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Democratic Deliberation in China's Urban Village Regeneration

China has been experiencing massive social and urban transitions following the capitalist expansion of the last 30 years. One aspect of those transitions is a concerted program of urban regeneration in many cities. However, the standard practice of the land-centered “demolish and rebuild” urban village regeneration has proven to be controversial. It soon caused uneven development, social exclusion, and injustice. To treat these problems, the Chinese government has implemented a so-called “human-oriented” urbanization policy since 2014. This new policy emphasizes the integration of villagers into the city rather than physical site developments. Under that context, democratic deliberation became a key instrument for Chinese local government to address the problems around urban village regeneration.

The main objectives of this research are to explore the role of democratic deliberation as a tool of governance both during and after the urban village regeneration process. It looks at both the Chinese government's changing governing discourses, daily practices, and the citizens' reactions to these governance technologies. Two in-depth case studies of Zhengzhou urban village regeneration programs will be carried out, and the data will be collected and interpreted by qualitative methods. This study will develop a new conceptual framework for understanding the Chinese government's shift towards deliberation in China's social and urban transition, which combines elements from both Chinese Confucianism and western theories around democratic deliberation and social justice. It will contribute to the knowledge around Chinese urban governance and democratic deliberation within non-western and non-liberal contexts.