Original Paper

Tracing the Grotesque: Finding Value in the Urban Villages of Shenzhen

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Abstract

Commercial housing communities are rapidly developed in the city of Shenzhen since the 1979 economic reform. In contrast, the still remaining village houses are excluded from the urban planning strategy and they are described as the "dirty, unorganized, bad" Urban Villages. The formally constructed Shenzhen metropolis, which was intended to greatly improve life in Shenzhen through modernization, somehow fails to provide full sense of rootedness to the residents, while the residents who live within urban villages are having surprisingly positive connections with these low-end neighborhoods. This article has the ambition to promote inclusion and support the maintenance of the Urban Village type. It also aims to discuss how the design of public space contributes to mental wellbeing of residents; how access to public space allows for social inclusion; and also, do Urban Villages deserve to be mostly preserved and how can these communities co-exist with the whole city.

Keywords

urban planning, urban mental health, urban village, public space design, defensive space, hybridized space, social inclusion, afforestation, spatial diversity, public safety

The city of Shenzhen, which is located around the southern Pearl River Delta District of China, was before the 1980s mostly known for its fishing and agricultural business. Thanks to the "Economic Reform and Open-Up" policy, the whole city has been developed to a metropolis filled with modernist features. During the process, two urban communities were formed. The most noticeable ones are "Commercial Housing Communities" that are built upon the concept of capitalism and with the ambition to promote housing market development. "Urban Villages", which stand on the opposite side if compared with high-

end commercial housing communities, are however, unorthodoxly built by the groups of local residents and "Low-class immigrants" base on their personal needs and interests.

Commercial housing was intended to stand for high quality life style and Urban Villages on the other hand, have been thought to represent miserable living conditions. However, according to the relevant social studies, plus the extremely negative attitudes that villagers expressed towards the urban villages' demolition plan, the overall residential life and mental conditions inside Urban Villages seemed better than expected if we look at individuals' behaviors and connections with the environment. The Shenzhen metropolis is considered the region in China with the most serious mental health issues such as lack of rootedness and solidarity. In this case, commercial housings, which provide the residential spaces for most citizens in the metropolis area, may need to be blamed for causing these issues. Thus, this paper has the ambition to dig deeply into the relationship between public spaces designs and their social impacts by comparing and discussing these factors in Xiasha Village and the 4 chosen commercial housing communities. The research will analyze how the recorded social behaviors are affected by the surrounding spatial designs and typologies. Moreover, the argument will be coupled with the information that are inspired by multiple literature works that focus on the connection among public spaces, social life and mental health. The goal is to discuss how public space design can potentially have impact on an individual's mental wellbeing. The analyses will be separated into different parts and ultimately aims to discover the voice in regards to the attitude that the public should have towards Xiasha Village and other Urban Village communities.

1. The Liminal Identity

Created using a unique design vernacular and thus looking completely different than the products coming out of professional design strategies, Urban Villages can mostly be distinguished from their surroundings because of the previously mentioned chaotic elements. Moreover, these communities have been described as hotbeds of social degradation that may grow as "spatial viruses" that affect their surrounding environments; and thus, it is universally agreed that special treatments, controls and supervisions are needed to avoid contamination of the nearby urban environment. The common criticisms of these villages as "dirty, chaotic, grotesque". Discrimination have resulted in exclusion associated with "othering" because Urban Villages, unlike the more recently design areas in the Shenzhen metropolis that are clearly defined and standardized, look and feel very different. This characteristic is reflected in the term "village", which refers to a "borderer" and assumes a larger scale compared to the description of "commercial housing community", which clearly indicates a group of residential buildings for the purpose of living plus commercial advertisement. As mentioned before, Urban Village communities are formed randomly based on individuals' needs and interests, instead of heavily relying on any historical preservation requirement or authentic urban planning or marketing strategy. Even though they were developed from a group of historic local agricultural villages, they nevertheless have extremely limited connection with

the original form. Thus, it is extremely challenging to define the Urban Villages' position with the overall urban planning perspective. This vague and varied identity makes them resemble a group of non-places, or seem to be just as simple as "village places", which have always tended to exist in a liminal and unclear stage. The term liminal usually refers to the sense of transition, which means the object belongs to neither one nor another category but stands in the space in-between. Such places may not be seen to fit with a standardized future city, because their existence results in senses of awkwardness due to their non-conformity with current ideas.

In fact, it is almost no doubt that Urban Villages, as liminal spaces with so many abnormal spatial characteristics, do not fit with overall urban master plans. Urban Village edges, as the most exterior parts which can represent the overall identity of the place and first capture people's attention, fundamentally illustrate and enhance this effect. Therefore, the first section aims to explore and discuss the most visible parts of Xiasha Village that typify this difference: the village edges. The following paragraphs will illustrate the northeast, southwest and the southeast village edges and analyze their features by breaking down their spatial typologies and relevant functions. These will then be compared with the spatial characteristics found in commercial housing communities and discuss their difference with concerns about social effects.

1.1 The Penetrable Edge

We start from the northeast village edge, located close to the high-end KKone shopping mall. This edge is the most visible one because it is usually used as the entrance to Xiasha Village for both local residents and outsiders. Different from the elegant, coherent, consecutive, massive, solid and impenetrable edge of the shopping mall, the village edge, the one located right behind the public sidewalk space, is simultaneously divided by small-sized shop and service programs at the ground floor of each residential

building. Each building unit is separated by another layer of sidewalk and gap. These small to tiny gaps are mainly used for circulation, and people can walk into the Urban Village blocks from outside. Moreover, because of the unique spatial feature that the gaps seem seamlessly attached to the building, some residents choose to slightly transform the gap space to a self-made laundry space by hanging their clothes on the wood or plastic rods which are stuck in-between the gap. Thus, the gap spaces, that are attached to the public programs and directly connected to the public sidewalk, are used as semi-public spaces and occupied by personal items that are not intended to be shared with the public. This combination of the totally public sidewalk space, private owned public programs spaces and the semi-public spaces create profound spatial hierarchies alongside the village edge. The gap spaces also make the village edge penetrable but also, somehow discontinuous.
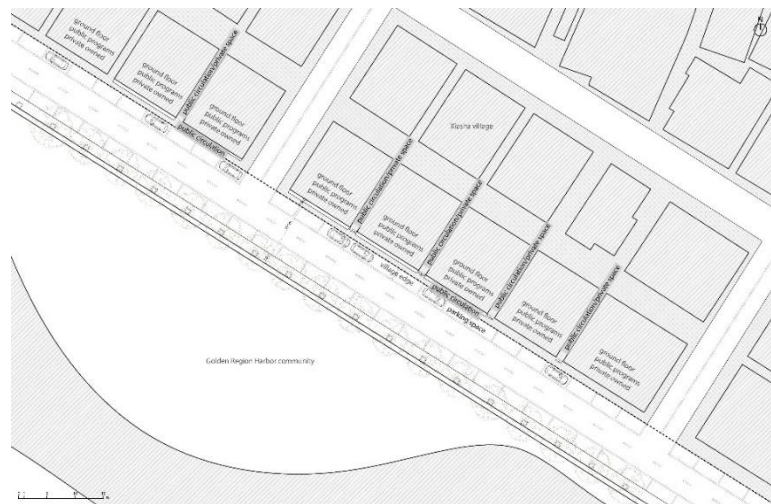
Moving to the southwest part of Xiasha Village, the edge here is relatively less noticeable because it is opposite to a commercial housing community instead of a shopping mall. However, this edge is wider because it is also attached to a 10-meter-wide circulation space shared by residents and vehicles. Like the one mentioned before, this edge is also separated by service programs on the ground floor. The entrances of these programs are seamlessly attached to a 1.5 meter wide, one step height circulation route which is purely used as pedestrian space, and the route is directly attached to parking spaces. Again, like the northeast village edge, the tiny gap between each apartment unit is filled with personal items such as clothes and bikes. Furthermore, despite their private storage function, these gaps are also used as public circulation spaces because they are directly connected to the sidewalk spaces within Xiasha Village. In this case, the overall structure of this village edge can be broken down into different layers which spontaneously support different uses such as walking, parking, laundry, shopping and most importantly, illustrate the inside more personal scene of the Urban Village to the outside public because the edge is visually and physically penetrable.

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1.2 The Engageable Edge

The southeast village edge is located close to the Shangsha primary school. It is also separated by different service programs, and the overall spatial language is quite different from the previous two edges because the gap between each apartment unit is blocked by iron fences. Thus, the edge overall is not as penetrable as the other two. However, the two-step landing spaces, which are attached to the public sidewalk, are installed in front of every program's entrance space, and every landing space is shared by 2 to 3 programs. These landing spaces have created an interesting relationship, plus spatial hierarchy, with both the attached programs and the public sidewalk spaces. If we considered the public programs as semi-public spaces because they are privately owned but partially shared with public, then the attached two step landing spaces can be seen as 75 percent public spaces, because figurally and psychologically, the individuals, who frequently occupy the spaces here, are the ones that just played as consumer roles in the attached programs. In this case, the landing space provides extra spots to support the consumers' stationary activities, and nicely organize the different activities between those who actually spent time inside these programs and those who just passed by. The spatial hierarchies here do not organize the activities by splitting the audience into different groups and sacrificing the sense of inclusion, instead, they perfectly provide the clear connection between the people who stay inside the programs, the one who remains stationary outside and the individuals who are engaged in motion activities on the public sidewalk space.

1.3 New Relationship

With a clear glimpse of the spatial characteristics of the liminal and blurry identities of the Urban Village edges, it is vital to explore their impact on the social perspective. First of all, quoted from Dror Kochan in his work "Placing the Urban Village: A Spatial perspective on the Development Process in Contemporary China", the spatial liminality of the Urban Village space, particularly the Urban Village edge, allows for a certain spatial parity and blurring of differences. It also injects some new and instable

elements into the stable structures which can spontaneously form a new social relationship. Based on the spatial typology, the most remarkable social activities that have a great potential to happen around the Urban Village edge are the random and unplanned interactions, as known as the unstable elements. As mentioned before, the village edges are automatically formed with different types of spaces such as public spaces, semi-public spaces and semi-private spaces. They make the edge look discontinuous and chaotic. Nevertheless, these discontinuous and liminal moments, which serve different functions, play a significant role in supporting the random interactions. The possibilities that an individual randomly interacts with others are significantly increased because these spaces encourage communication among individuals who are all engaged in similar or different stationary activities at the same place during the same time. For example, people are likely to have some connection if they meet with others in such a tiny environment and stay there for a while.

Moreover, these discontinuous elements also promote the connection between individuals who live either inside the Urban Village, or outside and are engaging in motion activities such as walking and passing by. These connections can be either purely visual or orally related. To be more specific, people who are passing by Xiasha Village can take a glimpse of what is happening within this community, and the village residents are able to have good understanding about the scenes happening outside of Xiasha Village. Therefore, these penetrable and discontinuous features allow the formation of new social relationships, and they can be either the communication among individuals who live inside Xiasha Village, or the connection between local residents and visitors.

1.4 The Popular Community

Despite the potential to enhance the connection and create new social relationships, the edges of the Urban Village make themselves as desirable elements to the surrounding environment. Again, as described by Dror Kochan, the Urban Village edge spaces attract populations from the outside environment, and convert the liminal space into a buffer zone with the ambiguous characteristics and fulfill a diverse set of purposes for both local and outsiders. As a living and residential based community, the bonus features, which are the distributions of public service programs along the village edge, truly attract many people from the nearby neighborhoods, and somehow transforms the grotesque community to one which is needed by the surrounding. Because of the geographical location, the northeast edge is considered as one of the most commercial sites within the whole Xiasha Village. Over 90 percent of the ground floor programs are used as restaurants and snack shops and they are fully occupied most of time. According to the public life study which took place in September 02 and September 11, 2021, the southwest edge was filled with individuals who came from the nearby luxury shopping mall. There were about 25 individuals, who seemed like middle-class people working in mid-to high end real estate or marketing offices, came to the village site for dining or shopping. Similarly, for the southwest village edge which is located close to the Shangsha primary school, the ground floor programs here focus on providing academic facilities to the local students. So based on the public life research, the village edge

space here is fully occupied by teenagers and there were over 30 different individuals engaged in stationary activities during the 30 minutes observation. This scene is fundamentally different with that on the opposite side of the street which is attached to the primary school and consists of nothing but solid walls, plain afforestation elements and individuals with high walking speed and straight moving patterns.

1.5 The Solid Edge of the Commercial Housing Community

Compared to the village edges that are liminal and spontaneously used as marketing spaces, circulation spaces and storage spaces, the edges of the commercial housing community are monotonous. The edges here brilliantly illustrate the feature of the inside community spaces which are basically secured utopian spaces that embrace a great level of certainty and reject unstable elements. Although the southeast side community edge of Baihua Unit 01 does line up with multiple service programs and the programs are attached by the step landing space, the landing spaces are overall too continuous and they seem like one giant and pure circulation space, instead of the spaces that selectively connect with the programs and support their services. Moreover, the landing spaces are mostly 4 steps above the ground and partially surrounded by iron fences, so the connection with the nearby sidewalk space is fundamentally lacking.

The community edge in Nantian Garden, the northwest side of Baihua Unit 01 and all sides of Baihua Unit 02 are completely installed with impenetrable iron fences. Behind the fence layer, the attached areas are either built up with inaccessible afforestation spaces or parking spaces which fundamentally discourage any engagement from people. Therefore, the edges around the commercial housing communities are extremely solid and coherent in compared to that within Xiasha Village. They separate the community from the surrounding environment, refuse to provide any support to the outside and reject any connection which is not highly associated with the member of the community living in the residential buildings. Therefore, the spatial characteristics of these neighborhoods, at least from the perspective of public, can be described as solid, lonely and impenetrable.

2. Two-way Hybridization

Constructed using a completely different strategy than the commercial housing communities, Urban Villages surprisingly have noticeable similarities with them. First of all, in both types of community, the development of infrastructure and living environment, and the goal of making profits, are the major motivation besides the residential purpose. Therefore, this economic concept has created interesting development trends for both types of community. Understanding the trend requires understanding the meaning of hybridization and the direction of the movement. As described by Sylke Nissen in her work "Urban Transformation, From Public and Private Space to Spaces of Hybrid Character", hybrid spaces, that is, public spaces that are mostly privatized, are or soon will be the majority in urban regions, especially for districts in which the economic development is the priority. She introduces some methods by which hybridization can take place. The most iconic one is that public spaces become semi-privatized because their right of use is somehow altered. The accessibility of these "public spaces" is only true for

the individual groups who can be considered proper consumers. However, the hybridization within Urban Villages is developed in the opposite direction: private spaces are made public. As we known, most Urban Villages, similar to commercial housing communities, are meant to be designed, constructed and owned by private groups of individuals. The most noticeable difference is that residents in Urban Villages have to do most of the work based on their available resources and according to their personal needs and interests, and it is not really possible for them to acquire any orthodox design and planning strategies or even advice. As a result, the major tasks during village development are building together to make living and working spaces. Additional activities such as decorating and landscaping are minor or even excluded. This approach not only hybridizes lots of enclosed spaces as the combination of personal spaces and public spaces, but also leads to a hybrid influence on these chaotic public spaces. There is great potential then to create surprising effects in regards to social influences.

2.1 Making Private Spaces and Activities Public

I will explain the last statement in relation to the methodology by reversing Nissen's statements on privatization of public spaces, and using different scenes and spatial typologies in Xiasha Village to illustrate. Because of the limited area of the ground floor interiors, tremendous amounts of exterior public sidewalks here are "partially swallowed" up by spaces for shops and services. In this case, the two sides of the vehicle routes are mostly occupied by people. This widens the public walking space, and also makes the gap between walking areas and the ground floor programs seamless. As what are uniquely emphasized by the urban villages limited spatial dimension, most of the ground floor programs spontaneously support both public and totally private activities; therefore, numerous private activities that are not supposed to have public engagement are now taking place in the public areas and are affected by other activities and participants. These interactions can happen between the people who own different programs, or between those who own private properties and those who are doing activities in public spaces. To be more specific, an owner of a kitchen facility shop has set up a personal dining space alongside the public sidewalk. He is then joined by a staff member who works in the nearby fruit shop but is focused on his cell phone at that moment. A few minutes later, when I returned to this spot from other site, they started drinking tea together.

The hybridization is also highly expressed on the "special zig-zag street" which is awkwardly formed between unorganized residential programs and pedestrian space. Because the attached sidewalk spaces are relatively wide if compared to the interior space that supports only a limited area for private activities, the sidewalk spaces are normally used as extended private spaces to support individuals' personal activities. Thus, private spaces in this case are actually highly public because of their overlapping with the public sidewalk spaces. Another example is that an owner of the snack restaurant has a family gathering activity occurring outside in front of the entrance because they have young child who needs fresh air. At the same time, these families have some oral connection with those people who are waiting in the same area to dine inside.

Similarly, the private family attract people from other parts of the site wanting to get involved. According to the personal public space and behaviors documentations, these strangely shaped overlapping spaces are mostly filled with stationary activities involving different groups of people, because for the individuals who own the attached programs, their private gathering activities somehow affect the public. At the same time, their behavior can also be influenced by the public. This phenomenon is illustrated in the unique "handshake street", which refers to the insanely narrowed circulation gap between buildings. Because of the limited available space, the boundary between the public spaces and the private ones must be blurred in order to use the space efficiently. To be more specific, the "private space" attached to the residence entrance are being used as the laundry space, personal item storage space, and even dish washing space for the nearby kitchen. In other words, the "private" dishing-washing spaces or laundry spaces are exactly used for personal item storage and circulation. Moreover, the private space within Xiasha Village can potentially be made public by transferring the right of use to people undertaking a task that benefits both public and private subjects. This hypothesis can be illustrated by the recorded scene in which the restaurant dish washer spontaneously cleans the dishes and also the street in which he is working. Whether he did that intentionally or not, this hybrid space is a site of a magic trick. In addition to all the scenes inside, the penetrable edges, which were discussed in the liminal identity section, are another sign that this mostly privately owned residential community always embraces public engagement.

2.2 Privatized Community Space

It is obvious that the scene within commercial housing community is fundamentally different. Because the Economic Reform and Open policy fundamentally changing the economic status of Shenzhen, it partly unleashes the restricting boundary from the central government that is built upon the concept of communism. Plus, the housing commercialization policy significantly shifts the control of public housing property from the local government to different private enterprises. In this case, public housing, which is commercial housing communities that are meant to be sold to individuals, are more like personal investments. Therefore, privatization is the trend of owning residential value as well as accessing the relevant living spaces and infrastructures.

As mentioned by Sylke, the privatized programs have the chance to significantly reduce the public debt from authorized departments and unleash these departments from pressure. Also, the trend of privatization can increase the control level in order to enhance the sense of security. Moreover, privatization has the opportunity to boost the market of the commercial housing field. The reason mentioned by Sylke perfectly matches the original purposes that initiated the housing commercialization policy in 1980s. Furthermore, Sylke claims that privatization processes can have some side effects, particularly for the privatized commercial housing. The first effect is the reshaping of public space will enhance the sense of exclusion with signs and different personal properties. This is true, most of the public sidewalk spaces in commercial housing communities, which could be potentially used as wide-open playground and support multiple types of activities, are mostly occupied by private vehicles. For

the public scene within Nantian Garden, they are filled with vehicles significantly shrink the public space and fundamentally enhance the sense of inaccessibility and exclusion on the two sides. In this case, vehicles can metaphorically be seen as private "stuff items" which exclude other activities from the space. Furthermore, Nissen's statement about the transferring of rights of use and the accessibility of public spaces to maintaining task on private subjects in order to reach some goals is absolutely correct here. Besides, the goals she mentioned may not have many connections with the concerns about public interactions in this case. This statement is perfectly illustrated by the "green garden situation" in Nantian Garden 01 and the second public space in Baihua Unit 01 community. In these "public garden spaces", most of the area is covered by dense and tall green vegetation and they are designed to be inaccessible. As described in the public life study around the garden space within Nantian Garden, almost every square foot of the garden space is poorly unoccupied no matter during weekdays or weekends. Furthermore, the well-crafted vegetation fences, which strictly stand on the two sides of the path, annoyingly narrow down the walking space and eliminate the opportunities that public interaction can ever take place here. Similarly, the afforestation, which is becoming one of the most iconic characteristics within commercial housing communities, is also built in an extremely dense pattern within Baihua Unit 01; it will not tolerate any human interaction, and awkwardly swallows and narrows down the sidewalk spaces. Moreover, there are signs which clearly, and maybe ironically, state that the "public garden spaces" are under protection and are completely not allowed for private activities. On the other side of this community, the afforestation design is absolutely poor if compared to other spaces, but sarcastically, this less elegant space is the one that supports the highest amount of activities that are engaged by people. In order to match with the concept of housing commercialization strategic picture, the afforestation here is the key element to complete the task which is to sugar coat the housing communities and enhance their market price. The task is reached by sacrificing the majority of the exterior of public spaces which could have otherwise been used to enhance social life.

2.3 The Consumer only Space

Moreover, as described by Nissen and this may be the most extreme and iconic example, the public space can be fully privatized for some purposes. Thus, the accessibility of these public spaces is reduced to consumer only and it is either controlled by security devices or highly blocked by spatial characteristics. This statement can be seen in the case of Chang'an Garden. The design strategy of this commercial housing community is the new and popular trend in the commercial housing development around Shenzhen metropolis region because it boosts the communities' attractiveness on market. As illustrated, each apartment tower is intersected with a giant podium which is 2-3 stories tall. The ground floor of the podium is filled with public service programs, such as McDonald's, pharmacies and food markets, and they increase the attractiveness of this community by providing necessary services nearby. Nevertheless, the public garden space is located 10m above the ground and completely loses the connection with the ground floor public sidewalk space. The design indicates that the public garden space within these communities can be accessed by no one but the groups who is considered as the authentic residents. And there is no chance for the individuals, if there is any, who are engaged in public activities here to have any form of connection with the outside public. Thus, any activities or interactions that are happening here can be extremely bland and lifeless. As a result, from the documentation of the spatial occupation rate, this community, the garden space remains mostly empty all the time in either weekday or weekend. Besides the empty scene, the lack of cleanliness alongside the garden sidewalk illustrates the lack of human interaction. The most ironic part of the lifted garden design is that this concept is popular for their ability to mark the community as "the one with the garden in the sky" and it will be competitive in terms of getting high market price.

Privatization of housing may stimulate the real estate market and create some sense of security. In fact, the process did a great job in these two fields. Nevertheless, it also creates a new trend that public infrastructures, public spaces, or even most parts of the cities, do not belong to all citizens any more, but to the groups who have the ability to convincingly assume the role of the consumer. Commercial housing

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communities are always meant to be designed with orthodox strategies in order to fit well with the overall metropolis design intentions, but in fact, they swallow most things which should be shared by the public, and they provide nothing to the neighborhood.

3. Public Safety and Health

Hybridized in the method that a large number of private spaces used by the residents are overlapped with the exterior public spaces, it is the Urban Village community that encourages different forms of social interactions. Because of the fact that these interactions exist informally and randomly, Urban Villages are imagined to have serious safety and hygiene issues because of these disorganized and chaotic planning methods. Modern planning policies in Shenzhen equate lack of organization with lack of safety. Plus, this discrimination is also based on the fact that most residents who live within these communities relatively lack education, so it is assumed that they must lack the skill and knowledge to make proper safety control and keep spaces clean. In fact, the judgement is quite the opposite. Again, take the safety and health situation within Xiasha Village as an example, according to the "41st Public Security and Safety Index Report of All Streets in the City" in 2020, the safety index around Shatou Avenue, one of the main transportation arteries in which Xiasha Village stands alongside, has gained a 93 out of 100 score. The score is considered to be decent if compared to the 94 out of 100 points for Yuanling Avenue, in which stands the Baihua District with dozens of luxury commercial housing communities. This index cannot entirely speak for Xiasha Village because it includes the security situation not only in this village but also in other communities around the district. But it will be unfair to describe Xiasha Village as the "Spatial Viruses" which consists of severe safety and health problems. And because of the penetrable features, this community will strongly affect the overall safety index if it does have these issues. Based on the fact that Urban Villages are overly excluded from the city development masterplan; this can be partially proved by the situation that the digital and physical surveillance system within Xiasha Village is absolutely not as advanced as that in Baihua District. In this case, the spatial typologies must play significant roles in maintaining the overall safety and health situation to decent levels. Thus, in this section, I aim to explain how the spatial features, which spontaneously serve the public and private purposes, help to promote a safe and healthy living and working community. The explanation will be coupled with Oscar Newman's theory about defensible space that he mentioned in his work "Defensible Space Prevention through Urban Design".

3.1 Sense of Territoriality

According to Newman, one of the most outstanding characteristics of a defensible space is the sense of territoriality. This sense can be approached by giving the control of the space back to residents and enhancing their emotional connection with the place. Thus, they have great motivation to try to preserve the area and hold the values and lifestyle of the space they own and occupy. Within the Urban Village, it will be significant to build the sense of territoriality between residents and the public spaces in order to

ensure the overall spatial quality. Again, speaking of occupying and somehow owing the public space, this concept can be perfectly illustrated in the area of the "zig-zag street". These streets, which are mostly used as spaces for public circulation, are considered as semi-public spaces because they are partially occupied by private activities. Therefore, these semi-public spaces could be considered as the properties which are controlled by the individuals who use parts of spaces as stages to support their personal purposes. As a result, these people may choose to maintain and enhance the overall quality of the spaces to relatively high qualities in order to benefit their own subjects.

One of the zig-zag sidewalk spaces, which is located in front of a fried chicken house, is strangely shaped as a triangular form. In this case, the owners of the fried chicken house choose to occupy the right and first half of the space as their personal garden space by decorating it with their personal afforestation items. Even though these items are placed in dense patterns, the back part is still unoccupied and open for public circulation. Moreover, in order to maintain the greenness and liveness of these vegetation, the solid ground surfaces of the surrounding areas are mostly kept clean without extra mud and dirt which can potentially harm this green vegetation.


Besides, based on Newman's statement, some spaces, which are considered as completely public but are directly attached to the private or semiprivate spaces, may also be considered as extensions of these private spaces. Based on what I experienced and documented with a random corner around the middle part of Xiasha Village, it would be obvious that no one can claim this space to be the one which is filled with unsafe and dirty elements. In the foreground of the image, the residents here constructed the half to one step height landing spaces, which are seamlessly attached to the entrance on the left and the public street on the right, as their personal space to place their own afforestation elements. In the middle ground

to background of this image, the residents occupied the left side of the public street as their private tiny garden space. In this case, all of the public street spaces in this image are maintained to a high-level cleanliness because they are somehow considered as the extension of residents' private spaces and needed to be taken care of.

3.2 Group Effort

Despite the fact that the seamless connection between public, or semipublic space, and individuals can enhance the spatial quality, the concept of sharing space among different groups of people can also create the similar affect. Take the tiny handshake streets as examples to explain this statement. The "handshake streets" within Xiasha Village usually connect to the entrances of different programs such as residential apartments, restaurants and grocery stores. In this case, these narrow spaces are frequently considered as the "shared courtyard spaces" for different groups of people. As I witness around one handshake street here, the one whose width is measured less than 2 meters, the space is spontaneously shared by different group of residents for different purposes such as dining, food preparation, storage, card games and clothes drying. Thus, these activities keep the solid surface of this handshake street in a clean shape without too many unhygienic elements. Moreover, the feature of sharing forms the "natural surveillance system" among residents. To be more specific, the most obvious feature is the public space locates so close to each private group so everyone can see what is happening here. Again, based on Newman, the visual connections between individuals and public spaces are significant. Furthermore, each group of residents have to ensure that their activities are taken place in organized and legal forms to avoid bothering others. Therefore, even though the narrow handshake streets are located in a relatively unnoticeable corner, they are still maintained as tidy forms based on the scene that most facilities and tools are arranged in organized patterns. The behavior of group supervision is vital to maintain the spatial quality.

3.3 Sense of Familiarity
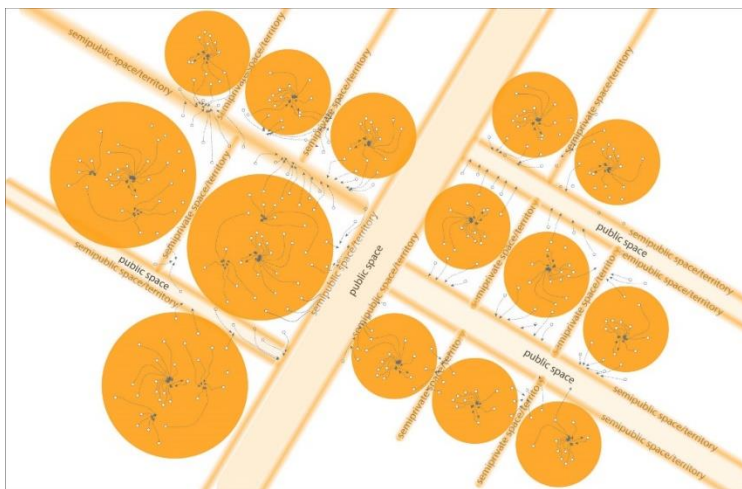
Another element that can promote the sense of territoriality and further enhance the spatial quality of a space, is the sense of familiarity, not only between individuals and spaces, but also between residents and other people. The different types of spaces in Xiasha Village gradually increase the social interaction scales, from individuals with their families, to individuals with strangers. As shown in the diagram, the spaces within each residential apartment are like the comfort zone for social activities, in which the interactions are mostly happening among individuals with their families. These types of social life are considered as the most private ones with the smallest scale. The narrow and tiny handshake streets, which are seamlessly connected to the apartment entrances, are the spaces that support a small scale of random interactions among groups of people who are engaging in similar or different types of activities around the tiny spaces. These types of interactions can fundamentally launch and build the sense of familiarity that individuals can possibly have to their surrounding neighborhood. Moving outside, the social interactions, which happen in the wide streets shared by residents and vehicles, are considered as completely random interactions with the largest scale. Even though this type of large-scale interaction happened less frequently than the one in the handshake street, it does a great job in enhancing the sense of familiarity that an individual can have to the overall environment within Xiasha Village.

3.4 Tracing the Personal Items

The sense of familiarity among individuals can create a sense of trust. Public trust, which directly comes from the feeling of familiarity between individuals and space, and among different people, is one of the most significant elements in regards to building a safe living environment with a sense of inclusion. As mentioned earlier, the unique spaces here build up the sense of familiarity, in this case, the public trust may already be built around the neighborhood. The strongest evidence of the public trust is the many private items which are placed in the public spaces. During my site visits, I've witnessed a series of street spaces that are used as the clothes drying spaces with dozens of clothes hanging alongside the public apartment wall in completely unprotected forms. This mostly happens for the residents who live in the ground floor, however, the windows on the ground level are mostly attached with a steel frame, and the clothes could be hung on the steel frames and placed inside. Even though this method will decrease the sun exposure and air flow and this will take more time for clothes to get dried, it significantly prevents any risk of theft. Overall, residents still chose to use the public space as their clothes hanging spot and left their personal items completely unprotected. This can only be reached through the strong sense that most residents here believe that the surrounding neighborhood is safe. Similarly, multiple residents park their motorcycles by simply leaning them against the wall without any security lock. This abnormal phenomenon highlights the sense of public trust around the neighborhood.

3.5 The Loss of Control

The senses of territoriality and familiarity are extremely helpful in maintaining spatial quality, and this is perfectly illustrated on the handshake streets in that each of them is shared by only few groups of residents. As mentioned by Newman, the larger the number of people that share a public space, the less

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the number of people that will actually care about the space because individuals will have no idea about who actually has ownership of the space. This is sadly true. In Nantian Garden 01, the spatial arrangement of the program's distribution is relatively organized, so the shared public spaces are all located on the ground level. In this case, the giant and continuous ground floor public space is simultaneously shared by over thousands of people. As a result, this public space remains unoccupied all the time. The overall spatial quality here is extremely poor with dirty mud stuck on the wall because no one has any motivation to take any care of it.

3.6 The Depletion of Control

The sense of territoriality is obviously formed based on the feeling of control, which can be further understood as believing that the spaces are mostly under control of specific individuals' groups. However, the overall spatial quality will be highly depleted if people always believe that the spaces are owned by the authority and they are having extremely limited control of it. This phenomenon is so common within the commercial housing communities. Shenzhen metropolis is considered as the technology hub in China and the digital surveillance systems are extremely pervasive and advanced. In Nantian Garden 01, every few square feet of public space are under watched by a digital camera. Even though the surveillance systems play an important role in maintaining public safety, they significantly reduce the sense of territoriality that individuals can have to a public space. The surveillance systems highly discourage the sense of control because residents will always believe that the public spaces never belong to them. The reducing sense of control depletes the motivation for residents to spend any time in taking care of the quality of the public spaces. Although the living environment in Nantian Garden is appeared to have a very high standard, there are countless traces of mud and unhygienic elements stuck in the small corners of these well-crafted spaces and gardens. These detail scenes indicate no one is truly connected with these spaces.

4. The Influence of Stationary Activities

The spatial characteristics of Xiasha Village mentioned in the previous chapters highly encourage individuals to remain in stationary positions, such as standing, sitting, leaning or moving in small distances, for a while. These outside stationary activities can take place in different scales here. To be more specific, the narrow stage spaces that are attached to the entrance of these public programs allow residents to have a seat outside. Also, the handshake streets provide narrow spaces for residents' informal activities. Thus, these two types of public spaces encourage stationary activities and interactions to occur among individuals who both happen to be there, regardless of whether they have similar purposes. Moreover, the public sidewalk spaces that connect with public programs, plus the unique zig-zag spaces, are doing the same job. For example, the group of people who are having dinner inside the village neighborhood, have the chance to interact with others who are taking family walks. Similarly, in some community scene, customers are standing outside the grocery shop to taste the watermelon and having

long conversations with the shop owner. Furthermore, the "unexpected void", which informally stands in between multiple residential apartments, provides a great space for large groups of social gatherings. Overall, based on my personal public life study, the stationary activities, no matter how many individuals are engaged, are happening around multiple corners within Xiasha Village because of the unique spatial features. Therefore, Xiasha Village is a place in which residents frequently spend some time in the standing or sitting still positions.

In contrast, the spatial features within commercial housing communities, which are largely decorated with inaccessible afforestation items plus parking facilities, fundamentally discourage most types of stationary activities. According to the public life record within these three documented communities, most activities that happen here are nonstationary, except the few in the plazas in Nantian Garden 01 and Baihua Unit 02. The main reason behind this is that most spaces are either covered by non-accessible facilities or occupied by vehicles, which discourages stationary activities both physically and mentally. Moreover, the public sidewalk spaces that are built around these communities also refuse most types of pausing behaviors. The overall public sidewalk design in Shenzhen metropolis strictly follows the zoning codes that prioritize the sense of modernism, the feeling of aesthetic, and the convenience of public transportation. In this case, the sidewalk spaces have extremely limited connections with multiple types of human interactions rather than pure circulation. Based on the documentation of the four public sidewalks that are located close to the three commercial housing communities, I saw almost no stationary activities happen except unlocking bikes or standing there and talking on phones. Besides, individuals usually travel in these spaces with relatively rapid circulation speed which can be as fast as 5 seconds for 10-meters walking. Thus, the communities' spaces that almost demand non-stationary activities, plus the attached sidewalk spaces that allow no pausing behaviors, fill the whole Baihua District with moving activities with relatively rapid rhythm.

In this section, I will discuss the social effects that are created by the stationary activities. I will further explore how stationary activities promote the sense of familiarity with the whole neighborhood and the sense of social trust among others in the community, both of which are helpful in promoting social inclusion.

4.1 The Expansion of the Sense of Familiarity

Based on the theory mentioned by Jan Gehl in his work "Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space", optional interactions are usually referred to as the simple greeting, oral or some casual physical communications among strangers. They can potentially be created during stationary activities. The reason is that people will have more chance to meet and interact with others if they remain stationary around the public spaces for a while. Also, the longer time they spend with others in the same space, the more likely they are about to have interactions. The interactions here are mostly optional types such as greeting and talking for few minutes. These types of interactions can create some surprising effects on creating the sense of familiarity by expanding the radius of individuals' social networks. I will use Mark S.

Grannovetter's theory about social ties as a reference to further explain this hypothesis. The most vital feature about the types of random interactions, which are formed during the stationary activities, is that the connections in this case are mostly not very intense. The feature states that such social ties in this case are weak and short. Based on the fact that weak ties take a relatively short amount of time to be built up, people can potentially form multiple weak ties with others during different stationary activities. Grannovetter states that the flow of familiarity, information or "whatever it is", depends on two factors. The flow is proportional to the number of social connections path, and it is also inversely proportional to the length of such paths. In this case, the weak ties, which are mostly formed during the simple greeting processes, are the key to expand an individual's social network within the neighborhood because they can be quick to build, and easy to be multiplied in numbers. The sense of familiarity, and the feeling of social trust, are fundamentally formed and enhanced in the case that people have more direct or indirect ties with others.

4.2 The Isolated Groups

According to Jan Gehl, the overall social activities are the combination of two features. The first one is necessary activities, which are individuals' majority tasks such as walking to work or school, or waiting for drives. These types of activities are the majority, the connections among the people who are engaged here are mostly very strong and they hardly affected by the environment. The second type is, as mentioned before, the optional activities which create weak social ties and such ties are more likely to be created during random stationary activities. Thus, the social network structure is more like a upside down pyramid; the top refers to the strong connection that individuals can have with their families or close friends, and then the network gradually transfers to the bottom which implies the absent social ties. However, if the middle part of the structure, which means the weak ties, break or disappear, then the social relationships within this community will be either extremely clustered or individually isolated. As a person who has lived in Nantian Garden for 20 years and have connection with nobody besides my families and 3 other friends, this hypothesis about broken social network is sadly true. As mentioned above, because of the intense occupation of the facilities, most public spaces within this community are designed as circulation-only forms. Particularly for some of the most popular sidewalk paths, the overall designs of the surrounding environment are so well-crafted, that they ironically discourage even two people to present in a horizontal line. Moreover, as described, the public sidewalk streets around the community are designed with orthodox strategies. To be more specific, the sidewalk spaces are seamlessly attached to the tactile paving spaces, and on the right side stands the bicycle parking spaces and afforestation spaces. Thus, these elements are arranged in the perfectly-arranged patterns such that there is no room to support activities other than walking and bike parking. Therefore, most of the land around this region supports no stationary activities. What I observed within this community is that the social activities that happen here are mostly walking. And it seems like these happen either among families and close friends, or completely for individuals. As a result, the overall social network within

this commercial housing community is the combination of different small clustered groups and individuals, and this type of network creates nothing but the sense of isolation and exclusion.

4.3 The Great Things about Resting Outside

Besides the fact that stationary activities can create more weak ties and such ties have great opportunities to expand individuals' social network and enhance the sense of familiarity, these activities can simply do another vital favor, which is to allow people to rest for a while and have appreciations to the surrounding environment. According to the documented statistic and interviews, residents who live within Urban Villages do have appreciations with the living environments no matter the quality. This phenomenon can be reflected by the fact that residents here mostly have strong senses about what is happening around them when they are "resting" in the public spaces. To be more specific, these resting activities include sitting or dining on the public spaces close to their residential districts, hanging clothes at the handshake streets, or washing vegetables alongside the public sidewalk streets. They have the opportunity to observe the different activities and features around the community when they are "resting" outside. Thus, residents tend to root themselves within this community because they actually spend time to know what the community looks like and what is happening here.

In contrast, as mentioned, lots of people view their living spaces within commercial housing communities as their valuable properties, and they live and decorate the house for some time and then sell them to other buyers in order to gain profits. The whole process is more like pure business activities, and this may refer to the fact that people's mental connections with the well-decorated communities are fundamentally lacking. As stated, the public spaces here are mostly designed to be circulation based and it highly discourages most types of stationary activities that allow individuals to pause for a while around the outside spaces. Moreover, individuals here usually live with relatively high rhythm life with fast moving speed. Thus, the overall lifestyle within commercial housing communities can be simply described as point-to-point circulations in rapid and non-stop patterns. In this case, these types of living styles will cause the sense of indifference, and then deplete extra mental connections with the living environment. As mentioned by Georg Simmel in his work "Metropolis and Mental life", the protective organ within people's brains will be formed against rapid environmental modifications, and in this case, the rapid upheavals are fast shift between different scenes of space when people are moving around the district in a non-stop pattern. Therefore, people tend to be less sensitive about what is happening around them and there is no room to form any sensitive emotions. So, lack of resting behaviors outside will decrease people's connection with the environment, and this can prevent them from rooting themselves in the spaces that they are residing in.

4.4 The Stages for Stationary Activities

The stationary activities have positive effects on connecting individuals with their residential community because they can expand people's social connections, and also slow down residents' living rhythm so they may have more room to build the mental connection with the neighborhood. According to the previous discussion, most types of stationary activities that are happening outside are optional which can be heavily affected by the surrounding physical environments. Thus, it will be vital to understand the spatial features of these environments that can successfully support individuals' stationary activities as well as their social influences. Based on the life study diagrams in Xiasha Village, even though multiple stationary activities are happening frequently here, they are mostly taking place on the narrower sidewalk spaces which are measured between 2.5 to 6 meters wide and mostly used by humans only. In contrast, the main roads, which are usually wider than 6 meters but over 70 percent of the spaces are shared by vehicles, hardly support many stationary activities that involve large numbers of people. The reason is that the spaces which can mostly support human interactions and exclude vehicles are relatively narrow on these sites. Although some stationary activities do happen alongside the main road, they mostly happen on the zig-zag streets where the "pop-up" spaces can be as wide as 2.7 to 3 meters, and they are rarely used for any circulation by vehicles and bikes. Therefore, the most obvious characteristic for the spaces that encourage stationary activities is wide and empty, and can mostly occupied by pure human activities without vehicles. Similarly, based on my observation and documentation in Nantian Garden 01, over 95 percent of stationary activities take place on the wide-open plaza at the right side. These well-afforested circulation spaces at the left side, however, hardly support any activities other than the necessary walking behaviors because of the tiny accessible spaces which are less than 1.5 meters wide. It is obvious that Baihua Unit 02 can be considered as the one that supports the greatest number of stationary activities among these three documented communities because of the central wide garden

space. The Baihua Unit 01 community, on the other hand, causes the opposite effect because most public spaces within here are narrowed down by the inaccessible facilities.

Although the spaces with wide-open features are suitable for stationary activities, the dimension of these spaces is controversial. The stationary activities that happened on the 3 to 6 meters public street within Xiasha Village have the sense of inclusion for everybody regardless if they are purchasing the fresh vegetables on the left side or the meat or medicine on the right side. The reason behind this is that most individuals can easily find out about the situations that are happening on the other side of the spaces. However, the stationary activities that happening within Nantian Garden 01 and Baihua Unit 02 are relatively separated to different small clusters. To be more specific, the public space here is 47 meters long, and the groups who are engaging in playground activities at the left side have almost no connection with the groups who are chatting on the other side. Gehl's statements about the public spaces' dimensions have reasonable explanation for this phenomenon. He states that the spaces which are distanced up to 7 meters, work functionally in connecting people. However, if a space is wider than 35 meters, it will be hard for people to understand the contents of the activities that are happening on the other side of the space. Similarly, the stationary activities that are taking place on the plaza in Nantian Garden 01 are divided into different clusters. The connections between these groups are rare even though the space is 12 meters by 17 meters. Therefore, public spaces have to be empty enough and sized properly, and the width needs to be somewhere between 2.5 meters to 7 meters in this case, to fully support the stationary activities and enhance their relevant social influences.

5. The Fact About Diversity

The overall structures of the public spaces within Urban Villages are similar to those inside commercial housing communities. The public spaces contain circulation spaces and ground floor public program spaces. However, the overall spatial qualities, which can usually be indicated by the quantity of stationary activities plus social interactions that the spaces support, are different. Despite the direction of hybridization as discussed before, the diversity of the public programs, plus the diversity of the spatial features, is another key factor to fundamentally differentiate the quality of the public spaces inside these two types of communities. Based on my spatial studies and documentations, the public programs within Xiasha Village serve dozens of functions such as dining, shopping, entertaining and cleaning, etc. In contrast, the public programs inside commercial housing communities mainly support only three types of functions, which are walking, parking and decorative and it creates a sense of monotonousness for the public spaces here. Similarly, the public spaces within Urban Villages are created with many "twists and turns" in forms, and they are different from those inside and around commercial housing communities, which are mostly straight and plain. Thus, this section aims to explore how the diversity of the public spaces is significant in terms of enhancing the quality of social life by promoting social interaction, organizing spatial orientation and encouraging a sense of rootedness.

5.1 Points of Attraction

The stationary activities that take place in and around public spaces are important in building a healthy social life among residents, and the points of attraction are exactly the catalyst which suggests the quantity and quality of the social activities. As described by Jane Jacobs in her work "The Death and Life of Great American Cities", high-quality public activities with great diversity can simply be defined as different individuals appear at the same time in the same place and are engaged in different activities. These theoretical street scenes can only be achieved when there are lots of different points of attraction, which belong to different categories in terms of social activities, located in the same space. However, these aforementioned scenes, which can firstly be found around the northeast edge of Xiasha Village, are highly mixed-functioned. In the edge scene here, different groups of individuals appear at the same time for different purposes such as shopping for food, visiting spa or dining. Even the simple dining activities here contain a great amount of diversity. The foods that are served in restaurants here are fundamentally different from each other because they contain different cultural backgrounds from various regions around mainland China. Moreover, as described before, a great number of stationary activities happen alongside the streets or around various corners here at the same time. They happen because of the different programs that are used as points of attraction. These attractor points are located close to each other and give a variety of reasons to a diverse range of individuals as to why they should all stay at the same place for a while.

Stationary activities are formed when there are diverse attraction points around the public spaces. The diversity can also make the public spaces lively and interesting, which in turn encourages more engagements between individuals and public spaces. As illustrated in multiple public street spaces inside Urban Villages, most types of activities, as long as they are completely legal, are supported, no matter if these activities belong to either working or entertainment categories. This highly broadens the usage of the public spaces and encourages everyone to find their place here.

In contrast, the feature of the public spaces within commercial housing communities can be considered as bland and boring. The public spaces hardly support any stationary activities, not only because of the limitation of sidewalk width, but also because there are barely any points of attraction that convince people to stay there. To be more specific, the public spaces inside Nantian Garden 01 are largely occupied by parking spaces and inaccessible afforestation spaces. Additionally, the ground floor lobby-like spaces, which are also connected with the main public circulation spaces, are extremely boring and empty and they serve mostly no purpose. In this case, individuals will find nothing but an over 150-meter-long empty space, plus the extremely dull parking spaces that sit on the two sides of the sidewalk space, when roaming inside this residential community.
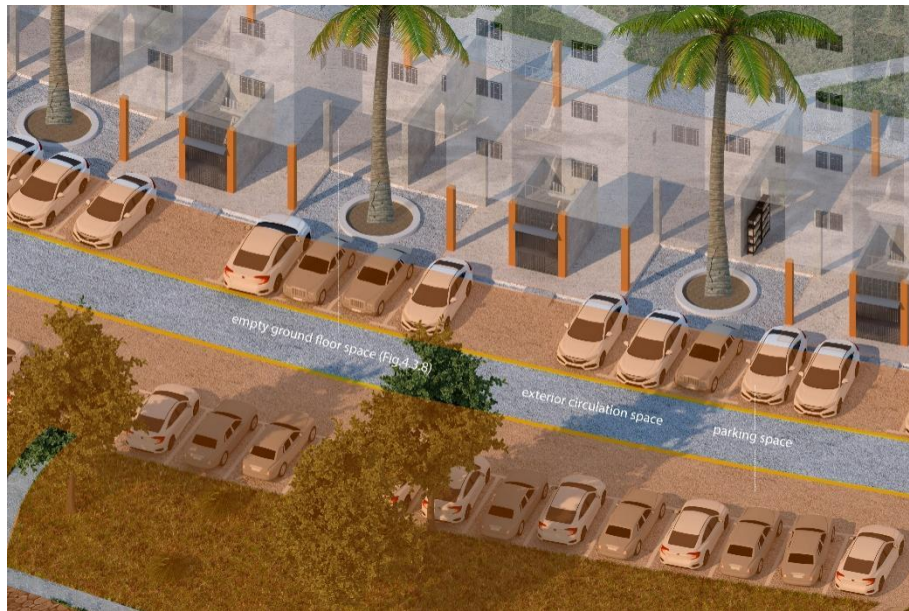
In addition to providing no reason for people to stay, this monotonous characteristic can also create a sense of exclusion that restricts the occupation of these public spaces only to the group of "proper consumers". As observed, the public spaces in the northeast side of Nantian Garden 01 support only two types of sports activities which are fitness and basketball. Although these two types of activities are encouraged here, the spaces are still considered to be extremely monotonous because they support nothing else. To be more specific, the spaces here are mostly "well designed" in organized patterns with narrow sidewalk paths that connect different fitness equipment and the basketball court. Moreover, the rest of the spaces are fully occupied by well-crafted afforestation elements which are again completely inaccessible. In this case, based on the overall design and public life documentation, only the individuals who have an interest in fitness or basketball related activities will utilize the space. Thus, these public spaces here are more like a double-functioned space which do not promote any other type of stationary activities, not even other sports activities such as badminton or Taiichi, which are usually popular in this region. The spaces here create a large sense of exclusion because people who do not plan to engage in these two activities will experience some inconvenience when doing other activities because of the space design.

5.2 The Unorganized Order and The Organized Chaos

Another feature of diversity is that they have great potential to produce some elements that stand out, and these elements, with the perspective of architectural and public space design, are significant to mark and highlight the position of surrounding environment. Again, stated by Jane Jacobs, the diversities of uses are usually handled poorly in their form, and this is honestly true about the diverse forms in Urban Village. These seemingly unorganized diversities can however, offer the decent possibility of displaying genuine differences of content. Thus, the differences can become inspiring and they have chance to

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stimulate spatial differences to individuals' vision. And in this case, this stimulation can be helpful to identify the direction around a district. The spatial organization within Xiasha Village can be so disorganized that it will be challenging to identify the exact location on digital map. However, my site research experiences went relatively smoothly without frequently getting lost because I randomly was able to identify one or two programs or parts of the streets, and consider them as the landmark of that district. To be more specific, I can easily find out where is the mid part of the community by visually locating the position of the continuous zig-zag street. Similarly, the handshake street, which contains the restaurant kitchen and the apartment entry and basically used as a tiny shared courtyard, helped me to identify the southwest direction of the community. Also, by locating the tiny grocery shop, which is advertised with the red board and stuck in the corner of a handshake street with brown-painted concrete wall surround, I can figure out the location of the existence point of Xiasha Village. I use my personal preference to define these "stand-out" programs, and different people will have different preferences. Even though the site plan is relatively difficult to navigate when represented digitally on electronic device, thanks to the great diversity, lots of spaces inside Xiasha Village are easy to recognize. There are always elements that look different from others and enhance the identification of the surrounding region.

On the contrary, the orientation inside the organized commercial housing communities can be relatively confusing because the lack of diversity that makes lots of objects look similar. Again, quoted from Jacobs, homogeneity and close similarity have the great possibility in creating internal disorder because these features fundamentally blur the sense of direction within a neighborhood. The overwhelming scene of similarity destroys the natural indication of direction and in this case, it creates great confusion and this is definitely another type of chaos. This statement is so true based on the countless times that I failed to provide the precise information to the delivery person about where is apartment 01 and which is apartment 02. Even though each single time I described that apartment 01 is the one which stands in the middle of the parking lots and garden spaces, it made no help because apartment 02 does exactly the same thing. Moreover, there are barely any other elements existing here besides building, parking spaces and garden spaces. The absolutely identical parking spaces, plus the two garden spaces with extremely different and complex walking patterns but still look identical with human's ground level perspective, highly blur the orientation inside this community. The overall circulations inside this community can be chaotic because the diversity here is extremely poor and each region looks alike to each other.

5.3 Diversity and Rootedness

Individuals' sense of rootedness with the neighborhood are usually formed when they can actually spend some time to have connection with the surrounding environment. This connection can be explained as having visual or physical contacts with the spaces. People will have even greater opportunity to explore around and build the sense of rootedness with the neighborhood if these contacts take place in slower and more detailed rhythms and manners. As stated by Jane Jacobs, the exploration that helps people to connect with the neighborhood, should always be taken on foot instead of by vehicles and automobiles

because travelling on foot can slow down the circulation. And great density can promote the slower and more intense contacts. This statement is perfectly represented inside Xiasha Village. In some specific street scene, the diversity of the public programs that stand alongside the public sidewalk space is huge. To be more specific, on the right side of the scene, the barber shop, which is decorated with a black advertisement board and yellow neon light, is attached to a deli shop that serves lots of Guangdong style snacks. Also, on the right side of the barber shop stands a Japanese restaurant. Moving forward, the small warehouse, which provides laundry and bathroom facilities to customers, is located between a pastry shop that is decorated in red color theme, and a fresh meat market in which dozens of fresh proteins are provided by the butcher. In this case, more than 6 different public programs, which serve 6 different types of social activities, stand alongside the same public street and they are seamlessly connected with each other. Thus, the circulation inside this community is spontaneously encouraged to be taken in the relatively slower on foot method so that residents can fully explore all the services that are provided in the public spaces. The longer time that people spend on exploring the neighborhood, the greater opportunity for them to build connection.

Despite the fact that the great diversity provides reasons to encourage individuals to travel on foot and explore more, it also makes these roaming processes more enjoyable. The feature of enjoying is significant to further promote individuals to explore around the community and enhance their sense of rootedness. As mentioned before, the diversity within Xiasha Village can be represented in both functional and spatial perspective. The statement of the latter perspective can be shown by the different types of public spaces such as the wide and narrow sidewalk streets, handshake streets, zig-zag streets and the unorganized courtyard streets. These different types of public spaces are mostly seamlessly attached to the major circulation routes which are relatively long and shared by vehicles. The integrations among the traffic route and these strangely shaped spaces create unique public space patterns that add extra content to the overall circulation system. To be more specific, these strangely shaped handshake streets and zig-zag streets are seemed as the small "popped up" square spaces that are attached to the main streams and serve more types of activates rather than walking. Similarly, the unorganized courtyard space here, can be viewed as a small-sized plaza space that supports group gatherings. In this case, these unique spaces which are not shaped normally, make the walking activities more interesting and also, less exhausting. This street scene is similar to what described by Gehl. He stated that walking patterns in a neighborhood, which contain multiple alternations of street spaces plus some "popped up" squares, can stimulate the psychological effect that the streets are shorter than their real dimension. The whole walking processes can even be considered as a scavenger hunt type of game. The main quests are to move from one square, which is filled with some different and interesting activities, to another. And in the case of Xiasha Village, the great spatial diversity creates more "squares" and makes the walking as relatively enjoyable activities.

In contrast, the lack of spatial and functional diversity depletes individuals' connection with the neighborhood by providing no stage and attractions point for stationary activities. Moreover, the poor diversity and monotonous feature can even build the sense of annoyance and exhaustion. This could be a further explanation of the poor connection that individuals build within the commercial housing communities. The public sidewalk spaces here are seemed empty, besides, they are connected with parking spaces and the empty ground floor spaces on the two sides, which are equally monotonous. In this case, the walking activities here can be extremely boring as well because there will be no alternations or visual stimulations that can stimulate some pints of interest. Furthermore, described by Gehl, acceptable walking distances are the combination of the street length with the quality of street contents. Thus, for the streets in Nantian Garden 01 where the quality of street contents is close to nothing, the acceptable walking distances will be short. Similarly, all the documented public sidewalks that are located outside commercial housing communities, may receive zero in terms of the street content grading because they support almost no activities other than walking. Besides, they are connected to nothing but the plain concrete communities' walls or iron fences. In this case, relatively long-distance walking activities will create the sense of annoyance and exhaustion. Particularly for the fact that the travel distance inside or around the communities here can be greater than greater than 500 meters, they can potentially create negative effects on individuals' mental connection with the neighborhoods.

5.4 Diversity and Reliability

The great diversity of a community has another surprising ability to create individuals' reliability with the neighborhood by providing and servicing resources and opportunities in the most convenient way. Because of the great diversity within Xiasha Village, residents can easily get different resources based on their needs and interests in an extremely short amount of time. For instance, in the handshake street scene, the restaurant space is seamlessly connected to the residential apartment and provides food resources. Similarly, the street within this community that contains tons of different types of programs, is located 6-8 meters away from multiple apartment building entrances, so, the residents here can easily get multiple types of resources in extremely short amounts of time. Moreover, as mentioned, these strangely shaped streets, which are always located extremely close to some residential apartments, also provide stages to support other types of daily activates such as laundry, resting or even mahjong. In this case, the diverse Xiasha Village community is basically a utopian residential community filled with different resources that can be reached so conveniently, and the neighborhood is heavily relied by the local residents.

The poor diversity inside commercial housing communities, however, depletes the reliability that individuals can have with the surrounding community because it provides nothing. The diversity around Nantian Garden 01 and Baihua Unit 01 and 02 is lacking. These three communities basically contain only three elements which are apartment buildings, afforested areas and parking spaces. Even though there are about two fruit markets plus one tiny restaurant located at the ground level outside Nantian

Garden, they can hardly provide enough resources for over thousands of people who live here. In this case, individuals who live around this region are forced to rely on the resources that are located elsewhere. And according to the site map, these nearby resources usually cost them extra 20-30 mins in travelling. It is vital to mention the mental status that individuals can possibility have if they live in an economic-driven metropolis like Shenzhen. As stated by Simmel, people's mental health in such environment is more like a machine. It means that most of them expect schematically precise life schedules in order to maintain their mental stability. Extra travel time on the road has great potential to add extra contents to people's expected routine and breaks their expected life schedules, which are supposed to be as precise as possible. In this case, the online resources deliveries, which can deplete the time for travelling and in-field product exchanging, but also highly discourage most types of outdoor public social interactions, are heavily relied. In this case, the objects that actually matter to individuals are their own apartments plus the digital tools, and anything else in this community can be relatively meaningless.

6. Preservation and Respect

To sum up, it is universally well-known that the city of Shenzhen is filled with the sense of indifference and lack of emotion. Commercial housing communities were designed in a uniform and monotonous manner and they are definitely enhancing the ideas and bringing this sense to individuals' daily life. In contrast, even though Xiasha Village looks aesthetically grotesque, it has tremendous amounts of positive characteristics that provide the local residents with quality social life. Unfortunately, Xiasha Village is placed on the "to be renovated or eliminated" list, which means that the whole community may looks significantly different in the coming years. Even though there is no published renovation plan leaked from any professional architectural teams, it is likely that this community will be changed to commercial and residential mixed skyscrapers which follows the footstep of nearby Shangsha Village. Nevertheless, based on the research and arguments, the neighborhood to potentially be fundamentally transformed or eliminated, is the one that has a series of remarkable attributes and promotes wellbeing for its residents. To be more specific, this neighborhood not only welcomes the groups who do not live here, but its commercial spaces also are needed by the outsiders. Moreover, this community is so filled with spatial and social diversity that it excludes nobody and provides the sense of rootedness to most individuals. Besides, this community is built in a way that the public safety and health can be maintained through eyes on the streets instead of the digital supervision system. Moreover, the public living environments here are so intriguing that most residents have the passion on spending time around them. Thus, the current form of Xiasha Village should be preserved as much as possible. Because the reason that Xiasha Village is typical enough to represent the spatial form of most Urban Villages in Shenzhen, these weirdly shaped neighborhoods all deserve to be preserved and protected.

Despite all the positive attributes about urban villages, I have to highlight the fact that Shenzhen should still be developed as an elegantly shaped metropolis because of its role as a special economic zone, and

the concept of standardization will still be the core. However, it will also be important to notice that the overall structure of the demographic in Shenzhen is highly different with that in other Tier-1 metropolis such as Beijing because of the immigration history. Thus, the sense of rootedness is poor and the emotional connection between residents and the city is insufficient. In this case, the concept of promoting social inclusion and connection deserve extra attention during the process of developing residential community. Even though the shape of urban villages will never represent Shenzhen, the main concepts of their public spaces' development are still valuable learning resources. Thus, for the following chapter, I aim to introduce multiple ways of improving the quality of public spaces within commercial housing communities by learning from Xiasha Village.

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