

COLLECTIVE FORMS AND COLLECTIVE SPACES: A DISCUSSION OF URBAN DESIGN THINKING AND PRACTICE BASED ON RESEARCH IN CHINESE CITIES

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Abstract

The paper examines how social projects, social spaces, and social realities define three contexts and shifts critical to understanding urban design in China. The transformations from collective forms to community building, from government to governance, and from urban versus rural development to urban-rural integration. The argument presented is that a unique unification of administration, production, and reproduction spaces into one institution, produced collective forms in China, whose collective spaces and collective subjectivities contrast with Western-centric explanations of urban design and urban sociology that depend on abstract notions of the public, public space, community, and place making. Instead, collective forms and collective spaces are defined by concrete activities, interests, and benefits that provide social networks of support and care to clearly identifiable constituencies. The collective and the community in China are thus always legibly spatialized and develop in parallel to a socialized model of governance that derives from a “differential mode of association.” This creates a spatialized governmentality, an instrumentalization of spatial design by government that brings spatial and social problems of governance closely together. A brief discussion of the historical formations of these changing contexts is the basis to outlining an interdisciplinary urban design approach that deals with spatial and social environments, practices, and policies. The paper brings together research conducted in Chinese cities including Wuhan, Beijing, and Shanghai.

Keywords

collective forms; collective spaces; people’s commune; *danwei*; *xiaoqu*; urban design; spatialized governmentality

Historically, in social, political, economic, and spatial terms, urban and rural areas in China were arguably all planned, designed, and administered at a “neighbourhood scale” that greatly varied in size, ranging from an urban community within an urban block to that of a district, or from a village community to that of a town. While some influences can be traced back to Clarence Perry’s concept of the “neighbourhood unit” and especially the “microdistrict” (*mikrorayon*) introduced by Soviet planners in the mid-1950s (Lu, 2006), the function of a neighbourhood was, more importantly, characterized by a unification of administration, production, and reproduction spaces into one institution that in its organization is specific to China. This organization is what I refer to as a *collective form*. Examples from China’s recent past include the rural people’s commune and the urban *danwei* (work unit), with the *danwei* being part of a long history of the development of walled and gated cities, neighbourhoods, residential and live-work compounds, and communities (Xu and Yang, 2009).

While others have explained the “collective form” as foremost an urban design approach, whether by distinguishing between compositional, megastructural, and group forms (Maki, 1964) or differentiating between urban individual (singular) and collective (repetitive) forms (Fan, 2016), I suggest that in the context of China, it should be understood as an experimental process in which administration, policy, and spatialization continuously interact, making it difficult to separate between cause and effect. For example, the relationships between five year plans, policy interpretations, pilot projects, and subsequent emergence of dominant urban and social models is not a simple matter of linear deduction and top-down implementation. Instead, regional social, economic, and political conditions or idiosyncrasies determine the way policies are translated and implemented.

Therefore, understanding how today's prevalent community-based developments and community building agendas, exemplified in the gated communities of the urban *xiaoqu* (small district), are rooted in a legacy of collective forms and their socio-spatial characteristics is of importance. Although the context has fundamentally changed since the economic reforms started in 1978, they continue to play an essential part in administering access to housing and public or social services, remain a regulator of economic growth and labour migration, and still provide essential social security. But, changing demographics and lifestyles, a growing land and housing marketisation, and a shift from government to governance (Gui et al, 2009; Wu et al, 2007; Jeffreys and Sigley, 2006) have created new urban and rural community and spatial typologies to which planners, urban designer, and architects must respond. For example, unlike in the *danwei* period, work and living are separated and there is a rapid growth of an ageing population, with its social and economic pressures exacerbated by the generational imbalance of the 4-2-1 family structure^① caused by decades of a one-child policy that was only abandoned in 2016. Although some of these general challenges of demographic and economic changes are global, we can see these shaped by specific problems and socio-spatial histories of collectivity in China.

1. Collective space vs public space

Collective forms in China are defined by spaces that considerably differ from Western-centric, abstract concepts of the public, public space, community, and place making, and raise slightly different questions about representation, legitimacy, social care, and responsibility. It is therefore worthwhile to clarify the meaning of terms key to these differences.

Whereas a “collective” has a hierarchical organization and a defined leadership, with its members submitting themselves to shared norms and demands in the pursuit of common goals and benefits, a “community” is formed by like-minded individuals with shared interests who equally contribute to its self-regulation and self-administration. A collective is normative, government and governance are closely linked, and often a direct form of policing is employed, while a community is defined by its structured forms of communication and a reliance on self-governance and self-policing.

Based on this distinction, it is apparent why current governments desire community development, as this enables a sharing or handing over of responsibilities for public and social services and their management to grassroots organizations and the third sector. In addition, in historical terms, with all-encompassing collectivization in China in the 1950s, not the building of individual but collective subjectivities was the aim of new work practices, political participation, and a social contract based on social and work security (Bray, 2005), as well as new social networks or infrastructures of care. Therefore, paternalistic family and work organization – historically defined by kinship relationships of the clan, guild or gang, and later by the nuclear family – were largely replaced by a pastoral socialist state, collectivist lifestyles, and new modes of production determined by a planned economy.

The resultant collective forms and collective subjectivities are distinct from the idea of individual subjectivity and public space predominant in the West. The individual in China was seen as a constitutive part of a larger collective subjectivity. Significantly, the relationship

between individual and collective are hereby understood in what Fei Xiaotong (1949/1992) termed a “differential mode of association” through elastic and associational networks of personal and real-life relationships that are continuously changing and hereby define the experience of the individual in relation to the community. These changing interpersonal and associational relationships, I would add, are formative to all social relationships and exist beyond a distinction between collective or communal governance. Thus, collective and community are conceptually and practically in governance terms less distinct, as institutional relationships are always experienced through an individualized and socialized lens of governance (Woodman, 2016).

The Western conception in comparison assumes a strong dialectic between individual, collective, and community, whereby a conflict between individual interests and the common good needs to be continuously negotiated, with an individual’s subjectivity and rights taken as fundamental to one’s identity and place in society. This premise underlies, for example, Ferdinand Tönnies’s distinction between community and society that has come to dominate urban discourse and urban sociology. But, Fei (1949/1992) distinguishes between a Chinese “differential” and a Western “organizational” mode of association, in which all individuals within an organization share the same relationships and boundaries. Real-life relations are accordingly essentially subordinated to an idealized, abstract, and institutional organization that de-spatializes the understanding of communities.

Consequently, a public space in the Western tradition does not mean the same as a collective space, but implies a political space of communication, a space for individual expression of rights while addressing society at large (its nostalgic prototype being the Greek agora). In contrast, collective spaces in China often simply just provide spaces for concrete everyday uses and activities, through which associational relationships between individual and individual, but also between individual and the collective, are reinforced. This is also reflected in how these spaces are owned. The collective space is normally collectively owned by a group of people living and working closely around it – for example the extended family, the village collective, the *danwei* – and spatializes and reinforces personal social relationships, whereas public space is typically owned and managed by the state on behalf of society, hereby institutionalizing and abstracting social relationships.

Why does this all matter? Because Western public spaces are increasingly commercialized, homogenized, and socially ineffective. They are often more symbolic than functional. The Chinese activity-based collective space offers thus an alternative framework to understanding how shared spaces can function, as collective spaces always serve identifiable constituents and their shared – but also at times individual – activities. Collective forms are an important heritage of collective infrastructures and collective subjectivities.

The social and economic structures harking back to a national collectivization in the 1950s, have remained effective beyond a de-collectivization and reform of the people’s commune and *danwei* systems in the 1980s until today. Thus, current problems of neighbourhood transformations and urbanization in China must be seen in relationship to historical communal or collective development models. The contemporary urban *xiaoqu* and new community building at grassroots-level government (*shequ*), the “new socialist countryside” program and rural village reforms, elderly-friendly communities, smart communities, or community renewal projects are all responses to new socio-economic demands,

demographic changes, and changing governance needs. While answering to ongoing social, political, and economic transformations that are part of a larger global trend, they are also deeply contextual to historical government policies and a parallel socialist conception and spatial design of communities in China. They created new dominant social and urban spaces specific to China, which is well recognized by sociologists, economists, and political scientists (Xie et al, 2009; Bray, 2005; Lu, 1989; Walder, 1986), but less so by spatial designers.

However, especially for urban designers it is essential to better understand why “public space” is in historical terms a misnomer in China and how shared types of spaces are rooted in collective life and more accurately described as a “collective space.” Despite similar appearance, it differs in conception and function from Western notions of public space and its common association with a public sphere (Habermas, 1962/1989), which are ideas discussed in China for less than 30 years. Many spaces are simply open spaces and, resulting from a collective landownership system defined by family and community structures, are for the use of local residents (Heberer and Göbel, 2011). Therefore, this is a very different, but important and complementary, milieu to that found in the West to define challenges of urban transformations and experiences and their impact on spatial design processes. It has clear implications for how we can understand and define a framework for urban design thinking and practice in China, some of which I will discuss in the following.

2. Three contexts of urban design in China

When the idea of a public space was introduced in China in the mid-1990s, its difference to existing collective spaces was largely disregarded. Western-style “public” spaces came along with a reorientation from pure planning to design problems in China, with urban design introduced by Chinese planning authorities and adopted by practitioners. The rising importance of urban design was tied to developing design guidelines capable of integrating the needs of communities and relatively smaller developments into very large urban plans. Yet, significant differences exist in how urban design in China deals with placemaking, local communities, and scale. Imported Western design models – as most urban designers in China were either foreign-trained or foreigners – have not translated well into a context of larger development plots, a dominance of state-owned Local Design Institutes, and a lack of public participation and a third sector (Loew, 2013).

While there is currently a noticeable and significant shift to smaller scales of design, urban design was until recently mostly seen as serving larger planning objectives and bringing economic value by preparing smaller plots of large urban plans for real-estate development. The failure of urban design to better understand and instrumentalize its grounding in socio-economic and political aims, reveals a limitation of its traditional interdisciplinary focus on architecture, planning, and landscape architecture. A more comprehensive integration of urban sociology, social policy, and spatial planning is thus urgently needed to cross established disciplinary, methodological, and cultural boundaries. To advance this, I propose that a China-specific interdisciplinary urban design approach can be framed by how social projects, social spaces, and social realities shape three contexts critical to understanding past and present spatial design and planning in China, and by asking what the underlying conceptual and spatial transformations are. More specifically, this looks at three shifts

through which socio-spatial planning and urban design in China can be read as informed by the political and collective.

2.1 From government to governance

The first context is architecture, urban design, and urban planning as a technology of “governmentality” (Foucault, 2007). It is particularly a “spatialization of governmentality,” meaning when spatial forms correlate to social forms and become a technology of government. An example of this is the *danwei*, in which the emergence of designed modern spatial forms as a rational technique of government is particularly legible (Bray, 2005). This is therefore also closely related to the question of how a change from government to governance has created or is creating particular social and spatial development forms or specific urban experiences, and what lessons can be learned from them? For example, the restructuring of the lowest level of government administration and grassroots organization from the *danwei* to the subdistrict and street office since economic reforms in China – or from the people’s commune to the town – while perhaps inevitable, is also a deliberate attempt to rescale spatial, social, and political management and development by creating new administrative units, new grassroots organizations, new neighbourhoods, and new types of community, as well as new urban design problems and criteria.

2.2 From collective forms to community building

The second context is the transformation of collective forms and subjectivities originating in the Mao Era into contemporary community building agendas and policies. The nationally enforced *danwei* and people’s commune systems were exemplary in instituting a unit of total planning that provided rights and identity, but also extensive control over the population by managing access to housing, employment, health- and childcare, social welfare, schooling, culture, sports, and political and cultural education. It also replaced traditional, patriarchal kinship and family structures with a socialist pastoral state and collectivist lifestyles defined by work relationships.

This history of collective forms hereby anticipated some of the changes we see widely emerge today globally, for example, a disappearing nuclear family (married couples and their children) as a social and spatial planning norm, and a diversification of the household structure. We are witnessing these changes today more noticeably due to demographic transformations, such as an ageing society, but also due to rising housing costs, as the open market has failed to sufficiently self-regulate while welfare states are waning. Out of this has arisen a growing need for intergenerational housing, coupled with a need for new social networks of care – both driven by a declining social support by the traditional family and a disappearing nuclear family-bound idea of domesticity. The collective forms were in this respect an early attempt to create non-familial social networks and promoted a close integration of work-live-education, which is currently also greatly endorsed by knowledge-based economies. It has informed China-specific meanings of collectives and communities that in turn define the context and beneficiaries of current urban design practice.

2.3 From urban versus rural to urban-rural integration

The third context is how this history of collective forms is influencing current socio-spatial changes in urban and rural developments in China, and a redefinition of planning or design scales and terminology relevant to practice, theory, and pedagogy. Despite policy reforms dealing with landownership, rural-urban integration, and the *hukou* (household registration)

system, socio-economic inequality and large-scale labour migration persist. This is largely due to biased economic policies that since the 1960s have focused on urban development.

This context also relates to an interdisciplinary perspective of how design research can contribute to urban and community studies, and how social and urban design or planning policies are related. For example, reforms in *hukou* and economic policies have led to changes in the provision of public services and a need for new urban planning attitudes and approaches. Therefore, this context also considers how a shift in focus towards an urban-rural integration and smaller planning scales is related to the provision and design of public services and social welfare infrastructures. It is hereby as much about social security as it is about growing a capacity for self-governance and non-governmental responsibility for public services. Generalizing, what this third context is concerned with is an ongoing transition from a collective to a community-based organization of the population, which started in the 1990s and runs in parallel to a gradual shift from government to governance.

3. The people's commune and *danwei*

To understand in greater detail the heritage and influence of collective forms on current urban design problems, I will outline how the nationally enforced *danwei* and people's commune systems in China were exemplary in instituting a unit of total planning that provided rights and identity, but also extensive controls over the population by managing employment, housing, and all aspects of education and welfare. The "three contexts" of urban design in China and their shifts are characterized and legible through the socio-spatial changes conditioned by a transition from the people's commune and *danwei* to the *xiaoqu*.

One precedent of the *danwei* can be found in the radical phase of Soviet commune planning in the late 1920s. Deriving from Leonid Sabsovich's economic model, the housing commune realized a Sotsgorod idea of socialist settlements for workers of state-owned industrial units and farms. The Sotsgorod was divided into smaller collective housing communes with a few thousand inhabitants each. Complementary to, yet separated from, production areas, the commune was dedicated to providing social services that framed the collective life of its inhabitants. In an unrealized project by Nikolai Kuzmin (1883 – 1938) from 1929, a mandatory "super-collectivism" was imposed by: removing all private life and reducing shared bedrooms to the minimum, controlling daily routines by breaking them down into detailed activities and by providing for these centrally placed collective spaces such as a dining hall and facilities for education, culture, sports, and socialization, and by physically separating families and making the caring for children and the elderly a collective responsibility (see Figures 1 & 2). The Chinese collective forms acknowledged this Soviet speculation on spatialized governmentality, but also profoundly exceeded it by closely bringing together all working and living activities.

The campaign to establish people's communes in China was officially launched in August 1958 as part of the Great Leap Forward^②. Already a month later, people's communes incorporated 90.4% of rural households, making approximately 77% of China's population part of a rural commune (Lu, 2007). Their purpose was to increase productivity and create a new autonomous grassroots unit replacing the township, the lowest direct administrative level of government, and taking on its far-reaching responsibilities for local government administration and commune management, including the coordination of industry,

agriculture, finance, trade, education, military affairs, and public services. The three administrative levels of the people's commune were the administrative committee, the production brigade, and the production team. A typical example of this is the Shigushan Brigade (today Shigushan Village) in the Xinzhou District, Wuhan, that was built in the early 1970s at a production brigade-level as part of the Phoenix Commune, which was first established in 1958 (see Figure 3). The rural commune system lasted until 1984, when these administrative responsibilities were returned to the level of the township.

But Kuzmin's socio-spatial design principles are especially legible in one of the earliest examples of a planned commune settlement, that for the Panyu People's Commune from 1959. The scheme for a new settlement in Guangdong is divided into five sectors, which each have clear functions and service facilities placed right in their centers. The housing is entirely made up of two flat typologies and their variations (see Figure 4). The individual units have no kitchens or bathrooms, and are not planned as functional family units. The different residential building typologies are based on a simple combination of the flat typologies for couples and single workers. The minimization of private space is made possible by providing at the building scale, shared washrooms and toilets, as well as a disproportionately large amount of public facilities for the commune with diverse functions. The most important of these are multifunctional, public canteens, which form the physical centers for each cluster as well as the daily routines of workers (see Figure 5). What Panyu shows is a symmetry between the overprovision of public facilities – of collective spaces – and the reduction of private space to reinforce a collective lifestyle in which working, living, and learning is synchronized.

In a shift from rural to urban planning, the *danwei* emerged, which dominated the urban development and industrialization of China from the late 1950s to the 1990s. While only partially a direct urban translation of the rural people's commune – and rather developing in parallel – it also had extensive economic, administrative, and social welfare functions. A *danwei* can greatly differ in scale, and is predominantly the outcome of the size of company or institution it is defined by and which it spatially demarcates. Its inclusion of public or commercial functions are equally not fixed, but depend on the economic standing of the *danwei*. This makes the *danwei* a pliable administrative and economic and social model. In the case of the Wuhan Iron and Steel Corporation (WISCO), a major industrial *danwei* in Wuhan, it occupied a territory equivalent to a large urban district (see Figure 6). This means it had to take on corresponding administrative and social service burdens.

In contrast to WISCO, the Luoyang Research and Design Institute for Non-Ferrous Metals Processing only occupied a relatively small urban block (see Figure 7). The Luoyang case is an example of a very compact *danwei* and a typical transformation of *danweis* since the 1990s. Its work, housing, and living or social support functions are clearly zoned. Most of its original housing was built in the 1960s to 80s, and there is a typical range of unit typologies for families and single workers. Since the mid-1990s, the *danwei* had to redevelop some of its existing housing with larger units that can be sold on the open market. What at first simply looks like common real-estate speculation, is therefore part of a larger economic demise of an industrial state-owned enterprise, as well as its need to create new income to support its (former) workers, with land and real estate one of the few available assets that a *danwei* can exploit.

4. The *xiaoqu*

What the transformations of the Luoyang *danwei* shows is an extensive urban change in China since the 1990s from the *danwei* to the *xiaoqu* system, which became the new dominant urban development model and collective space. The decline of industrial manufacturing led in 1984 to state-owned enterprises being released from their responsibility to provide welfare functions, which made a rethinking of urban policy and governance necessary. These urban transformations and challenges are evident in a number of *xiaoqus* we studied in 2018 in China, and which can be considered as relatively typical examples. These included the Geguang Community, Wuhan (developed 1994, 1996, 1998, 2003), the Miaosan Community, Wuhan (developed early 1980s and 2000), the Xinyuan Xili Community, Beijing (started in the early 1980s), and the Hongmei *Xiaoqu*, Shanghai (built from 1996).

With the *xiaoqu*, a whole matrix of ownership and demographics has emerged that, with an increasing commodification of housing, moves currently towards privatization and private ownership (see Figure 8). There are communities that are still owned and occupied by a *danwei* and its employees, some that are built by *danweis* to relocate their workers off valuable urban sites so that they can be redeveloped for profit, and completely private and commercial *xiaoqus*. But the majority of cases we looked at have a mix of former *danwei* residents and private, external owners – we deliberately excluded completely private *xiaoqus* from our study. Yet, what they have in common is that all *xiaoqus* continue to spatially demarcate and define a clearly identifiable community and its members. This is because a community is still, first of all, an administrative space or governing unit according to whose size, wealth, and demography, social services and rights are exclusively provided to its residents. The services and rights are assured either due to historical or continued *danwei* relationships, or are purchased in private *xiaoqus*, which tend to have better quality services – although this does not necessarily mean that these services are used by more residents. In many other cases, the state steps in, creating a large-scale challenge to rationalize costly state provision.

In the *xiaoqu*, self-governance, state representation, public or shared services, and spatialization continue to be strongly linked, and therefore urban communities are still defined by their rights to social services, care, and infrastructures. This is an interesting point for comparison, considering that European countries, for example, are increasingly trying to re-establish this relationship between community, social care, physical area, and governance. A community is typically made up of several *xiaoqus*, for which it might have different levels of administrative responsibility. While community governance varies from city to city, in general its administrative level is the resident's committee in which community and Communist Party of China representation overlap. Therefore, despite growing privatization, the Communist Party of China had to ingrain itself at a much smaller scale and to a much larger extent than before the economic reforms. In fact, with the failure of creating an efficient and affordable market for services and management of residential communities – especially in poor and old communities – the government has reentered many of the urban communities it left in the beginning of the economic reform period (Wu, 2018). Despite this, in addition to the resident's committee, most *xiaoqus* have a property management company, responsible for managing and maintenance of public areas and facilities, and an owner's committee if there is private housing. Although there are *xiaoqus* that only have

privately owned commodity housing, which are managed by the property owners and their elected representatives, the government retains some direct influence and even some responsibilities – certainly in comparison, for example, to private developments in Europe. Thus, within the community governance structure – especially in the older, mixed-tenure communities we studied in China – there is a mixture of Communist Party of China representatives, community representatives, elected and employed committee members as well as community volunteers that work together to administer a community and maintain a social network of support (see Figure 9). I would argue, that despite obvious conflicts and problems, for community-controlled developments to have legitimacy and the power to make and implement decisions, some state involvement and a clearly identifiable and accountable governance body is necessary, something that is often lacking in community-led developments in places such as the United Kingdom.

Considering the origins of collective forms and collective spaces in the rural people's commune and their codification in the urban *danwei*, whose collapse led to an urban transformation and rise of urban *xiaoqus*, and further considering the new integration of urban-rural development and policies, we can see the closing of a long rural-urban-rural cycle of socio-spatial changes.

To return to an earlier discussion of collective spaces, I would like to examine how in the *xiaoqu* they offer opportunities for both individual and shared uses (see Figure 10). The appropriation of collective spaces is at times contradictory, as individuals often unhindered claim large parts of them for their personal use, as in the case of many illegally erected structures. These illegal private and commercial functions and structures, which sometimes provide services to the community or are consensually shared by residents, can be described as self-organized. Other uses can be classified as semi-planned, which include adaptation of spaces designed for collective use, ranging from appropriations or use by individuals to group activities. The self-organized and semi-planned uses of a shared space, especially the first kind of use, clearly show how these spaces retain key characteristics of a collective space. If these were Western public spaces, the individual appropriations found in China would be seen as breaking with common rules or laws that govern their use and would lead to exclusion from the space. Finally, planned uses refer to collective spaces in the form of buildings that provide services, such as a service center run by the street office or a privately-operated commercial center. The matrix emerging from these different uses shows how associational relationships are established and maintained through planned uses and spontaneous appropriations of collective spaces. Given a concrete and direct, yet unstable, relationship between space, user, and use, it is possible that collective spaces both support and contradict a normative understanding of common space, as they are equally used for individual and shared purposes. To say it differently, while public spaces are normally protected from appropriations, especially appropriations by individuals, what we see here is a continuous socio-spatial appropriation, a process that is productive to community building.

Considering a decline of large-scale projects and a shift to smaller scales of design, planning, and governance in China, it is not a coincidence that young design practices are becoming interested in issues of community building and urban design. For example, MAT Office has taken a very different approach to its renewal of the Xinyuan Xili community in Beijing, one of the case studies we analyzed. Based on a comprehensive study of the site

and its socio-spatial needs, MAT Office identified strategic small interventions sites throughout the community. This led them to developing an intervention toolbox instead of a fixed masterplan. It acknowledges the need for an urban design approach whose implementation can be negotiated between stakeholders over time instead of presenting a final outcome. This also aligns with new community design guidelines as, for example, promoted in the recently published *Technical Guidelines of Working Mechanism and Design for Community Planning in Wuhan* (2018) by ATA Architectural Design, which sets out the policy contexts, stakeholder involvement, and decision-making processes to develop a community plan.

5. Conclusion

Collective forms provide insights into today's urban design problems, especially into the unstable relationships between constituency, space, ownership, and use. The collective spaces deriving from a history of collective forms are not the same social space as a public space. This is important, because a critical role of urban design is to establish spaces for shared or rather differentiated "collective" use. To advance then a possible framework for an interdisciplinary urban design thinking and practice in China today, I would in summary like to make the following claims:

- ① Communities are still defined by the social services and infrastructures they provide to their members. This is an important heritage of collective forms from the Mao Era and of great relevance to global community debates. It raises a question of how this can be adapted better to demographic transformations, changing social needs, and cultural diversification.
- ② Communities continue to have strong administrative functions. Their governance as grassroots organization include a diverse mix of state and community representatives. While residents' committee employees such as social workers are paid for by the state, maintenance and investment in the *xiaoqu* depend on the ownership of housing and are increasingly paid for by property owners instead of the state or state-owned enterprises. This combination of stakeholders and responsibilities gives communities political and social legitimacy and, potentially, provides access to the specialized knowledge and skills needed to develop community plans or participate in decision-making processes, but can also lead to conflicts between stakeholders. Despite many challenges, there is some noticeable resilience in these community governance structures and the new types of collective spaces they produce.
- ③ Collective spaces are defined by associational relationships. Their relations to user and activities are direct and their ownership collective. Individual and shared claims to collective spaces can be contradictory, but permit coexistence, and their socio-spatial appropriation often strengthen relationships between individuals and the collective or community they belong to.

Urban design thinking that considers the contexts outlined in this paper, has to simultaneously deal with spatial and social environments, practices, and policies. The historical transformations leading to the dominance of the urban *xiaoqu* reinforce community planning as a socio-spatial problem, and we therefore have to regard urban design as concerned with both designing a built and social environment. Thus, a new multi-scalar and interdisciplinary approach is needed that brings multiple stakeholders and disciplines

together in a design process. Architecture, urban design, and planning are hereby important instruments of socio-spatial realization and spatialized governmentality.

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Editor's note:

① "4-2-1 family structure" refers to a family consisting of four seniors, a couple who are both the only child of their respective family, and their only child.

② The "Great Leap Forward" was a campaign by the Chinese communists during the Second Five-Year Plan, which was aimed at transforming the country from an agrarian economy into a socialist society through rapid industrialization and collectivization. It ended up causing a severe social and economic disaster.

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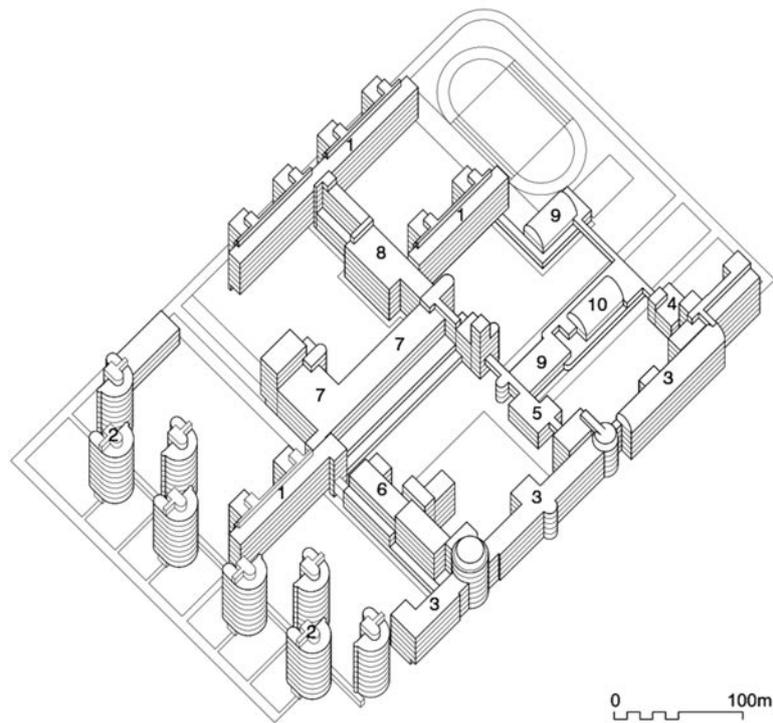
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Figure 1

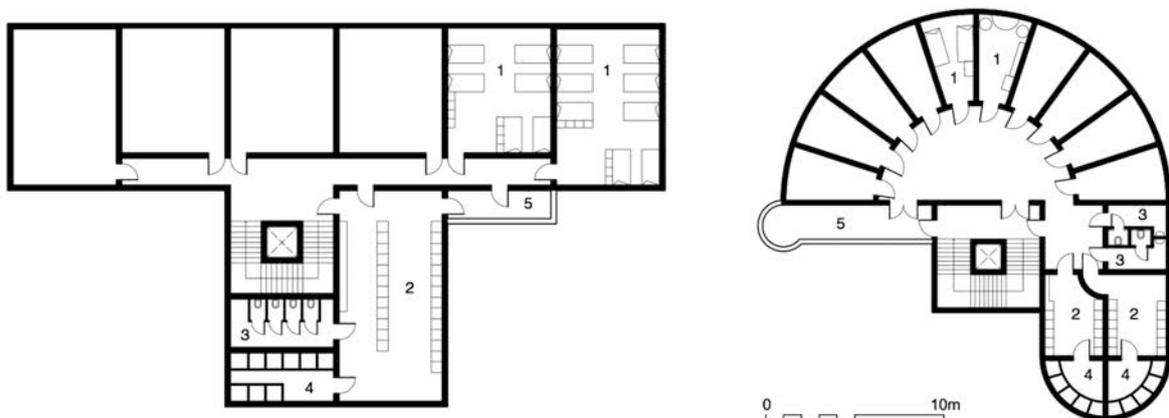


Axonometric of Housing Commune for the coal mine No. 5/7 in Anzhero-Sudzhensk, Nikolai Kuzmin (1928 – 1929).

Drawing key: 1 housing for single workers (groups of 6 – 8 people); 2 housing for couples; 3 housing for children; 4 nursery; 5 kindergarten; 6 school; 7 communal center/social club (theater, library, meeting rooms, workspaces); 8 communal dining hall; 9 sports facilities/gym; 10 swimming pool.

Source: Jacoby, 2016.

Figure 2



Typical unit plans of Housing Commune, Nikolai Kuzmin (1928 – 1929)

Left: shared accommodation for adults; right: accommodation for couples. Drawing key: 1 bedroom; 2 changing room; 3 WC; 4 shower; 5 terrace.

Source: Jacoby, 2016.

Figure 3

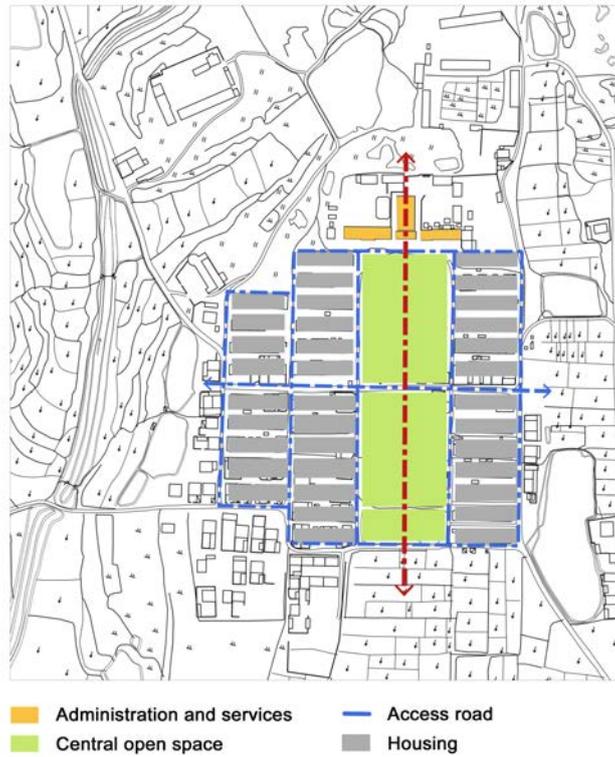


Diagram of commune settlement (Shiguan Village), Phoenix People's Commune (1970s)
Source: AA Visiting School 2017, drawn by Olga Konyukova, Yuan Bixiao, and Ye Mingyu.

Figure 4

組合体技術經濟指標

組合体类型	总户数	建筑面积 (m ²)	居住面积 (m ²)	平面系数 (%)	每层平均面积 (m ²)	每建筑平均面积 (m ²)
	4	54.6	3.6	532	34	63.4
	10	437.6	285.4	65.5	28.7	43.7
	20	791.6	571.6	72	29.6	39.5
	8	411.8	277.3	63	34.5	51.5
	12	739	422	57	35	61.5
	24	784	533.8	68.5	22.3	34.6

图3. 沙坪居民点詳細规划

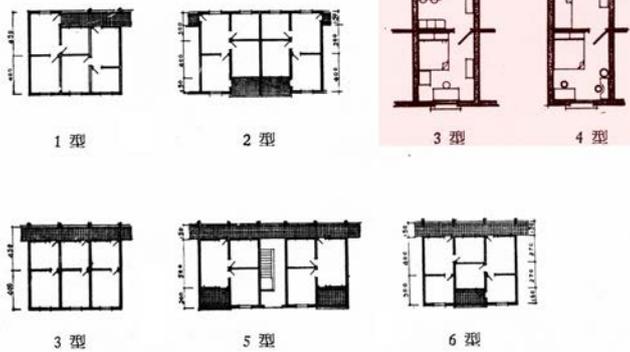
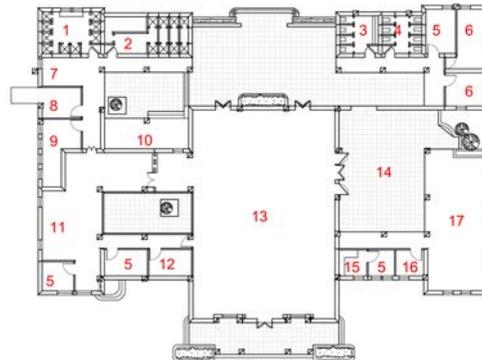


图4. 各类型单元平面

Housing and unit typologies for the Panyu People's Commune

Source: School of Architecture, South China University of Technology, 1959.

Figure 5

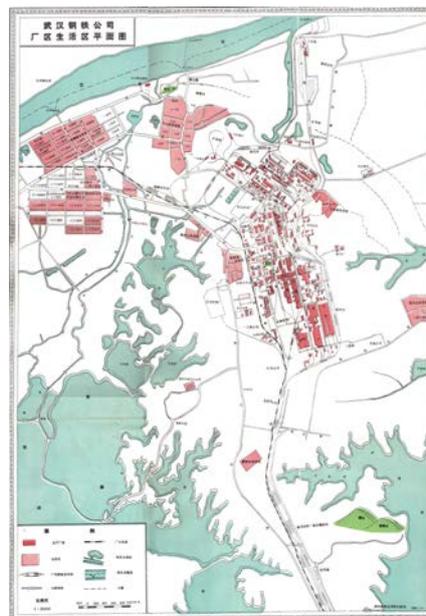


Public canteen in Panyu

Drawing key: 1 women's bathroom; 2 men's bathroom; 3 men's toilet; 4 women's toilet; 5 storage; 6 staff housing; 7 water storage; 8 boiler room; 9 coal storage; 10 washroom; 11 kitchen; 12 office; 13 dining hall; 14 tea garden; 15 shop; 16 workshop; 17 tea house.

Sources: School of Architecture, South China University of Technology 1959 (top); redrawn by Yuan Rongwei and Yan Ting from *Architectural Journal* (bottom).

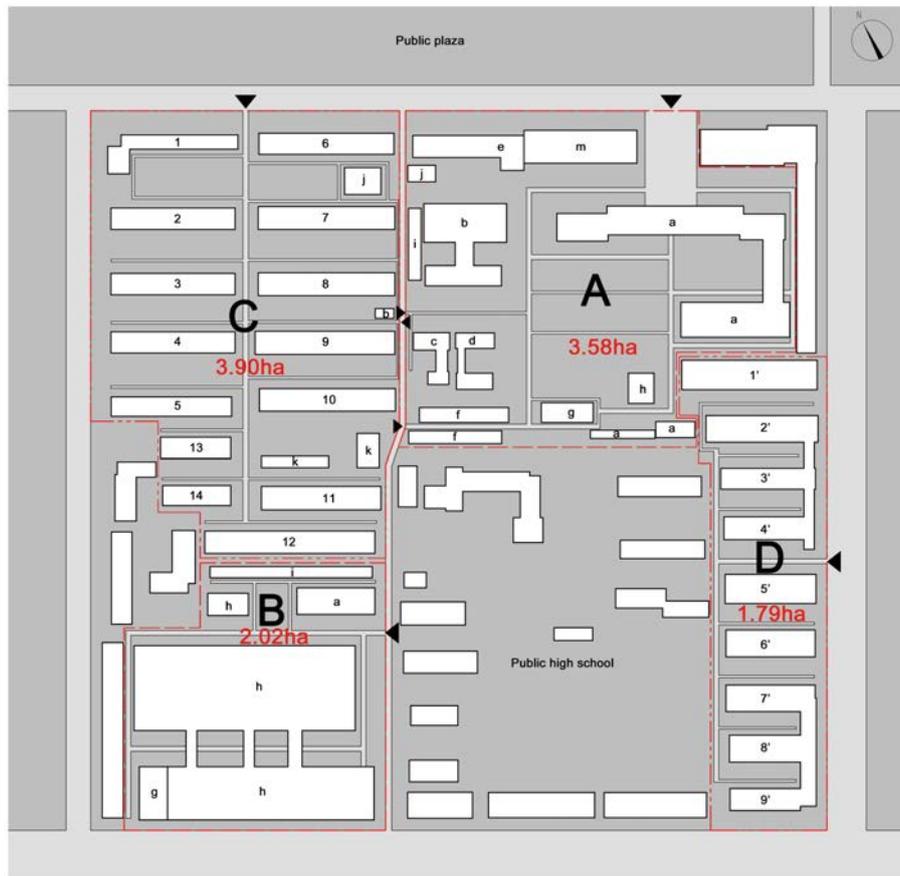
Figure 6



Masterplan of the Wuhan Iron and Steel Corporation

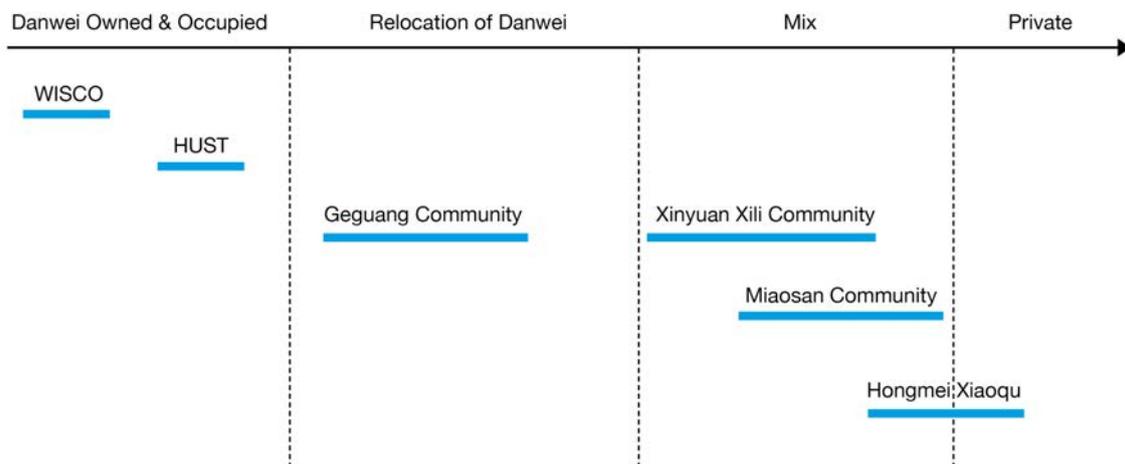
Source: Wuhan Iron and Steel Corporation, 1983

Figure 7



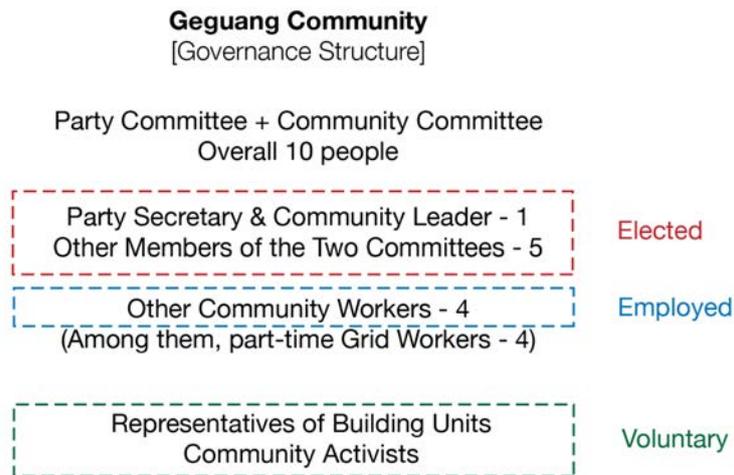
Masterplan of the Luoyang Research and Design Institute for Non-ferrous Metals Processing
 Drawing key: A Work Area 1 (design department); B Work Area 2; C Western Living Area; D Eastern Living Area; a office; b canteen; c clinic; e kindergarten; f bachelor's quarter; g bathhouse/barber shop; h workshop; i storage; j garage (bicycles); k activity center for the elderly; m commercial rental space.
 Source: Drawing by Li Chenyu.

Figure 8



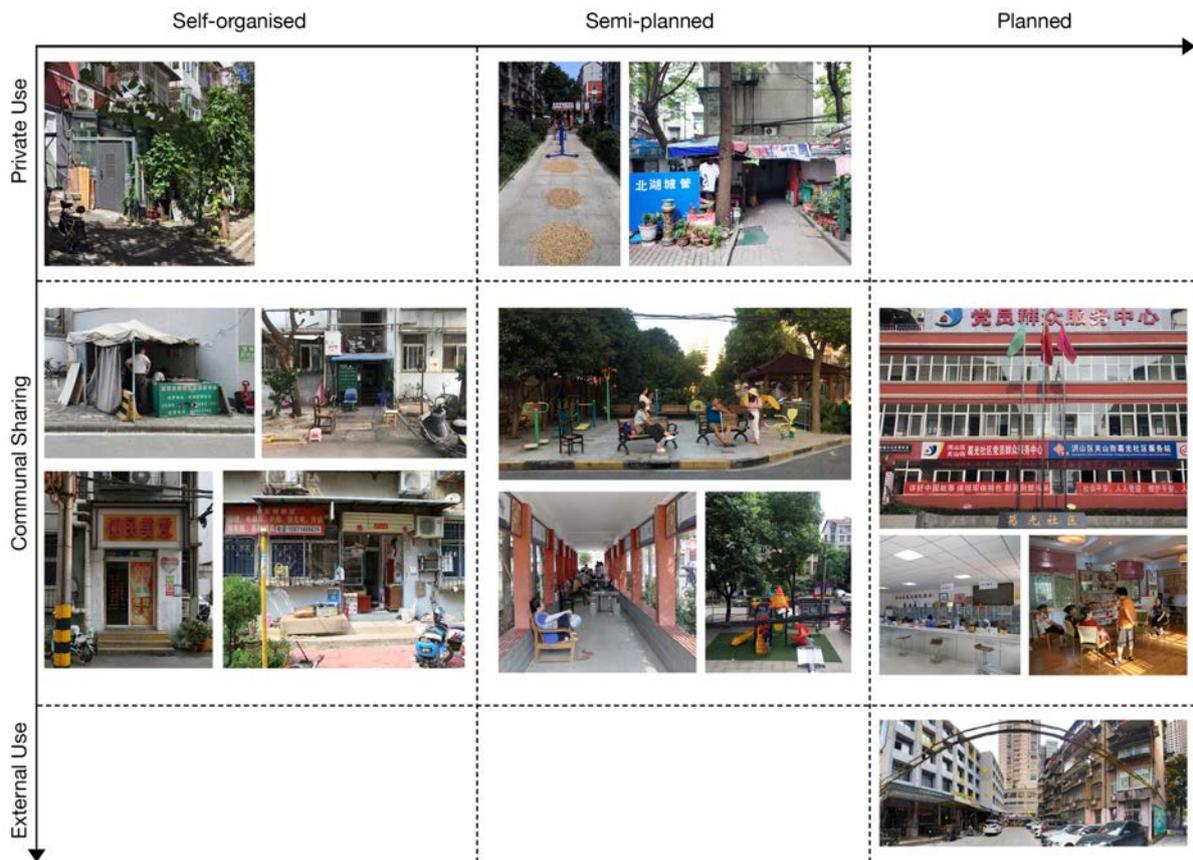
Housing ownership matrix (today) based on analyzed case studies

Figure 9



Governance structure of the Geguang Community in Wuhan

Figure 10



Matrix of collective spaces and their uses (from left to right and top to bottom)

Column 1 / row 1: illegal construction and extensions. Column 1 / row 2: illegal structure for key and shoe repairs, extension to building lobby, illegal health salon, and illegal repair shop. Column 2 / row 1: drying peanuts; extension of home. Column 2 / row 2: playground / different users; pavilion used for leisure activities; children playground. Column 3 / row 2: service center exterior and interior. Column 3 / row 3: commercial center.