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ID 1422 | THE GATED COMMUNITY IN CHINA: ETHICS AND THE PATTERN OF SETTLEMENT

Mengwei, Gao¹

¹University College London

ucqbm5@ucl.ac.uk ; 263728596@qq.com

1 INTRODUCTION

Recognized as a global phenomenon, the gated community has provoked heated discussions from various perspectives, including social, political, economic, anthropological, and geographical ones. Particularly due to the obvious spatial demarcation and social segregation embodied by the fortress-like forms, the social-spatial aftermath of gated community, has become the major focus of those multidisciplinary debates. Moreover in the practical world, despite the fact that the gated communities, have embraced unprecedented levels of prevalence, pervasion and variety, notably in China where such patterns have become the standard form of contemporary residential development and widely welcomed by all social classes and groups, it has been gradually noticed that the predominant gated communities in China have raised other public issues than social and spatial segregation, such as the greatly reduced land-use efficiency, the restricted transportation network and the negative impact on the well-being of public spaces (Huang and Feng, 2008; Wang, 2010; Wang, 2014). Under such circumstances, Chinese government has officially announced the reforms of the current urban residential wards in China by gradually removing the gates of the contemporary gated communities and “danwei” (work-unit compounds), which has inevitably provoked a variety of controversies (Liu, 2016).

As any materialization of place and locale as urban form is not a result of arbitrary architectural or planning interventions in the urban realm, but is fundamentally shaped by and embodies the deeper, more enduring social, political and cultural forces that emanate from the whole process of the urban development (Lefebvre and Smith, 1991). Therefore the paper will attempt to identify the significance and specificity of the social and historical context in Chinese cities that substantially resulted in the adapted gated communities in specific loci and to understand how ethics have influenced the pattern of residential settlement. Finally the paper will aim to suggest some pivotal elements that should be preserved in the face of housing reforms in China.

2 THE GATED RESIDENTIAL PATTERNS IN CHINA: ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION

The gated enclosure has been an ingrained feature of the urban residential pattern in China. Following a chronological sequence, the closed pattern has experienced two typical periods: the traditional walled residential wards and inward courtyards in the feudal monarchy; the “danwei” (work-unit compounds) in the socialist era and the contemporary gated community that have emerged since 1978. The section will review the traditional form of settlements in Chinese history in order to find out the historical origins of the contemporary gated community and the morphological characteristics inherited from the traditional enclosed forms.

2.1 THE FEUDAL MONARCH

With a rigidly hierarchical and controlled social structure, Chinese cities before the Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD) were physically characterized by walls and fortresses. The most typical model, Tang Chang’an (618-906 AD) is a walled city that has been divided into 108 “fang” (rectangular residential wards) and two designated markets by eleven north-south and fourteen east-west major streets (Heng, 1999). The residential quarters (fang) were fortified with earthen walls and within the quarter, there were organized courtyard dwellings and an internal road system (Dong, 2004).

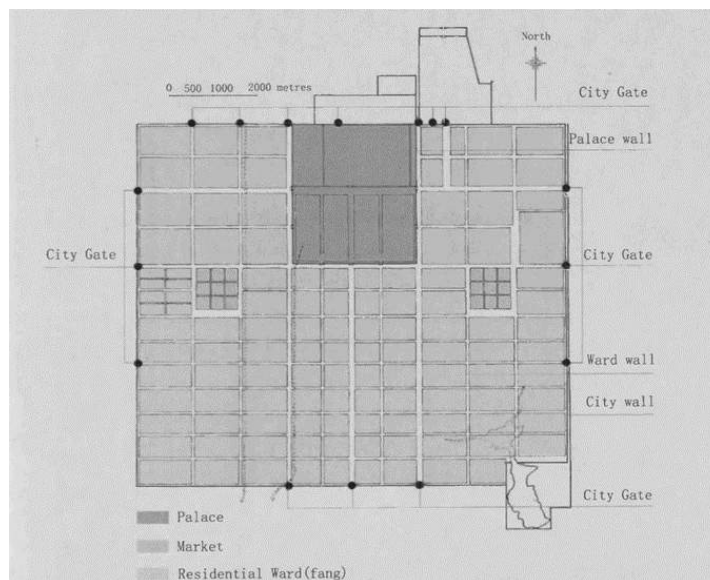


Figure 1 – “Li Fang” in Tang (Wei and Yao, 2012, p.2891)

Later in the Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD), the economic growth, facilitated by long-term social stability and the revolutionary improvement in agricultural technologies, became the decisive stimuli to overthrow the previous demarcated and restricted urban residential form (Heng, 1999). Despite the main street-block structure remained, the ward walls and the street encroachment have been demolished (Heng, 1999), which resulted in the emergence of ‘hutong’, a street connecting the dwelling units in ‘fang’ (Dong, 2004). Although it functioned a linear communal space providing a strong sense of community, the “hutong” was generally restricted to local inhabitants with a door and a nameplate at the gateway (Ibid).

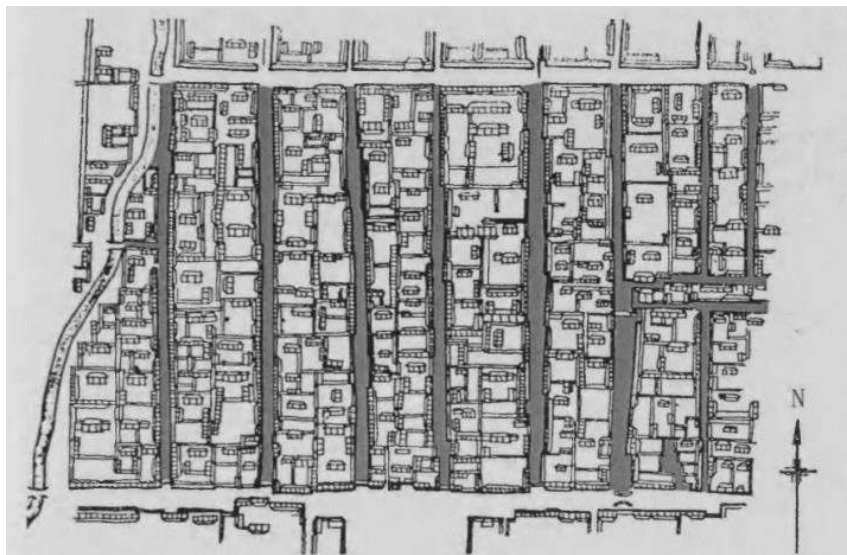


Figure 2 – “Fang Xiang” in Song (Wei and Yao, 2012, p.2891)

In all, notwithstanding the fact that streets (hutong) have become more accessible to passersby with the ward walls being dismantled, it were still the high blank walls rather than the dwellings that continuously and directly confronted the street (hutong). Hence, the residential pattern has still remained enclosed in the following feudal monarchies, with the walls as an elementary component in the reformed urban form to separate the private family space from the public urban environment.

Schulz (1985) has posed two fundamental aspects of the meaning of places which are identification and orientation respectively. Through identification of the surrounding environment, humans possess their social identities while orientation indicates the spatial organization which allows life to take place. Thereby residential forms have manifested the ideal living environment desired by a social or cultural group and revealed the social and cultural meaning behind these places (Rapoport, 1969). That is to say, traditional residential patterns have inevitably become a medium, through which to exhibit and Confucian ideologies and social structure in Chinese society. One of the core concept in the Confucianism is “Li” (propriety), which referred to an all-embracing system of defined ritual social behaviors (Lin, 1938). As was stated by Confucianism (Analects, 8.2),

“Respectfulness without the rules of propriety becomes laborious bustle; carefulness without the rules of propriety becomes timidity; boldness without the rules of propriety becomes insubordination; straightforwardness without the rules of propriety becomes rudeness..... It is by the rule of propriety that the character is established”.

Hence “Li” was codified as the main social grammar for Chinese people to direct them to the appropriate hierarchy of behaviors and interpersonal relationships to achieve a harmonious asocial order. As a result the hierarchical philosophies and ideologies of the Confucianism has impelled Chinese to highlight the spatial order in the residential pattern, which could be defined and maintained by the walled-enclosure. Moreover the elementary ideology of social interaction in Confucianism is “Xiao” (Filial Piety). From the Confucian perspective, there was a direct linkage between family and the nation, as was claimed that “when the family life is regulated, then the national life is orderly; and when the national life is orderly, then there is peace in this world” (Lin, 1938, p. 197). As a result, Chinese people were generally “family-minded” instead of “social-minded” (Lin, 1989, p. 172). In Confucian society, the primary concern was not the people’s obligations to the society but their loyalty to their families. Hence the enclosed multi-courtyard housing has somehow symbolized and strengthened the coherence of a family. Furthermore as was described in the proverb “Si Dai Tong Tang” (Four generations under one roof), the big Chinese family comprised of a long patrilineal line was traditionally accommodated in the multiple-courtyards housing compound (Huang, 2006). The rooted Confucian propriety (Li) believed that the best spatial organization of a house should not merely felicitously embody the hierarchical kinships between, but also maintain the individual privacy among family members. For instance, the segregation of gender was a considerable concern in Chinese family (Lin, 1989), as was regulated in the Book of Rite that “The men should not speak of what belongs to the inside (of the house), nor the women of what belongs to the outside.....

Things spoken inside should not go out, words spoken outside should not come in". Hence the High walls has restricted the access to the inside spaces for unmarried females to minimize the interaction between the inside and the outside. In this regard, according to Knapp (2000)'s description, a housing with a series of wall-enclosed courtyards was the best layout to apply the Confucian approach to resolve the tension separateness and togetherness, through a spatial sequence created by the transitions between individual spaces, the communal spaces shared by the family members and the outer society.

The traditional residential wards have universally exhibited three major morphological characteristics, namely the collective living pattern, the closed courtyard, and the gated enclosure. Moreover such long-existing gated tradition and collective and inward living patterns have been found to continuously play a significant role in urban settlements in China during the Socialist Era.

2.2 THE SOCIALIST AND POST-SOCIALIST ERA

Since the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, China has stepped into the Socialist Era, during which the Chinese institutional economy and urban planning were significantly influenced by the former Soviet Union (Dong, 2004). However the urban residential patterns under Mao were far more than the replica of Soviet models with the distinctive Chinese invention of "danwei" (work-unit compound).

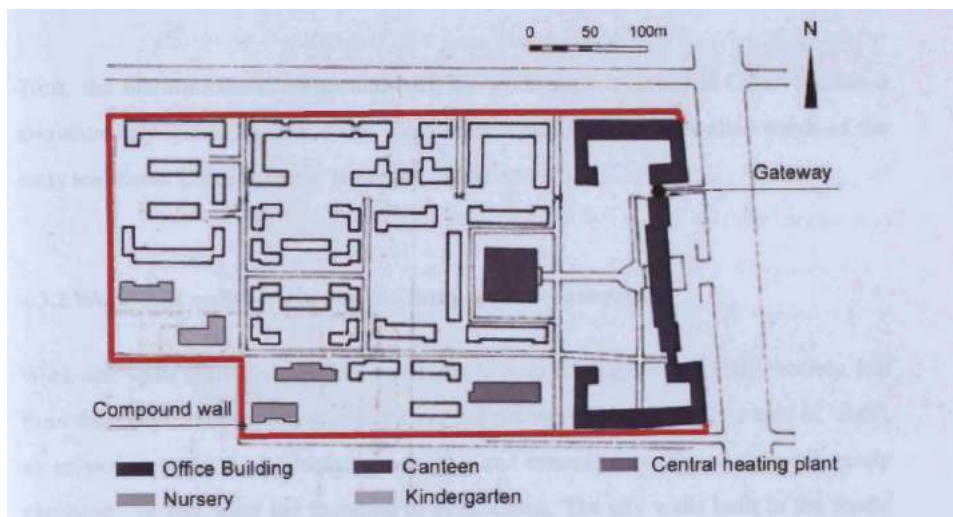


Figure 3 – Work-unit Compound (Hua, 2006, p. 45)

Unlike the spatial separation of residential districts and workplace in the Soviet models (Bater, 1980), the work-unit compound (danwei) in China resembled a miniature society which has endeavored to integrate working and living space in close territorial proximity with the provision of social services (Lu, 2005). Enclosed by overwhelmingly ubiquitous presence of walls and guarded gates, the work-unit compounds were merely open to the workers and their family members (Ibid).

At the end of the 1970s, cities in China have witnessed an overwhelmingly housing shortage and poor living condition (Wu, 2005). Hence a series of housing reforms programmes have been successively launched, in accordance with the reforms social market economy, to tackle the housing deficiency in 1980 (Fong, 1989; Wang and Murie, 1996), which hence resulted in a nationwide boom in commodity housing markets in the following decades (Chen and Gao, 1993; Wu, 1996 and 2005). Consequently, as the maintenance and management of commodity housing were taken over by specialized estate management companies, the enclosed residential developments became gradually pervasive in China by means of the reproduction of the exclusive feature of the "danwei", which exhibited a strong echo of the global phenomenon of the "gated community" (Wu, 2005).

After decades of reform, "gated community" has become the predominant residential pattern in China whereas previous work-unit compounds have still played an indispensable role in the urban housing sector (Ibid). However as was widely noticed by researchers in their survey on a variety of gated communities around the country, the contemporary gated community has witnessed distinction changes compared with

the work-unit compounds and the enclosed residential wards in the feudal age (Li and He, 2007; Wei and Yao, 2012; Wang, 2014)



Figure 4 – Gated Community Model: Central Garden (Li and He, 2007, p. 94)

Fundamentally, the size of enclosure has changed dramatically from the residential ward in Tang dynasty to the contemporary diversified gated communities. Starting from the residential area accommodating hundreds of households in the Tang dynasty which was strictly controlled by aristocratic power with depressed commercial activities, it has then shrunk to the courtyard housing for one household per unit during Song dynasty with the rise of the mercantile society. Thereafter in Socialist era, the enclosure size increased in the work-unit compound which is like a large spatial entity encompassing workplace and residence for thousands of workers and their families with the provision of most supporting facilities and services. Finally like the palimpsests of successive layers of the growth of size over time, the contemporary gated communities have manifested a hierarchy of enclosure, with courtyard style buildings, enclosed in the “hutong” like residential groups and ultimately gated in a loose grid residential community which has significantly inherited the Soviet model of “super-block and wide-avenue”.



Figure 4 –Wall in “Hutong” (Author, 2015) | Figure 6 –Wall of “Cheng Nan Yi Jia” in Chengdu (Author, 2017)

Moreover, the boundaries had changed greatly that have been shaped by the monotony in aristocratic controlled feudal empires and diversified thereafter from the socialist time.

Despite the fact that the contemporary urban settlements are continuously featured by the traditional form of gated enclosure, these greatly varied elements have been identified to significantly exacerbate the social, spatial segregation and even resulted in other urban issues (Huang and Feng, 2008; Wang, 2010; Wang, 2014).

3 THE CULTURE CONNOTATIONS OF GATED COMMUNITIES

The section will critically evaluate the cultural ideologies and values which have arguably resulted in this gated tradition and the identified spatial characteristics. Based on the study the section will attempt to explore how ethics have influenced and shaped the pattern of residential settlements in China's history.

3.1 THE CULTURE OF COURTYARD

One morphological characteristic is too vital to be ignored of contemporary gated communities is the gated open space which resulted from the obsession of introverted courtyards among Chinese. Such ingrained attachment to the introverted courtyard has arguably conformed to the willingness to pursue the ultimate nature-human harmony in Daoist philosophy and the interpersonal harmony from the Confucian perspectives.

3.1.1 DAOIST NATURE-HUMAN VIEWS

In the philosophy of Daoism, "yin" (negative) and "yang" (positive) are two basic components of the universe that should be integrated in perfect balance to create the ultimate harmony of the world (DAODEJING). Therefore, as buildings and structure were solid which have generally represented the force of "yang" (positive), an open space defined by walls and gates were seen as void and natural that form an enclosed courtyard space to complement the negative component in the gated community (Knapp, 2005). Hence the movement between buildings and the courtyard was deemed as the interaction between "yin" and "yang" (Du, 2004).

Furthermore, From the Daoist perspective, the courtyard was deemed as the pivot between the heaven and the world, the nature and human, the void and the entity. (Zhou and Yang, 1998). Hence, Chinese people tended to situate their dwellings inside the enclosed courtyard, with a manmade garden in order to communicate with nature (Knapp, 2005). In this way, humans could indeed sense the order of nature and realize the harmony with nature in their courtyard, and finally achieve the ultimate dream of "Tian Ren He Yi" (unity of the heaven and human beings). As was described by Hu (2008), "When a resident stood in his courtyard, as if he stood in the universe, he could be in touch with the sun, fresh air, winds, rainwater, his family, and even his gods" (p. 359).

3.1.2 CONFUCIAN "YUE"

Another essential concept in the Confucianism is "Yue" (music). As was stated by Confucianism, "Yue" is (an echo of) the harmony between heaven and earth; "Li" reflect the orderly distinctions (in the operations of) heaven and earth" (Confucius.). Hence, in terms of the social relationships among Chinese. "Li" restrained people's behavior to maintain the social order while "Yue" focused on the emotional communications and interactions between people to facilitate the harmony of the society. Therefore, as the medium between the private and the public realm, the courtyard on the one hand has enhanced the interactions between local residents and emphasized the engagement in the collective life (Gehl, 2011). On the other hand, the semi-public features allow the quiet and peaceful inward courtyard to be relatively segregated and enclosed from the chaotic external society, which strengthened a sense of self-protection (Newman, 1996).

In all, the enclosed courtyard form has perfectly fulfilled the demand of the physical and psychological space among Chinese.

3.2 THE CULTURE OF WALL

As the old saying goes: "Guo you feng bi cheng, jia you feng bi yuan" (The nation is safeguarded by the Great Wall while the family has been protected by the ward walls), China has the largest amounts of walls and walled structures (Nuttgens, 1997). Walls, as the physical boundaries and thresholds that explicitly defined the interior and exterior spaces, were deemed as the symbol of places in China (Xu, 2008). In the

long history, the wall has developed into a cultural phenomenon which reflects the Chinese patterns of thinking and behaving (Hu, 2008). Therefore the strong reliance on such physical boundaries have arguably represented the territorial consciousness, the introverted personality and the awareness of identity among Chinese.

3.2.1 THE TERRITORIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Originated from villages and tribes, the Chinese cities have been dominated by agricultural civilization for thousands of years, during which, land has provided the material foundation for the survival and reproduction of Chinese generations. As a result, Chinese people have attached great importance to the land. As was claimed by Xunzi that “De di zhe sheng, Shi di zhe si” (A man with land could survive while a man without land would die) (Zhou and Yang, 1998, p. 131), the land was regarded as a dispensable component in a Chinese’s life. Moreover as was advocated by Confucians, human beings were an element of the earth (Du, 2004, p. 7). Such strong attachment and obsession to the earth manifested in the philosophy of Confucianism has implied that Chinese has been traditionally possessive towards space and land. As consequence, the strong territorial consciousness would push Chinese to explicitly define their personal realm by physical and visible boundaries, such as walls to enhance their sense of territory (Altman, 1975).

3.2.2 THE INTROVERTED PERSONALITY

“Xu” and “Jing” were firstly proposed by Guanzi as two essential approaches to cultivate a decent and noble personality (Dai, 1996, p. 11). “Jing” referred to the peace and quiet inward state while “Xu” indicated the distance between the inward state and the outside society. In terms of the ideologies of Confucianism, the introverted personality was widely affirmed to acquire the honor and grace via remaining peaceful inner state. Hence, Chinese people have always showed a consistent tendency to isolate themselves from the external turbulent world so as to depend their sense of well-being entirely upon their inward state.

Furthermore, Chinese believed in the positive correlation between “Xu” and their moral characters, meaning that the more distant they were to the external environment, the more quiet the inner state is, and hence the more virtue could be cultivated (Dai, 1996). Therefore, walls and gates have been built in order to increase the physical and psychological distances to push away the outside away from the inside.

3.2.3 THE AWARENESS OF IDENTITY

As an old Chinese proverb says, “Birds of a feather flock together.” The worldview and the value of an individual would be reflected by his social network. Hence one of the core principles for social intercourse in the philosophy of Confucianism was “Those whose courses are different cannot lay plans for one another” (Confucius), meaning that a noble-minded person would merely interact with and build a friendship with those who shared the same aspiration and interests, followed the same moral codes and obtained the same level of education. From the Confucians views, what kind of friends did a person have has revealed who he was. Moreover, considering the introverted personality has resulted in the close social intercourse among neighborhoods within a community instead the wider society, therefore, Chinese people preferred to use physical boundaries to delimit their neighborhood, as well as their social circle to fulfil the awareness of identity.

4 REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The essay has explored the historical development of enclosed settlement patterns in China by looking at four typical models, dating back to the walled residential wards in Tang Dynasty, through to the enclosed work-unit compounds of the socialist era and pervasive and diversified gated communities to date. It has been identified that the contemporary gated communities, though being introduced from Western countries (Wang, 2010), is ubiquitously the continuity of the traditional enclosed settlement pattern which has been

shaped by the deeply rooted Chinese civilization and dominated by the philosophy of Daoism and Confucianism. Moreover three morphological features are remarkable for this morphological continuity identified in the study, which are the persistent tradition of collective living patterns, the introverted courtyard-style housing complex and physical boundaries clearly defined by walls and buildings. This, on the one hand, presents a comprehensive historical and cultural background for understanding the performance and prevalence of gated communities in Chinese cities today; on the other hand, it has manifested the ingrained worldviews and values behind the cultural ideology of walls and courtyards among Chinese. Therefore, these features should be carefully considered, sustained and adapted to show respect to the long history and rich culture in China.

However the discussion of the conservation of certain enclosed characteristics as historical legacy and the alternative ways forward for today's community design should be centered on the interaction between the gated community and the well-being of neighboring public realm in order to promote a more integrated urban form. What are the possible impacts gated communities could bring to the qualities of local public realm, and how could they be mediated by means of physical adjustment to conventional gated community design practices? To answer the intricate questions, two design features have been identified by the author in the reviewing of the entire development process of gated community in China.

Firstly, the gated communities in contemporary Chinese cities have been noticed to manifest a loose grid urban structure which fundamentally resulted from the wide-road-and-large-block pattern in the lengthy feudal empires and the Soviet model of 'super-block and wide-avenue' in socialist era. However the enclosure size should be stipulated and properly regulated in the regulatory plan to reduce the negative impacts of the gated community on the wider surrounding public space. On the one hand, the appropriate scale of enclosure will help to ensure a permeable, accessible and walkable urban districts. On the other hand, neighborhoods with medium or small gated areas could embrace more diverse communities with a variety of prices, housing types, or tenures. With the guidance of appropriate planning and design policies, the whole neighbourhood could be developed into a socially and physically heterogeneous districts, in which, each smaller size gated community remains the homogeneity and expresses the shared interests by the residents within it. Therefore, the careful subdivision of land and relevant policies to control the enclosure size could effectively guide subsequent developments towards a mixed use and heterogeneous urban neighbourhood centered on local public spaces, notwithstanding the presence of gated communities.

Secondly, the boundary is where the gated community encounters the public realm, which demarcates the gated community and the surrounding public realm not only spatially but also functionally in terms of its supporting role in facilitating activities in the adjacent areas (Bobic, 2004). The linear feature has been characterized by a series of the elements including the length, the materials, the frontages, the permeability, and the surveillance conditions, which play a crucial role in promoting and enhancing the interaction between the gated community and its adjacent areas. For instance, the exclusive and hostile wall could be made softer and friendlier by means of lower height, transparent materials or different sorts of plants providing a rich variety of forms and colors (Bobic, 2004). Moreover new development could be framed and defined by building frontages facing outwards which can potentially introduce various activities, which nevertheless, should be accompanied by detailed design with regards to the scale and material of frontage, the accommodated uses and access from the street. In particular, the ground floor façade and uses are crucial in the interaction between the gated community and passers-by (Gehl et al., 2006) Finally, the last potential intervention for the boundaries is to introduce ambiguous space for public uses, such as lakes, public parks, squares, etc., which could not only function as buffer areas between gated communities and the bustling public environment, but also be mutually shared, physically or visually.

All boils down to one point, despite the globally criticized social, spatial and physical challenges and problems in the gated communities with respect to the quality of the neighboring public realm and the local urban area as a whole, these specific patterns in China enjoy particular historical and cultural legacy. Therefore urban designer should carefully sustain the physical structures and characters to respond to the Chinese residing tradition but appropriately "open" the gate via introducing more human-scale enclosed community and much friendlier boundaries to accord with the contemporary urban life style.

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ID 1423 | RECLAIMING SPACES: FAMILY INCLUSIVE URBAN DESIGN

Sukanya Krishnamurthy¹, Chris Steenhuis¹, Daniek Reijnders¹
¹TU Eindhoven
s.krishnamurthy@tue.nl

1 INTRODUCTION

Following the current trend of global urbanisation and the growing attraction of cities for families with children, urban environments are becoming principal contexts wherein new generation of children will thrive and grow. Though cities were traditionally designed for adults and cars and not children, Zukin (2010) observes an ongoing shift in her book 'The Naked City'. She notes that through gentrification Western cities are experiencing a revaluation of streetscapes through commercial and cultural activities. Boterman and Karsten (2015) have titled this ongoing urban transition as 'the march of city families worldwide'. Examples can be found world-over, in European cities like Paris, Berlin, the Scandinavian capitals and London (Authier & Lehman-Frisch, 2012; Butler, 2003; Karsten, 2013; Lilius, 2014). Not restricted to the west, examples can also be found in countries that are on the rise like India where 41.2 million children under the age of six live in urban spaces. An increase of children in cities comes with rising analytical and policy interest for families with children in urban environments through child friendly cities, and in children's geographies.

Ongoing work on child friendly cities explores and highlights the role of housing, transportation, community networks, play and green, and governance as important prerequisites for living in the city with children. With the expanding reach of children's studies within the social sciences, urban analysis is essential to improve contextual understanding of children's contemporary problems and needs in the city. Particularly the designs of neighbourhoods influences the geographies of everyday life for children, though the neighbourhood is a mere backdrop for many full-time employed and commuting adults (Carroll, Witten, Kearns, & Donovan, 2015). However in neighbourhoods where families settle for example, patterns of varied consumption, activities, and needs are more evident (Karsten, 2013), reflecting an intensive consumption of the city and also new practices of public parenting. Karsten (2014) argues that this transformation goes with the production of a new city. Families as consumers claim their own urban environment through the development of a range of family facilities that can be summarized in three types: child directed facilities, family directed facilities, and child and family friendly public space. Sidewalks are being transformed into places to play and to socialise.

Occupying the outdoors used to be typical working-class behaviour, today has become part of the behaviours of middle-class families. The rise of this family friendly consumption spaces is in part initiated by the families involved, but also by governments, NGO's, and developers. There is also an ongoing push from academia towards policy to encourage family directed consumption spaces within inner cities.

This paper positions the possible learnings for urban planning and design within the creation of child friendly environments. Structured as follows, the first section provides a literature review on planning for