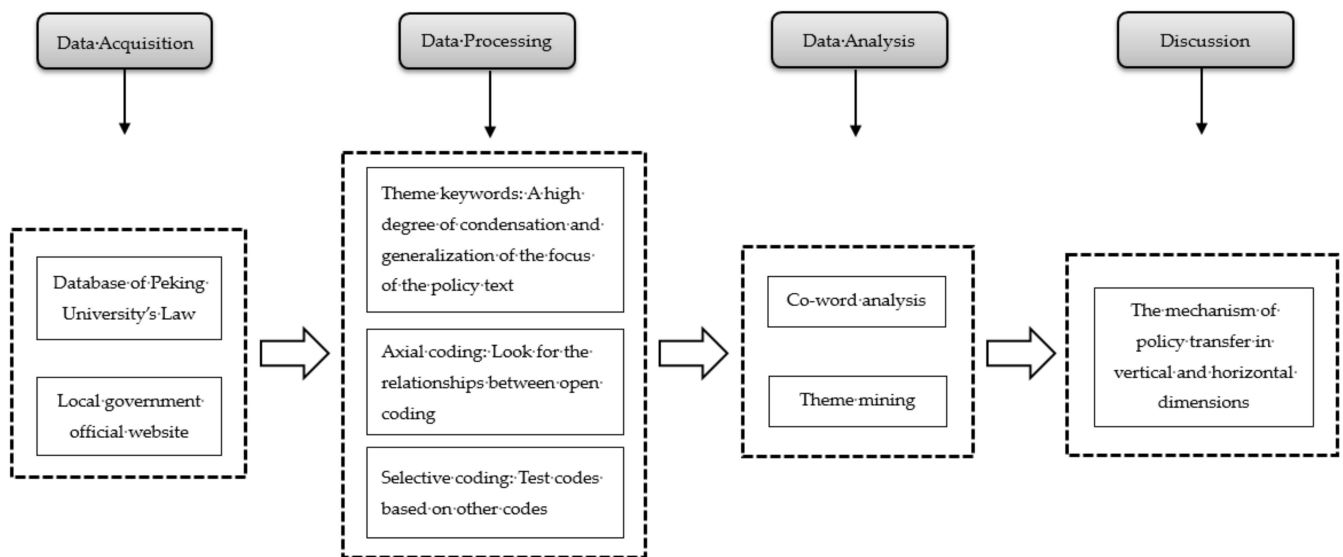
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Data·Acquisition        Data·Processing        Data·Analysis        Discussion
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Theme·keywords:·A·high·degree·of·condensation·and·generalization·of·the·focus·of·the·policy·text

Database·of·Peking·University's·Law

Local·government·official·website

Axial·coding:·Look·for·the·relationships·between·open·coding

Selective·coding:·Test·codes·based·on·other·codes

Co-word·analysis

Theme·mining

The·mechanism·of·policy·transfer·in·vertical·and·horizontal·dimensions

Figure 2. A framework of urban renewal policy research in China.

In the third step, this study analysed the logical order and relationship among the categories obtained by axial coding based on Howlett and Ramesh's [89] policy subsystems theory, since these categories were relatively independent and scattered. Then, we refined relevant main categories to acquire selective coding.

In the fourth step, we discussed the mechanism of urban renewal policy transfer in the vertical and horizontal dimensions, including the type, content, degree, and effect of policy transfer.

4. Policy Transfer Theory

4.1. The Connection and Difference between Policy Transfer and Other Concepts

Globalisation has increased the frequency of communication between countries. The universalisation of the phenomenon of policy dissemination in different places has attracted the attention of many scholars. Furthermore, many boundary-overlapping concepts have emerged, such as policy diffusion [90,91], policy convergence [92], policy learning [93], lesson drawing [94], institutional transplantation [95], policy emulation [96], and policy transfer [97]. This confirms that scholars have provided extensive insights on these concepts.

They are all used to explain the phenomenon of similar policy choices in different countries or regions over a period of time, but there are still difference in term of these concepts. Policy diffusion focuses on the conditions (influencing factors) that promote policy diffusion [98–102] and the explanation of the diffusion process [103–107], but it lacks attention to the content of the policy and how the policy changes [108]. Policy convergence studies the degree of policy convergence and the similarity in the results of policy changes [109–114], and is insensitive to the interactive feedback process that forms policy content changes [92]. Policy learning has derived five learning modes: political learning [115], social learning [116], government learning [117], policy-oriented learning [118], and lesson drawing [94]. However, the theoretical design of each learning mode is different, and knowledge integration cannot be realised [119]. Moreover, although each learning model involves the question of "who is learning" [69], the explanation is not clear, and a clear definition of learning actors is crucial for the theoretical integration of policy learning [108]. Rose [94] regards policy learning as lesson drawing, which includes copying, emulation, hybridisation, combination, and inspiration. However, the focus of lesson

drawing is on the voluntary behaviour of policymakers, which leads to controversy [120]. Institutional transplantation not only emphasises the time–space transfer of policy thoughts and institutions, but also pays attention to the effect of transplantation [121–124]. However, whether the transplantation is successful largely depends on the support from the corresponding informal systems (such as social values, cultural traditions, and ideologies). Only when the informal systems are recognised by the majority of people that the transplanted institution can really play its role [125,126].

4.2. Policy Transfer Theory

For the purpose of integrating many concepts, Dolowitz and Marsh [108] used the new term "policy transfer" to cover various forms in which a new policy is disseminated, including the diffusion, voluntary, and coercive forms. Furthermore, they also pointed out that policy transfer is a process in which policies, administrative arrangements, or institutions that exist at one time or place are used to develop knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, and institutions at another time or place.

Policy transfer is a dynamic process with many variables and complex structures. Dolowitz and Marsh incorporated the focus of previous studies and proposed that, to successfully carry out policy transfer, people must have a deep understanding of the process based on the following questions: What is its structure? What are the transfer types? What is the transfer object? Who are the key operators? How can it be transferred? What is the degree and effect of the transfer? [127].

First, the structure of policy transfer is multi-dimensional. Evans and Davies [128] believe that policy transfer covers multiple levels of global, international, transnational, domestic, and internal organisations. By enumerating 30 types of policy transfer at the governmental level, Dolowitz [97] presented a multi-dimensional structure. Wei [129] pointed out that such a structure is only theoretical. The actual level of policy transfer is relatively simple and mainly includes five types—the level of transfer between international organisations and countries, between regional organisations and countries, between countries and countries, among domestic governments, and across historical time and space. The policy transfer between international organisations and countries and among countries have always been the focus of research, while less attention has been paid to the policy transfer among domestic governments.

Second, instead of a simplified definition of policy transfer as voluntary or coercive, Dolowitz and Marsh [76] posited that policy transfer should be a continuum between lesson drawing (which is based on perfect rationality where the transfer is voluntary and triggered by a self-awareness of internal and external crises and opportunities) and direct imposition (which is based on bounded rationality where the transfer is coercive). A combination nature as reflected in treaty obligations is in the middle of the continuum. This important theory which includes voluntary transfer, coercive transfer, and combination transfer is more inclusive, because policy transfer is not an extreme event (either voluntary or coercive), and is consistent with the actual situation, helping us realise the complexity of policy transfer research more systematically.

Third, Evans [130] described the process model of policy transfer as involving the processes of "identifying problems–seeking solutions–introducing information by agents or elites–evaluating information–making decisions–policy implementation and results". This model reveals that policy transfer is not an independent behaviour, but a process of policymaking "embedded" in a new scenario. In addition, Dolowitz and Marsh [76] believe that any policy transfer is a combination of process and content and propose eight kinds of transfer—policy objectives, policy content, policy tools, institutions, ideology, policy plans, attitudes and cultural values, and negative lessons.

Finally, policy transfer is not considered an all-or-nothing process, but as containing four types ranging in the degree of transfer from low to high—"Copying", "Emulation", "Combination", and "Inspiration". Dolowitz and Marsh [76] proposed that the success of policy transfer should be measured by the degree to which a government achieves its goals

when carrying out policy transfer. The degree to which a policy transfer is regarded as a success is when major players participate in the policy field. On this basis, this paper categorises four types of policy transfer:

(1) Copying-type policy transfer is when a policy is usually copied and pasted. The policy participants do not make any change to the transferred policy or scientifically demonstrate its localisation. If unrealistic policies are enforced, they will increase the policy cost and the difficulty of their implementation. Moreover, the negative approach or disdain of the executor towards a policy makes the policy a mere formality, preventing its effective implementation. Finally, it is difficult to obtain expected results or even assess its negative effects.

(2) Emulation-type policy transfer is one in which policies are modified and parts of them are selectively transferred. This is a common form adopted by countries or regions. Because of state conditions or regional differences, the policy participants cannot completely copy the experience of others. Instead, they inspect supporting conditions for implementing policies. To solve the actual problems of their own countries or regions and achieve policy goals, policy participants aim for the localisation of transfer policy. Emulation-type policy transfer is easier to implement and more successful than copying-type policy transfer.

(3) Combination-type policy transfer is the comprehensive absorption and application of different policies. Owing to the continuous introduction of various policies, the policy participants give full importance to their subjective initiatives. Through the comprehensive utilisation of relevant policies and without excessive modification, the participants can apply them to their own country or region. This type of policy transfer has a higher optimisation degree, lower implementation difficulty, and better effect than the emulation-type policy transfer.

(4) Inspiration-type policy transfer refers to the creative construction of a new policy based on the implementation of policies in other regions. The policy participants give importance to the initiative, study similar problems in different environments, think of feasible schemes in their own countries or regions, complete the reproduction process of policy knowledge, and realise the innovation of the transferred policy. Compared to the other three types, this type is closely integrated with a country or region, easier to implement, and more likely to bring about policy results. This is the common type of transfer which policy participants pursue.

Thus, we can conclude that policy transfer originates from policy diffusion; policy learning may also lead to policy transfer; lesson drawing is regarded as "voluntary" policy transfer; and policy transfer may also lead to policy convergence, but there is no close relationship between them. Benson and Jordan [131] pointed out that research on policy dissemination is constantly changing, but Dolowitz and Marsh's concept of policy transfer is influential and is the most cited to date.

5. Result: Definition of Policy Period and Analysis of Policy Text

5.1. Definition and Classification of the Policy Period

Since China's reform and opening up in 1978, urban renewal has become an important aspect of its urban development. Having experienced 30 years of urban construction, the state encountered many new problems that can be classified into two kinds. First, owing to a planned economic system and a lack of effective policy guidance, most cities generally faced the problem of dilapidated housing, insufficient public infrastructure, and massive destruction of cultural relics. Second, the increasing shortage of land resources led to the transformation of urban spatial form. In this context, urban renewal was mentioned by the central government which rioritized adjusting its urban policy. This is marked as a milestone in the development and evolution of China's urban renewal policy in the following decades. In the history of urban renewal in China over the past 70 years, with the Central Urban Work Conference as the central point, the development of urban renewal policy can be divided into four stages (Table 1).

Table 1. Analytical framework of urban renewal policy paradigm in China.

Policy Period	Time of Urban Work Conference	The Relationship between Central and Local Governments	Policy Trends	Policy Focus	Difficulties in Urban Renewal	The Source of Policy Transfer
1949–1977	1962, 1963	Highly centralised	Preliminary proposal	Focused on the transformation of old cities	Confined to partial and small-scale renovation and the reconstruction or expansion of dilapidated buildings	State
1978–1999	1978	Power tilting towards the local level	Gradually increase	Solving the housing problem	Further deterioration of the old city environment	State, with local governments having more autonomy
2000–2014		Parallel centralisation and decentralisation	Obvious upward	Dominated by real estate development	Destroyed the urban characteristics and damaged the public interests of the city	Both the state and local cities
2015–	2015	Combining centralisation and decentralisation	Drive to maturity	Both stock upgrading and incremental structural adjustment	Urban connotation development and quality improvement	More towards local governments

5.1.1. Early Exploration Stage (1949–1977)

At the beginning of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the focus of the country's work was shifted from the countryside to the city, and it had approved the establishment of the first legislative body for urban construction, the General Administration of Urban Construction, which was in charge of the legislative work, including the formulation of regulations, systems, and standards for urban planning. During this period, as various systems were still in the wandering and exploring stage, the country introduced few policies related to urban renewal. With the basic completion of socialist transformation and the establishment of a highly centralised planned economic system that imitated the Soviet Union, China had formed a highly centralised situation. At this time, Chinese urban construction adhered to the basic national policy of "transforming consumption cities into production cities", and urban renewal mainly focused on the transformation of old cities and started all over the country. Beijing, as the capital of China, followed the general urban construction principle of "serving the central government, production and working people", and implemented urban renewal focusing on the reconstruction and expansion of old urban areas. Under the guidance of the urban construction guideline that aimed to "gradually renovate the old urban areas, strictly control the suburban industrial areas, and plan to develop satellite towns", Shanghai carried out the renovation of old urban areas. Based on the urban construction principle of "the urban area should be reconstruction mainly, the suburbs should pay attention to supporting facilities, and the new construction and relocation should be located in the outer "suburbs", Guangzhou pursued the urban transformation of production functions. Obviously, the local urban renewal at this stage was to implement the basic national policy of the country, and the source of its policy transfer was the state, with a strong coercive trend. Then, to strengthen urban management and solve urban contradictions, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council held the first and second National Urban Work Conferences in September 1962 and October 1963, respectively, to clarify the orientation of cities and emphasise the essential work of urban industrial construction [132]. However, limited resources for the development of urban industry and the construction of new industrial areas caused urban renewal to

be confined to partial and small-scale renovation and the reconstruction or expansion of dilapidated buildings.

5.1.2. Gradual Development Stage (1978–1999)

In 1978, China entered the initial stage of comprehensive reform and opening up. The development of urban industry caused serious environmental pollution and a shortage of housing for urban workers. Therefore, the focus of urban renewal during this period was on solving the housing problem and on the upgradation and transformation of old industrial and commercial areas. In March 1978, the State Council held the Third National Urban Work Conference in Beijing and proposed measures to accelerate housing construction [132]. These actions guided urban renewal in this period. Beijing and Guangzhou vigorously promoted the renovation of dilapidated and aged houses, while Shanghai focused on the tract dismantlement and renovation of dangerous sheds and shabby houses, and the protection of historical features. As the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone had just been established, urban construction started from scratch, mainly focusing on new land development which was accompanied by small-scale demolition and construction to improve office and residential conditions. However, the selection of a new urban area as the construction land at that time led to the further deterioration of the old city environment. During this period, driven by the reform of the economic system, the relationship between the central and local governments in China gradually broke the pattern of highly centralised power and showed the characteristics of power tilting towards the local level. With the promulgation of China's first "Urban Planning Regulations" [133] and "Urban Planning Law" [19], China's urban development stepped into the right track, and the policies of the four cities in terms of land, planning, housing, and demolition gradually increased. It could be seen that, at this time, the source of policy transfer was still the state, but local governments had more autonomy to lead the urban renewal activities in their region.

5.1.3. Rapid Development Stage (2000–2014)

With the establishment of an assignment system for land-use right and a fiscal tax-sharing system, land-use right was transformed from state ownership to private ownership for a certain period, accelerating the development of the real estate sector. Accordingly, China's urban renewal entered a rapid development stage that was dominated by real estate development. The promulgation of "the Urban Real Estate Administration Law of the People's Republic of China" provided a strong policy support for the implementation of urban renewal during this period [134]. Guangzhou carried out a comprehensive improvement of historic blocks and implemented the renovation of "the three-old" policy, which mainly revitalised the stock land resources. Beijing applied the idea of "organic renewal" into the practice of old city reconstruction and carried out the pilot work of the renovation of historically and culturally protected areas to promote the improvement of style and feature reserves. Shanghai entered a new round of old area renovation and industrial land transformation. Shenzhen started urban renewal by focusing on the renovation of urban village and the upgrading of old industrial areas. Such large-scale urban renewal promoted the improvement of living conditions and infrastructure of old areas, as well as the increasingly reasonable use of urban spatial structure. However, the urban renewal process under the guidance of economic development also destroyed the urban characteristics and damaged the public interests of local cities. At this stage, with the continuous advancement of market-oriented reform, China's central–local relations entered a new era of parallel centralisation and decentralisation [135]. With the gradual attention of the state to urban renewal, the release of relevant renewal policies showed an upward trend. At this time, the source of policy transfer was both the state and local cities. The four cities issued a large number of urban renewal policy documents, and the governments gradually changed from urban renewal operators to guides. In particular, the introduction of "the Urban Renewal Measures of Shenzhen Municipality" in 2009 marked the initial formation of the systematic policy mechanism of urban renewal in Shenzhen.

5.1.4. Steady Promotion Stage (2015–)

To eliminate problems arising from an overemphasis on economic development, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council held the Fourth National Urban Work Conference in December 2015 [132]. The meeting suggested adherence to intensive development, total quantity, limiting capacity, revitalising the stock, optimising increment, and improving quality to make urban development more sustainable and livable. After 37 years, the central government reopened the Urban Work Conference, which pointed out the direction for urban development in the new era. The urban renewal in China has changed from incremental construction in the past to both stock upgrading and incremental structural adjustment. The 19th CPC National Congress set the focus of national work as "the meeting of the ever-growing expectation of the people for a better life" [136]. Urban renewal based on a people-oriented concept pays more attention to issues such as promoting industrial transformation and upgrading, strengthening the intensive use of land, and emphasising urban connotation development and quality improvement. Beijing focuses on shanty area renovation and old community comprehensive improvement, and implements small-scale, gradual, and sustainable urban renewal. Shanghai implements organic renewal under the background of tight resource constraints. Guangzhou pursues micro transformation under the social compound benefits. Shenzhen coordinates renewal and builds a structure of pluralistic co-governance. Under the guidance of various national policies and the dual-track operation mechanism combining centralisation and decentralisation, the four cities have boldly explored the implementation mechanism and system construction of local urban renewal, and have successively issued local urban renewal measures, rules, and regulations to guide and standardise urban renewal activities within each administrative region. At this time, the source of policy transfer is more towards the local governments.

5.2. Statistical Analysis of Urban Renewal Policies at Multiple Levels

First, we collected 1027 policy texts related to urban renewal from the law database of Peking University and local government official websites, including 202 texts on renewal at the state level, 165 on that in Beijing, 272 in Shanghai, 72 in Guangdong province, 122 in Guangzhou, and 194 in Shenzhen. These texts cover topics including land, planning, housing, dismantlement, infrastructure, realty, dilapidated and aged houses, shanty areas, villages in the city, renovation of "the three-old" policy, and the protection of historical buildings. The corresponding policy years and quantity distribution are shown in Figure 3.
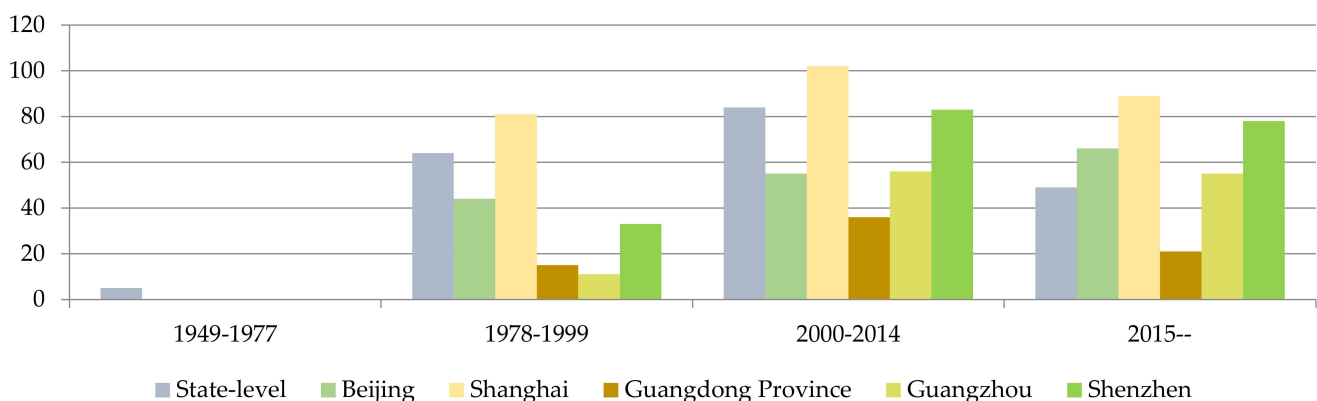

Figure 3. The year and quantity distribution in the four periods of China's urban renewal policy.

Second, after screening the texts, this study selected 216 closely related policy texts. A text database of China's urban renewal policies (Table 2), including data fields such as date issued, issuing authority, and policy name, was constructed to provide support for the next analysis.

Table 2. A text database of urban renewal policy in China.

S/N	Date Issued	Issuing Authority	Document Number	Policy Name	Level of Authority	Status	Area of Law
1	01-31-1958	State Construction Commission (changed) and Ministry of Urban Construction (dissolved)		Notice of the State Construction Commission and the Ministry of Urban Construction on Several Control Indicators of Urban Planning	Departmental Working Documents	Effective	Urban Planning, Development, and Construction
2	10-19-1978	State Council	No. 222 [1978] of the State Council	Report of the State Council on Approving and Forwarding the National Construction Commission on Accelerating the Construction of Urban Housing	Regulatory Documents of the State Council	Effective	Urban Planning, Development, and Construction
				…			
11	12-26-1989	Standing Committee of the National People's Congress	Order No. 23 of the President of the People's Republic of China	City Planning Law of the People's Republic of China	Laws	Expired	Urban Planning, Development, and Construction
41	06-13-2001	State Council	Order No. 305 of the State Council of the People's Republic of China	Regulation on the Dismantlement of Urban Houses	Administrative Regulations	Expired	Relocation and Demolition Placement
45	06-08-2003	State Council	Order No. 379 of the State Council of the People's Republic of China	Regulation on Realty Management	Administrative Regulations	Revised	Real Estate Enterprises
65	10-22-2009	People's Government of Shenzhen Municipality	Decree No. 211 of Shenzhen Municipal People's Government	Urban Renewal Measures of Shenzhen Municipality	Local Government Rules	Revised	General Provisions on Government Affairs
90	06-03-2012	People's Government of Guangzhou Municipality	No. 20 [2012] of Sui fu	Supplementary Opinions of the People's Government of Guangzhou Municipality on Accelerating the Work of the Three-Old Renovation	Local Working Documents	Expired	General Provisions on Construction
99	07-04-2013	State Council	No. 25 [2013] of the State Council	Opinions of the State Council on Accelerating the Work of Shanty Area Renovation	Regulatory Documents of the State Council	Effective	Urban Planning, Development, and Construction
102	09-06-2013	State Council	No. 36 [2013] of the State Council	Opinions of the State Council to Strengthen the City Infrastructure Construction	Regulatory Documents of the State Council	Effective	Urban Planning, Development, and Construction

Table 2. *Cont.*

S/N	Date Issued	Issuing Authority	Document Number	Policy Name	Level of Authority	Status	Area of Law
109	04-11-2014	People's Government of Shanghai Municipality	No. 28 [2014] of Hu fu ban	Notice of the General Office of Shanghai Municipality People's Government on Establishing the Leading Group of Shanghai Municipality for the Work of "Urban-Village" Renovation	Local Working Documents	Effective	General Provisions on Government Affairs
110	05-22-2014	Ministry of Land & Resources (dissolved)	Order No.61 of the Ministry of Land and Resources	Provisions on the Economical and Intensive Use of Land	Departmental Rules	Revised	Land Use and Management
				…			
212	01-20-2021	People's Government of Beijing Municipality	No. 1 [2021] of Jing zheng fa	Notice of the People's Government of Beijing Municipality on Issuing the Implementation Opinions on Deepening and Promoting the Special Campaign of "Making Improvements through Relocation and Rectification" during the "Fourteenth Five-Year Plan" Period	Local Regulatory Documents	Effective	General Provisions on Government Affairs
213	05-15-2021	People's Government of Beijing Municipality	No. 10 [2021] of Jing zheng fa	Guiding Opinions of the People's Government of Beijing Municipality on the Implementation of Urban Renewal Action	Local Regulatory Documents	Effective	General Provisions on Government Affairs
216	08-25-2021	Shanghai Municipality People's Congress (incl. Standing Committee)	Announcement No. 77 of the 15th Standing Committee of Shanghai Municipal People's Congress	Regulations of Shanghai Municipality on Urban Renewal	Provincial Local Regulations	Effective	Urban Planning, Development, and Construction

Third, after screening for high-frequency keywords, we finally selected 264 open codes as the theme keywords of renewal policy texts at the state level. Meanwhile, 124, 146, 196, and 188 open codes were selected for policy texts related to Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, respectively.

Finally, we extracted 11 axial codes on policy, including the goal, concepts, principles, participants, objects, environments, resources, finance, processes, measures, and supervision of each policy. Three selective codes were also extracted—policy agent system, policy support system, and policy feedback system—which constitute the framework of the policy analysis (shown in Figure 4). The tables of the axial coding and selective coding at the state level and city level are provided in Tables 3–7.
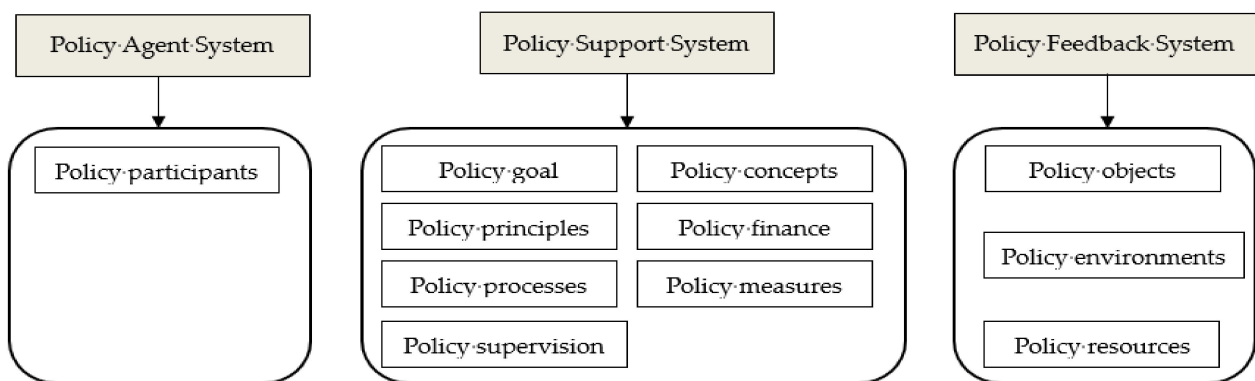

Figure 4. The framework of policy analysis.

Table 3. Axial coding and selective coding table (State-level).

Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
Urban–rural construction, New-type urbanisation, Urban construction, Public interest⋯	Policy goal	Policy support system
Green, Energy-saving, Coordinate, All-round, Sustainable development, Low-carbon, Environmental protection⋯	Policy concepts	Policy support system
Economical and intensive, Adaptation to local condition, Overall plans, Market allocation, Government-domination⋯	Policy principles	Policy support system
People's Government, State Council, Financial Sector, Enterprise, Individual, Residents⋯	Policy participants	Policy agent system
Shanty areas renovation, Urban planning, Land reserving, House dismantlement, Fund management⋯	Policy objects	Policy feedback system
Overall planning, Economy, System, Environment, History, Culture, Market, Policy⋯	Policy environments	Policy feedback system
Land, Architecture, House, Facility, Project, Resource, Population, Contract, Technology⋯	Policy resources	Policy feedback system
Funds, Finance, Compensate, Earmarked, Tax deduction, Compensation mode, Temporary resettlement fee⋯	Policy finance	Policy support system
Planning, Construction, Renovation, Dismantlement, Utilize, Expropriation, Exploit, Resettle, Transferring⋯	Policy processes	Policy support system
Management, Protect, Implement, Proceed, Organise, Advance, Perfect, Accelerate, Enhance, Formulating⋯	Policy measures	Policy support system
Provision, Approval, Law, Responsibility, Supervise, Execute, Registration, Violate, Responsible⋯	Policy supervision	Policy support system

Table 4. Axial coding and selective coding table (Beijing).

Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
Functional positioning, Historical function, Urban–rural environment, City appearance and environmental	Policy goal	Policy support system
Develop, Coordinate	Policy concepts	Policy support system
Market operation, Government guidance, Orderly development	Policy principles	Policy support system
People's Government, Office for Renovating Dilapidated and Aged Houses, Leading Group for Shanty Areas and Environmental Improvement⋯	Policy participants	Policy agent system
Shanty area renovation, Dilapidated and aged house renovation, Environmental improvement, Organic renewal	Policy objects	Policy feedback system
Shanty areas, Environment, Policy, Mechanism, Cultural and creative industries, Implementation measures⋯	Policy environments	Policy feedback system
Housing, Dilapidated and aged houses, Infrastructure, Economically affordable housing, Resource⋯	Policy resources	Policy feedback system
Funds, Loan, Compensate, Investment, Financing, Unified loan, Taxation, Social capital⋯	Policy finance	Policy support system
Construction, Resettle, Planning, Improvement, Vacating, Comprehensive renovation⋯	Policy processes	Policy support system
Management, Service, Examine and approve, Registration, Formulating, Simplify, Investigation, Publish⋯	Policy measures	Policy support system
Execute, Identified, Approval, Supervise, Assessment, Census, For the filling	Policy supervision	Policy support system

Table 5. Axial coding and selective coding table (Shanghai).

Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
Regional development, Innovative development, Connotative growth	Policy goal	Policy support system
Low-carbon, Energy-saving and environmental protection, Green, Intelligence	Policy concepts	Policy support system
Public participation, Planning guidance, Co-construction and sharing, People-oriented, Economical and intensive⋯	Policy principles	Policy support system
People's Government, Urban Renewal Leading Group, Stakeholders, General public⋯	Policy participants	Policy agent system
Urban renewal, Old area renovation, Organic renewal	Policy objects	Policy feedback system
Policy, Detailed regulatory planning, Public space, Unit planning, Implementation measures⋯	Policy environments	Policy feedback system
Land, Renewal projects, Public element, Realty, Contract, Property right, Report, Plot ratio⋯	Policy resources	Policy feedback system
Land transfer, Stock premium, Funds, Land transfer price, Compensate, Preferential⋯	Policy finance	Policy support system
Implementation plan, Renewal evaluation, Renewal unit, Life-cycle management⋯	Policy processes	Policy support system
Implement, Management, Adjust, Organise, Conform to, Formulating, Existing, Purpose, Need⋯	Policy measures	Policy support system
Specification, Law, Duty, Demonstrate, Consultative, Procedure, Responsibility	Policy supervision	Policy support system

Table 6. Axial coding and selective coding table (Guangzhou).

Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
Living environment, Urban function, Public interest, Urban–rural development⋯	Policy goal	Policy support system
Develop, Coordinate, People-oriented, Benefit-sharing, Sustainable, Low-carbon	Policy concepts	Policy support system
Government-domination, Economical and intensive, Enterprise participation, Market operation, Scientific planning	Policy principles	Policy support system
Rural Collective, Urban Renewal Department, Enterprise, Urban Renewal Leading Institution, People's Government⋯	Policy participants	Policy agent system
Urban renewal, Renovation of 'the Three-Old', Shanty area renovation, Dilapidated old house renovation, Organic renewal	Policy objects	Policy feedback system

Table 6. *Cont.*

Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
Policy, Detailed regulatory planning, Science and technology, Headquarters economy, Implementation measures···	Policy environments	Policy feedback system
Project, Land plot, Construction land, Basic data, Database, Plotting database···	Policy resources	Policy feedback system
Compensate, Funds, Financing, Cost, Reconstruction and resettlement funds, Policy funds···	Policy finance	Policy support system
Micro transformation, Renovation scope, Comprehensive transformation, Stockpile, Demolition and reconstruction···	Policy processes	Policy support system
Organise, Perfect, Formulating, Advance, Open, Management, Adjust, Present situation, Vote···	Policy measures	Policy support system
Investigation, Law, Reply, Publicity, Expert demonstration, Exit mechanism···	Policy supervision	Policy support system

Table 7. Axial coding and selective coding table (Shenzhen).

Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
Living environment, Urban function, City construction, Characteristic features···	Policy goal	Policy support system
Develop, Coordinate, Sustainable	Policy concepts	Policy support system
Coordinated planning, Economical and intensive, Public participation, Market operation, Government guidance···	Policy principles	Policy support system
People's Government, Urban Renewal Department, Urban Renewal Functional Departments, Public···	Policy participants	Policy agent system
Urban renewal, Demolition and reconstruction, Comprehensive improvement, Functional change···	Policy objects	Policy feedback system
Unit planning, Economy, Regulations, Villages in the city, Culture, Policy, Overall planning···	Policy environments	Policy feedback system
Project, Land, Buildings, Public service facilities, Industrial buildings, Indemnificatory housing···	Policy resources	Policy feedback system
Compensate, Land price, Funds, Calculation and collection, Standard land price, Land leasing fee···	Policy finance	Policy support system
Planning, Renewal unit, Unit plan, Resettle, Ownership, Annual planning, Development construction···	Policy processes	Policy support system
Implement, Organise, Formulate, Management, Registration, Handle, Procedure, Delimitation···	Policy measures	Policy support system
Approval, Law, Publicity, Announcement, Plan management, Validity period management···	Policy supervision	Policy support system

5.3. Text Analysis of Urban Renewal Policies at Multiple Levels

Through a comparative analysis of the axial coding and selective coding tables (Tables 3–7), we arrived at the following conclusions:

5.3.1. Policy Goal

The state took the strengthening of "urban-rural construction" and the comprehensive promotion of "new-type urbanisation" as its core goals and set the realisation of "public interest" as an important policy goal. Accordingly, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen determined the overall goals of "urban-rural environment, regional development, urban-rural development, and city construction". However, these cities added specific goals according to their respective urban characteristics, such as "functional positioning and historical function" in Beijing; "innovative development and connotation growth" in Shanghai; and "living environment and urban function" in Guangzhou and Shenzhen. Moreover, Guangzhou responded to the state call and paid attention to "public interest". In addition, Shenzhen also emphasised "characteristic features".

5.3.2. Policy Concepts

The concept of the state is consistent with that of the four cities. The state took "green, energy-saving and environmental protection" as the guiding ideology to realise the "all-round, coordinated and sustainable development" of the economy and society. Shanghai advocated "low-carbon, energy-saving, environmental protection and green". Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen emphasised "development, coordination and sustainability".

5.3.3. Policy Principles

The state and the four cities followed the principle of "economy and intensification". Starting from the overall situation, the state considered "adaptation to local conditions, overall planning, market allocation, and government-domination" as the main implementation principles. In combination with specific renewal activities, the implementation principles of the four cities were different. Beijing emphasised "market operation and government guidance"; Shanghai emphasised "public participation, planning guidance, and co-construction and sharing"; Guangzhou emphasised "government-domination and market operation"; and Shenzhen emphasised "coordinated planning, public participation, market operation, and government guidance".

5.3.4. Policy Participants

The state-level policy took the "People's Government" as its core participant and involved multiple policy participants, such as "government departments, enterprises, residents, and individuals". The four cities also established specific participants for specific policy objects. For example, Beijing set up the "Office for Renovating Dilapidated and Aged Houses" and the "Leading Group for Shanty Areas and Environmental Improvement"; Shanghai set up the "Urban Renewal Leading Group"; Guangzhou established the "Urban Renewal Leading Institution" and the "Urban Renewal Department"; and Shenzhen established the "Urban Renewal Department" and the "Urban Renewal Functional Departments".

5.3.5. Policy Objects

The state successively carried out "urban-rural planning; urban planning; land reserving; house dismantlement; fund management; renovation of dilapidated and aged houses, urban-village, and shanty areas; energy-saving renovation of buildings, administration of city purple lines, and comprehensive environmental renovation", which covered planning, land acquisition, housing, funds, environment, and other aspects. Beijing focused on the "renovation of dilapidated and aged houses and shanty areas, and environmental improvement" to achieve "organic renewal". Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen proposed "urban renewal". Among them, Shanghai focused on "old area renovation"; Guangzhou fully implemented the "renovation of 'the three-old'"; and Shenzhen divided the renewal into three categories including "comprehensive improvement, functional change, and demolition and reconstruction".

5.3.6. Policy Environments

The state-level policy was affected by political, economic, natural, international, social, scientific, and technological aspects, such as "economy, system, environment, history, culture, market, policy, regulations, network, and employment". Similar impacts are seen on city-level policies which follow specific policy environments. The cities formulated "renewal measures, implementation measures, solutions, detailed rules for the implementation, unit planning, overall planning, detailed planning, district planning, detailed regulatory planning, and detailed site planning".

5.3.7. Policy Resources

Both the policies of the state and the cities covered "land, architecture, houses, facilities, projects, resources, population, contract." Among them, Beijing formulated a sound

indemnificatory housing policy, including "economically affordable housing, low-rent housing, directional resettlement housing and directly managed public housing" to solve the housing difficulties of its people. Shanghai clarified the important issue of urban space management and control, such as "renewal projects, public elements and lists, and plot ratio incentives". Guangzhou established a normal "basic data" investigation system, regularly updated the basic data in a "database" for urban renewal (that is, a plotting database), and established a data sharing and exchange mechanism among various administrative departments and urban renewal departments. Shenzhen vigorously implemented the policy of "indemnificatory housing, innovative industrial housing, and public service facilities" to protect the public interests of the city.

5.3.8. Policy Finance

The state and the four cities made corresponding regulations on renewal funds, resettlement compensation, financial support, and other aspects. However, Guangzhou had more perfect financial policies than Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen.

The state made clear provisions for "raising, applying, calculating, allocating and using" urban renewal "funds". The resettlement compensation policy was continuously improved and specific provisions were made for the "compensation standard, compensation amount, compensation fee, compensation mode, payment period, relocation fee, and temporary resettlement fee" of various "subsidy funds". It emphasised "earmarking special account storage", implemented the policy of "financial and tax support and tax deduction", and strengthened the support of "financial, credit, and loan".

Beijing demanded that "funds" be guaranteed following regulations; the "investment" system be improved; the "financing" mechanism be innovated; the municipal "unified loan" platform be used to raise funds; the integrated use of financial funds and bank "loans" be strengthened; "insurance" funds and "credit and loan" funds be made available; and "social capital" be encouraged to participate in urban renewal. Beijing also demanded the active implementation of relevant "tax" preferential policies and formulation of "compensation" measures following the relevant provisions of the state and the municipality corresponding to the actual situation.

Shanghai and Shenzhen made relevant provisions on the "source, arrangement and use" of renewal "funds"; established "compensation" management measures for resettlement and relocation; and launched relevant "preferential" policies. Shanghai, in particular, formulated a detailed "land transfer" and "revenue" management system of "land transfer price," and "stock premium". Shenzhen drafted specific policies for "the calculation of land price and the collection of land leasing fee".

Compared with the above three cities, Guangzhou's financial policies were more detailed. It made provisions for "raising and using" specific "funds"; formulated "compensation measures" for the dismantlement, resettlement, and establishment of relevant "reduction" policies; issued relevant supporting documents, such as the "Measures for the Administration of Reconstruction and Resettlement Funds, Accounting Measures for Renovation Cost of Old Villages, Financing Measures for Urban Renewal"; increased financial support; and encouraged the use of the state "policy funds" for renovation.

5.3.9. Policy Processes and Policy Measures

Urban renewal policies were formulated by the central government in specific sectors, such as "urban construction; urban planning; land administration; house dismantlement; administration of purple lines; renovation of shanty areas, dilapidated and aged houses, and urban-village." After studying and implementing state policies, the four cities comprehensively formulated management measures and implementation procedures corresponding to actual local conditions.

The renewal mode adopted by Beijing included "improvement, repair, and comprehensive renovation". The city stipulated relevant "procedures" in the renewal process and pointed out that the "planning and construction scheme" should be "formulated" based

on "the investigation, registration, and determined evaluations". The relevant scheme should be "published" and the opinions of residents should be listened to. However, the city instructed the relevant departments to perform a good job in "designing, building, completing, accepting" and other processes related to "management and service". It also made provisions for the "expropriation and allocation" of land; for the "dismantlement" of houses; for the "moving out, vacating and resettling" of units and residents; for the "simplification of approval formalities" of relevant government departments; and for "the protection of historical and cultural relics".

Shanghai proposed a management system combining "regional assessment", "implementation plan" and "life-cycle management" for urban renewal. The city required the main agent to perform the "evaluation of renewal" during its implementation; delineate "renewal unit" based on "existing" renewal "needs"; clarify the contents in the public elementary list; "organise" and "formulate" intentional "construction scheme" according to relevant technical "standards"; and "comprehensively" consider "planning", "implementation" and "public will". Regarding land management, relevant regulations were created on the "use and transfer of land, transfer period, land use boundary, building area, and building height". Corresponding provisions were implemented for the "protection of historical features".

Guangzhou clarified the specific "renovation scope". The "Renewal mode" of the city included "comprehensive transformation" based on "demolition and reconstruction", "micro transformation" focusing on "renovation repair," and "historical and cultural protection" on the unchanged premise of maintaining the "present situation" and "construction" pattern. The city instructed the relevant departments to "organise" and "formulate" medium- and long-term "planning" for urban renewal, "delimit urban renewal areas", and set out "scheme" programs for areas included in the "implementation plan" of urban renewal areas following relevant technical "standards". Regarding land disposal, detailed regulations were created on the "expropriation", "acquisition", "stockpile", "integration", "development", "utilisation", "application", "transfer", and "allocation" of land, while emphasising the "improvement of historical land-use procedures" and the execution of "historical land disposal". The city also proposed specific measures for urban renewal projects involving housing "dismantlement" and "resettlement".

Shenzhen defined the "scope" of urban renewal and implemented a management system of "unit planning and annual plan". Its "procedure" covered "formulation of a unit plan; confirmation of implementation participants; ownership registration; land-use right transfer; development and construction; moving-back and resettlement; protection, activation and utilisation of cultural relics, historical areas and buildings".

5.3.10. Policy Supervision

The state and the cities envisaged implementing the whole-process and dynamic "supervision" of urban renewal. The state granted "rewards" to units and individuals who had made achievements; conducted "supervision, inspection, handling and notification" for violations of laws and regulations; and "investigated" whether personnel in charge of relevant regulations discharged their "responsibilities". Beijing emphasised the "supervision, assessment and filing" of participants and individuals; Shanghai focused on "law, demonstration and consultation" in the process of renovation; Guangzhou established a "regular assessment notification system, expert demonstration system and exit mechanism" for renewal projects; and the urban renewal unit in Shenzhen implemented "plan management (validity period management)".

6. Discussion on the Mechanism of Policy Transfer in Vertical and Horizontal Dimensions

Through the interpretation and analysis of policy texts, this paper discusses the transfer of China's urban renewal policies in light of the theory of policy transfer.

6.1. Types of Urban Renewal Policy Transfer in China

Since China's reform and opening up, the acceleration of marketisation, and the decentralisation of economic, financial, and decision-making powers, local governments have gradually assumed an important role in original policy development that had previously been strictly controlled by the central government.

Under the political and economic system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, there are two trends in the spatial dimension of policy practice (Figure 5). The first trend is that of hierarchical transfer along the vertical dimension, mainly in the form of top-down central-to-local policy implementation, while including mildly bottom-up reverse transfer. The second trend is that of policy transfer with modification along the horizontal dimension in cities, which is congruent with the specific environment of the place to where the policy is transferred. Based on this, this paper explores the transfer of China's urban renewal policies between "state-city" and "city-city" in the vertical and horizontal dimensions.
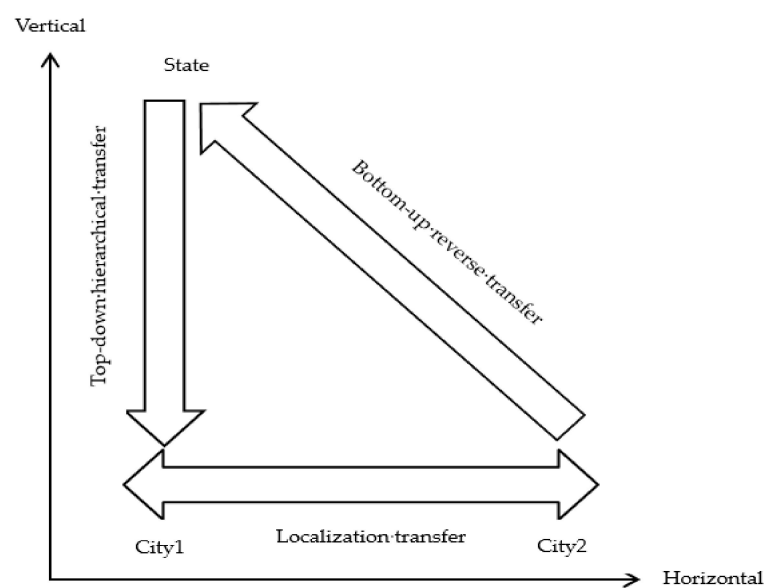

Figure 5. The spatial dimension of urban renewal policy transfer in China.

In the vertical dimension, although the power of local governments is constantly expanding, the power structure of this unitary system has not changed, and the state has absolute control over local governments. Through the formulation of laws, administrative regulations, departmental rules, and working documents related to urban renewal, the state promotes the transfer and implementation of central policies from the State Council and relevant departments to provinces, cities, districts, and counties.

With the performance appraisal system, local governments actively study the "spirit of central documents" and "leadership speeches"; analyse the central policy intentions; quickly find the policy-fit point between the central and local governments in agreement with their urban renewal status; and determine the content and focus of the policy transfer, which seems mandatory. The state also allows some local cities to carry out policy pilots. These local governments hope to gain recognition from the central government through the moderate adjustment and independent innovation of policy practices related to urban development. Moreover, once a local government obtains the success of policy innovation practice, significant and potentially popular policies will affect the central government to a certain extent, thus forming a bottom-up combination of reverse policy transfer.

In the horizontal dimension, with the rapid development of informatisation and regional integration, competition among local governments becomes increasingly fierce. These governments have gradually realised that, for the transformation of development, they have to solve urban problems and contradictions, enhance urban competitiveness, and maintain steady economic growth, besides implementing state policies. They have to

create a competitive and attractive local policy environment and build a policy system in line with the actual requirement in the locality.

To achieve this goal, policy transfer provides a quick way for local urban governments to actively learn the policy experiences from other governments with similar economic, social, cultural, and development priorities and situations; to draw lessons from the advanced demonstration of policies; and to introduce policies that have been verified by practice and have achieved a good social response. Thus, a voluntary renewal policy transfer among horizontal local governments has gradually prevailed.

6.2. The Degree and Content of Urban Renewal Policy Transfer in China

Policy transfer enables local governments to seek similar policy experiences to solve problems by borrowing the wisdom of others, regardless of whether state or regional policies are being transferred, unless the policy plans are time-consuming and involve laborious redesign. The state and local governments adjust policy contents and policy measures to local realities in a timely manner instead of completely copying them.

As for the transferred content, sometimes the whole policy is transferred, but mostly, policy goals and tools are transferred with policy content. From the vertical dimension perspective (Tables 3–7), local governments always select parts of the transferred policy from the state, covering "the goal, concept, principle, participant, object, environment, resource, finance, process, measure, and supervision of the policy". From the horizontal dimension perspective (Tables 3–7), when renewal policies are transferred among local governments, they select parts of the policies involving "its participant, principle, finance, process, measure, and supervision".

First, according to the degree of transfer analysis from the vertical dimension, the coding table at the state level (Table 3) shows that the state takes the "People's Government" as the core "policy participant" when coordinating urban renewal works. Its "policy objects" cover all aspects of urban construction, such as "urban planning; house dismantlement; renovation of dilapidated buildings, shanty areas, and urban-village; fund management, real estate management; construction of supporting infrastructure; administration of purple lines; energy-saving renovation of existing buildings; economical and intensive use of land; comprehensive environmental improvement". Based on the "green, energy-saving, all-round, coordinated and sustainable" "policy concepts" and "economical and intensive, and government-domination" "policy principles", as well as "market allocation and overall planning", an "urban-rural construction" will be carried out and an attempt will be made to achieve the "policy goal" of "new-type urbanisation".

According to the analysis of existing data on Beijing (Table 4), Shanghai (Table 5), Guangzhou (Table 6), and Shenzhen (Table 7), it is concluded that the degree to which the cities have transferred the state renewal policies shows a spiralling upward trend after experiencing a pattern of combination–emulation–inspiration (Figure 6). The reasons include the following:
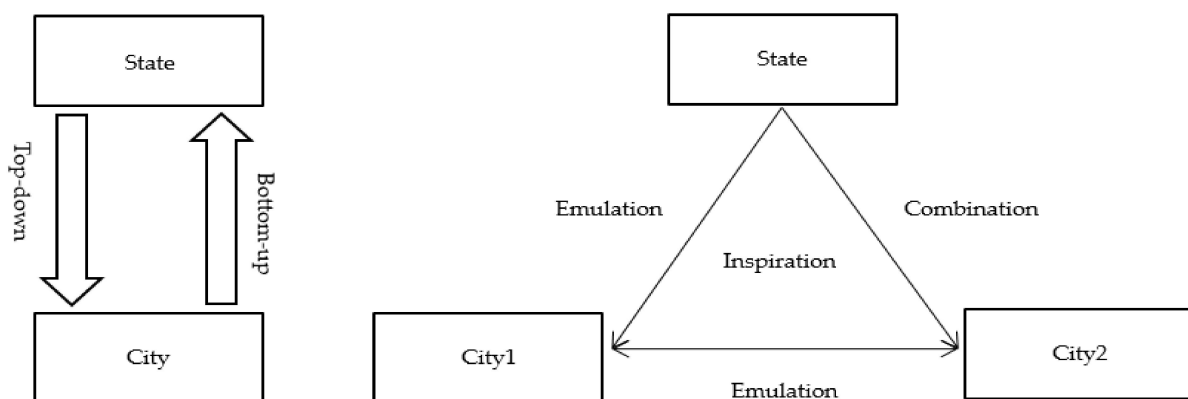

Figure 6. The degree of urban renewal policy transfer in China.

(1) The urban renewal policies issued by the state are formulated in specific sectors, including "urban construction and planning; land administration; house dismantlement; administration of purple lines; renovation of shanty areas, dilapidated and aged houses, and urban-village".

(2) Through a comprehensive absorption and integrated application of different policies in the planning of urban spaces, land acquisition, housing, shanty areas, and villages in the city, and by following the essence of their policies, the four urban governments learnt and drew lessons from the same "policy goals" and "policy concepts." These included state policies on improving the "urban-rural environment and urban functions" and realising "the coordination and development" of cities. The governments adopted similar "principles", "environments", and "resources" of policies, such as being "government-domination, economical and intensive." They utilised "the land, architectures, houses, facilities, projects" and other policy resources for urban renewal under existing "economy, system, environment, history, culture, market" and other policy environmental factors.

(3) When the four cities did not completely copy others' policies, they tried to conform to the actual situation in local cities or meet the central government's requirements in many aspects. For example, in terms of "policy object", the state made specific provisions for planning, land acquisition, housing, allocating funds, and protecting the environment.

Beijing mainly focused on the renovation of "dilapidated and aged houses and shanty areas, and environmental improvement"; Shanghai emphasised "the renovation of old area"; Guangzhou fully implemented the "renovation of 'the three-old'"; and Shenzhen classified urban renewal into "comprehensive improvement, functional change, demolition and reconstruction". In terms of "policy participants", the four cities established special institutions for urban renewal. Beijing set up the "Office for Renovating Dilapidated and Aged Houses" and the "Leading Group for Shanty Areas and Environmental Improvement", while Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen established the "Urban Renewal Department". In addition, many detailed changes were also made in the aspects of "finance, process, measure and supervision of policies", such as fund management, compensation provisions, support policies, renewal procedures, and regulatory control to achieve policy localisation.

(4) Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen creatively issued local implementation measures for urban renewal, detailed rules, and supporting policies through the reference and application of a single state policy. Although Beijing did not issue urban renewal measures and implementation rules, the city issued a series of new policies for the renovation of shanty areas and dilapidated and aged houses in the light of its specific conditions.

Then, from the perspective of the horizontal dimension, the analysis of the coding table (Tables 4–7) leads to the conclusion that the degree of transfer among the four cities is mainly based on emulation and inspiration (Figure 6). Among the cities, Shenzhen was the first to introduce urban renewal measures and implementation rules. Through learning policies, drawing lessons, and emulation, Shanghai formulated urban renewal measures, implementation rules, and supporting documents in 2015 and Guangzhou in 2016. Owing to changes in the actual situation, Shenzhen revised its urban renewal measures in 2016. Under specific local conditions, Beijing issued relevant policies for the renovation of shanty areas and dilapidated and aged houses.

The four cities established specific "policy participants" for specific "policy object". Although the "policy participant" of the cities took "People's Government" as the core, which is determined by China's political system, there were differences in "policy principle". Beijing focused on "government guidance and market operation"; Shanghai focused on "planning guidance, public participation, and co-construction and sharing"; Guangzhou focused on "government-domination and market operation"; and Shenzhen focused on "coordinated planning, public participation, market operation, and government guidance".

The four cities made detailed changes in the content of their renewal policy, such as in the aspects of "finance, process, and measures", according to local conditions. It involved "fund guarantee; the mode and period of land transfer; collection and management of

transfer fee; measures for resettlement, relocation, and compensation; preferential tax policies; scope, mode, process, and system of renewal; the protection of cultural relic".

Furthermore, in terms of "policy supervision", Beijing emphasised the "supervision, assessment and filing" of participants and individuals; Shanghai focused on "law, demonstration and consultation" in the process of renovation; Guangzhou established a "regular assessment notification system, expert demonstration system, and exit mechanism" for renewal projects; and Shenzhen stipulated "violations of law and discipline" and implemented "plan management (that is, validity period management)" for urban renewal units.

6.3. Evaluation of Urban Renewal Policy Transfer in China

The analysis in the preceding section leads to the conclusion that the four cities achieved policy innovations with different degrees of policy transfer. The system for the renovation of shanty areas and environmental improvement in Beijing was complete. Shanghai's clear list of public elements and plot ratio incentives were important measures for urban space management and control. Shenzhen's policies for indemnificatory housing, innovative industrial housing, and public service facilities realised the optimisation of urban spatial layout and the development of innovative industries, and ensured the public interests of the city. Guangzhou allocated land resources for stock renewal through data survey (that is, plotting database) and ensured that urban renewal activities agreed with the comprehensive transformation and micro transformation through a system of demonstration, consultation, and deliberation.

In addition, as shown in Table 8, Shenzhen issued two policy documents that became the top-level design of the city's urban renewal. Shenzhen made supporting provisions for renewal with added importance in the system such that the city's renewal work was at the forefront in China. Subsequently, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Beijing directly issued important policies. The top-level designs accelerated the renovation of the four cities and ensured the realisation of their renewal goals as scheduled.

Table 8. Important urban renewal policy of the four cities.

City	Policy
Shenzhen	"Urban Renewal Measures of Shenzhen Municipality"; "Detailed Rules for Implementation of Urban Renewal Measures of Shenzhen Municipality"
Shanghai	"Urban Renewal Implementation Measures of Shanghai Municipality"; "Detailed Rules for Implementation of Urban Renewal Planning Land of Shanghai Municipality"
Guangzhou	"Urban Renewal Measures of Guangzhou Municipality"; "Supporting Documents for Urban Renewal Measures of Guangzhou Municipality"; "Detailed Rules for Implementation on Deeply Advancing Urban Renewal Work of Guangzhou Municipality"
Beijing	"Implementation Measures of Beijing Municipality on Accelerating the Reconstruction of Urban Dilapidated and Aged Houses (for Trial Implementation)"; "Implementation Opinions of the People's Government of Beijing Municipality on Accelerating the Reconstruction of Shanty Areas and Environmental Improvement"; "Guiding Opinions of the People's Government of Beijing Municipality on the Implementation of Urban Renewal Action"

It shows that policy innovation at the city level stems from differences in urban background and urban renewal practices. This policy transfer of "adjusting measures to local conditions" is an essential reason for the four cities to successfully promote urban renewal work and improve efficiency. Moreover, the advanced policies of the four cities had a reverse impact on the state, prompting the Central Economic Working Conference in 2019 to emphasise the concept of "urban renewal" for the first time and elevate it to a state strategy, facilitating the state-level policy to usher in more systematic development and playing a positive role in guiding the renewal policies of other cities.

6.4. The Effective Path of Urban Renewal Policy Transfer in China: Inspiration-Type Policy Transfer

Effective policy transfer can solve state-level and regional problems and improve people's well-being. However, owing to the different degrees of awareness, understanding, and choice of policy participants, as well as differences in the local applicability of the transferred policies, the effects of policy transfer vary.

Based on the division of the degree of policy transfer by Dolowitz and Marsh, we further propose the framework of the "'Degree–Effect' analysis of policy transfer", as shown in Table 9. The degree of policy transfer is found to be inversely proportional to the difficulty of policy transfer and directly proportional to the effect of policy implementation.

Table 9. "Degree–Effect" analysis of policy transfer.

Transfer Degree	Transfer Grade	Transfer Form	Transfer Difficulty	Implementation Effect
Copying	I (low)	Copy-and-paste	IV (high)	Poor
Emulation	II	Selectively transfer and modify parts of the policy	III	Medium
Combination	III	Comprehensive utilisation of relevant policies and without excessive modification	II	Good
Inspiration	IV (high)	Completing the reproduction process of policy knowledge and realising the innovation	I (low)	Excellent

Our findings showed that both "state-city" and "city-city" urban renewal measures refused to adopt the copying-type policy transfer in favour of the emulation-type policy. Through comparing the specific contents of the axial coding (Tables 3–7), it can be concluded that the state and the cities have combined the actual situation of their own regions when implementing the renewal policy transfer, rather than copying. Despite the similarities in some policy contents and even the phenomenon of policy convergence, this is caused by the universality of policy transfer. While some local policies are copied, this is not the overall situation.

In the "state-city" policy transfer, the renewal policies at the state level were formulated in specific sectors, such as "planning, land acquisition, and housing". The cities first adopted the combination-type policy transfer to comprehensively absorb relevant single policies. Then, considering their actual situations, the cities adopted the way of emulation to selectively transfer and modify some policies. Finally, considering feasible schemes and for stimulating fresh ideas, implementation measures of local urban renewal were innovatively introduced to realise the inspiration-type policy transfer. We take the "Urban Renewal Measures of Shenzhen Municipality" as an example (Table 10), which is a successful experience of implementing inspiration-type policy transfer in Shenzhen. On the basis of better absorbing and transforming the state policies, Shenzhen has realized the transfer and innovation of renewal policies in line with local conditions. At the same time, the "Shenzhen model" of urban renewal as a result of reform has also been summarised and promoted by the state.

In the process of "city-city" urban renewal policy transfer, the four cities found new policy factors by emulating the good policy contents of other cities and combining transferred policies with the local reality, which promoted the innovation of urban renewal policy and the implementation of renewal activities. The promulgation of the "Urban Renewal Measures of Shenzhen Municipality" not only ushered in an era of "acceleration" in Shenzhen's urban renewal work, but was also emulated by the other three cities. They set up the "urban renewal department". According to the actual problems in urban renewal, as determined by the policy object in each period, Guangzhou formulated detailed and practical management policies for renewal funds; Shanghai implemented "life-cycle management"; and Beijing deepened and promoted a special campaign of "making improvements through relocation and rectification" to disperse non-capital functions and

effectively control the "big city disease". Finally, the three cities formulated their own urban renewal measures and renewal guidelines. Shenzhen also revised its urban renewal measures in 2016 on the basis of the experience of other cities. It can be seen that the transfer among the four cities is mostly voluntary by local governments and based on successful demonstration and information dissemination. Although there are local differences, most of the transfer degree is emulation, and the transfer effect is not consistent; the cities have optimised their urban renewal system and accomplished great achievements in urban renewal activities. Obviously, it would be silly to reinvent the wheel with much effort and through painful trial and error if learning the experience from others is both more cost-effective and practical.

Table 10. The transfer correspondence between the State policy and Shenzhen policy.

	Policy Goal	**Policy Concepts**	**Policy Principles**	**Policy Objects**	**Policy Participants**	**Policy Contents**
State	Realise a new-type urbanisation	High-quality development guided by green ecology	Overall planning and adaptation to local condition	Specific to land, housing, planning, funds, etc.	Land administrative department, urban–rural planning department, house dismantlement management department, etc.	Aiming at specific policy objects, it has formulated corresponding fund management methods, implementation process procedures, supervision and punishment mechanisms, and other policy contents
Shenzhen	Improve urban functions, optimise industrial structure, and improve living environment	Sustainable development	Government guidance and market operation	Divided urban renewal into three categories: "demolition and reconstruction, comprehensive improvement, and functional change"	Set up the urban renewal department and the urban renewal functional departments	In combination with the historical situation of Shenzhen, it created detailed regulations on renewal funds, procedures, measures, and supervision that conform to the urban development

To sum up, it can be concluded that the inspiration-type policy transfer has the highest degree, the lowest transfer difficulty, and the best implementation effect. Therefore, in the formulation and implementation of urban renewal policy, policy participants should gain awareness of the inspiration-type policy transfer. At the original level of copying or emulation, and without thinking of policy optimisation and innovation, the effect of renewal is greatly reduced.

We also found that the ability of participants to transfer policy has to be improved. Generally, the stronger their ability, the easier it is for them to obtain policy innovation. In addition, participants with a strong transfer ability attach importance to the collection, identification, storage, and processing of transferred policy information to deeply and accurately understand it. This helps them capture the spiritual essence of the policy; they become aware of its operability in the original country or region. Additionally, participants with a strong transfer ability can expand their perspective to think more broadly; they are good at using their keen vision to grasp key factors for their use in the process of policy transfer.

We have concluded that the localisation of policy transfer has to be promoted. Policy participants should follow the general law of policy transfer and determine the content of the policy transfer while considering the actual situation of their own country or region. The

process of policy transfer is determined by investigating the operational environment after transferring and analysing its transfer cost, the acceptance of policy objects, the difficulty of policy implementation, and the expected effect. After localisation, the transferred policies can adapt to the new policy environment and form different degrees of policy innovation according to local conditions to meet the renewal needs.

7. Conclusions

This study found that the policy transfer between the state and the four cities was dominated by a top-down coercive vertical transfer. However, a combination reverse transfer from the bottom to the top often occurred. The policy transfer among the four cities was mainly a voluntary horizontal transfer. In the process of policy transfer, the state or local government did not completely copy but selectively modified the goals, tools, content, and other factors of the transferred policies. The degree of transferring state policies in the four cities was in a spiral upward state after experiencing a combination–emulation–inspiration process; the degree of transfer among the four cities was mainly based on imitation and inspiration.

After experiencing different degrees of policy transfer, the four cities achieved certain policy innovations. This showed that the state's urban renewal policy was well implemented in the four cities; the key concepts and core contents of the policy were well inherited and developed. Moreover, owing to the different degrees of policy transfer in the four cities, their policy innovation was also different, which better highlighted the characteristics of local policies. Furthermore, the advanced policies of the four cities had a reverse impact on the state, making the urban renewal policies at the state level more perfect and systematic.

By analysing policy transfer in terms of the degrees of copying, emulation, combination, and inspiration, we can conclude that the copying-type policy transfer is not feasible. The political system, economic environment, and social culture of any country or city cannot be identical, nor can the development stage be completely synchronised. Therefore, policy transfer should always be carried out in accordance with the actual conditions of the country or the region. In the process of transfer, when using the emulation-type or combination-type policy transfer, some policies are changed or multiple policies are comprehensively utilised to a certain extent to be consistent with the actual situation of the area where the policy is transferred, so as to solve some problems related to the urban renewal of the region. These two types are easier to implement and achieve certain results when compared to the copying-type policy transfer. In the process of inspiration-type policy transfer, policy subjects give full play to their subjective initiative; conduct in-depth research on the transferred policies; discover new policy factors; create and change the transferred policies to a certain extent, which can better meet the actual needs of the local region, achieve better implementation effect, and promote policy innovation.

According to the experience of the four first-tier cities, we propose that the inspiration-type policy transfer is an effective path for urban renewal policy development in China, which not only provides a new perspective for the study of urban renewal policy but also provides a new idea in the policy context. Although the experience of advanced cities can lead other cities, in the specific implementation process, we need to take into account the institutional structure, organizational form, and execution capacity. Thus, in the future, we aim to conduct discussions on the combination of policy quantification and policy transfer to better promote empirical research on policy transfer and involve more cases of a nationwide policy of cities.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, Y.H. and X.D.; methodology, Y.H.; formal analysis, Y.H., W.C. and F.X.; writing—original draft preparation, Y.H.; all authors participated in writing—review and editing; visualization, Y.H. and L.W.; funding acquisition, G.L. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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