The spatial and social impacts of industrial restructuring in contemporary Chinese cities, Shenzhen as a case

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Research Program
This PhD research project falls under the scope of Dr. Stan Geertman’s research program of Informed Governance of Urban-Regional Dynamics.

Introduction
• The economic development of China in the last three decades, which is built upon export-oriented manufacturing industries, is phenomenal. Under the current scene of economic globalization, however, China’s comparative advantages in labour-intensive manufacturing are declining. As a response, industrial restructuring is initiated by the government to maintain roles and to advance positions in the global economy.
• Industrial restructuring, a way to replacing labor-intensive industries by capital-technology-intensive ones, has significant spatial and social implications. Under the “economic growth first” national strategy, however, the social and spatial impacts are overlooked.

Aim
To gain insights on the spatial and social impacts of IR for providing policy-relevant information for planners to better manage the planning making process of industrial restructuring in China.

Preliminary findings
• Industrial activities targeted by future policy and plans are identified. The amount and scale of existing old industrial sites are huge and the spatial distribution of those sites are scattered.
• IR related redevelopment projects have just started however ceased now due to the financial crisis 2008.
• As the global demand of China’s commodities shrinks in the financial crisis, a great deal of export-oriented factories closed or cut their outputs, leaving millions of migrant workers jobless.

Future objectives
• To understand firm’s (re)location behavior in restructuring period and crisis time.
• To investigate the spatial pattern of locational change of firms.
• To understand lay-off worker’s spatial behavior and livelihood choices.

Historical overview of Shenzhen
• One of the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) established in 1978 to operate a market economy in China
• Developed from a fishing town to a mega city in 20 years time
• The distinct late 1990s: rapid urban expansion and intensified industrial estate development arising beyond the scope of SEZs.