



# Villages in the City

*Stefan AI*

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Countless Chinese villages have been engulfed by modern cities. They no longer consist of picturesque farms and fengshui groves, but of high-rise buildings so close to each other that they create dark claustrophobic alleys - jammed with dripping air-conditioners, hanging clothes, caged balconies and bundles of buzzing electric wires, and crowned with a small strip of daylight, known as "thin line sky." At times, buildings stand so close to each other they are dubbed "kissing buildings" or "handshake houses" - you can literally reach out from one building and shake hands with your neighbor.

Although it is easy to see these villages as slums, a closer look reveals that they provide an important, affordable, and well-located entry point for migrants into the city. They also offer a vital mixed-use, spatially diverse and pedestrian alternative to the prevailing car-oriented modernist-planning paradigm in China. Yet most of these villages are on the brink of destruction, affecting the homes of millions of people and threatening the eradication of a unique urban fabric.

*Villages in the City* argues for the value of urban villages as places. To reveal their qualities, a series of drawings and photographs uncover the immense concentration of social life in the dense structures, and provide a peek into residents' homes and daily lives. Essays by a number of experts offer a deeper understanding of the topic, and help imagine how reinstating the focus on the village could lead to a richer, more variegated pathway of urbanization.

Contributors include Margaret Crawford, Jiong Wu, Marco Cenzatti, Jiang Jun, Nick Smith, and Laurence Liauw.

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