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The Housing Model *xiaoqu* 小区: the Expression of an Increasing
Polarization of the Urban Population in Chinese Cities?

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Abbreviations

CCP = Chinese Communist Party

PRC = People's Republic of China

SEZ = Special Economic Zone

SOE = State-Owned Enterprise

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1. Introduction

When Meng Ke was three years old, his father died and left him and his mother behind to depend on each other for survival. To watch over the father's grave, they moved to a place near the cemetery. As time passed, Meng Ke and his little friends learnt how to mourn at a grave, how to excavate the earth, how to bury "the dead" and how to hold a funeral. When his mother saw that, she shook her head and thought to herself: "I can not let my child grow up in such an environment." So they moved next to a marketplace in the town.

At the market, one could hear the puffery of merchants buying and selling goods all day and Meng Ke was very interested in it. He then played games of butchering pigs, slaughtering sheep and selling meat with the kids next door. He learnt to imitate the sounds of pigs and sheep being slaughtered and how to bargain over the price. When his mother saw that, she puckered her eyebrows and thought to herself: "Such an environment is not suitable for my son either." So they moved once again and settled down next to a school.

This way, Meng Ke heard the sound of children learning at school every day and started to like it. He said to his mother: "I want to go to school." His mother was very pleased and thought: "This finally is the right way for my child to go." She agreed right away.¹ Later known as Mengzi, he became one of the most famous ancient Chinese philosophers.

The legend about Mencius' mother moving three times because she felt that the environment of her former two residences was not appropriate for raising her son is very popular in China. It originates from the "Lienü zhuan" 列女传 ("Traditions of Exemplary Women") and occurs in the third line of the San Zi Jing 三字经 ("Three Character Classic"). It is further used as four-character idiom: *meng mu san qian* 孟母三迁 ("Mencius' Mother Moved Three Times"), signifying that Mencius' mother moved her home three times to better her son's education. Usually, the legend is used to show how the environment can affect a child's learning and that a wise mother should keep this in mind with regard to her child's education. The focus is set on the depiction of Mencius' mother as a virtuous and exemplary woman. But there can be extracted much more from the legend, especially when it comes to housing.

¹ Story recited as in: Yin, Zhigao 殷志高: "孟母"家庭教育的哲学启示, 2012, No.3, p. 11.

² State Council Document [1998] No. 23 (国发 [1998] 23号): "Guowuyuan guanyu jin yi bu shenhua chengzhen

Housing is not just a basic need which can be satisfied through its material provision, but it matters where housing is situated. Housing conditions do have a major influence on people's daily life, as the different reactions of Meng Ke to the environment surrounding him have shown. While urban housing in the PRC (People's Republic of China) had mostly been provided by the state in the Mao and the Post-Mao era (1949-1978), the emergence of a real estate market after the Reform and Opening in 1978 facilitated homeownership and promoted new housing models, where people have the possibility to make their own decisions in terms of dwelling type, place, et cetera. Chinese homeowners therefore increasingly acquire new interests and like Mencius' mother in the legend care about the impacts their housing conditions might have on their daily life and future prospects.

However, the commoditization of housing did not only have positive effects. As the majority of residential areas are no longer built by the state, but planned and constructed by real estate developers, these residential units are sold on the market and not subsidized by the government. The largely flourishing real estate market further made housing a profitable form of investment and attracted countless speculators, resulting in unboundedly rising housing prices in Chinese cities. There is still some dissent among scholars on whether recent developments are a reflection of a real estate bubble or not, but what is clearly apparent is a huge social divide among social groups living in the urban areas.

The problem of housing having become unaffordable to some social groups in the urban areas was so urgent that the government under Jiang Zemin 江泽民 had made it a priority issue. The State Council Document [1998] No. 23² ("Notice of the State Council on Further Deepening Urban Housing System Reform and Speeding up Housing Construction") marks the starting point of the implementation of a housing security system for urban moderate and low-income households. According to this policy, the real estate market is divided into three tiers. These are firstly several types of government-funded rental housing for the households with the lowest income, secondly "affordable housing" (jingji shiyong fang 经济适用房) which is "commercial housing" at subsidized prices for households with a moderate income, and finally "commercial housing" at market prices for high-income households.

With the privatization of housing, real estate developers emerged which were no longer merely operating on behalf of the state, but striving for profit. Starting with pilot projects in

² State Council Document [1998] No. 23 (国发 [1998] 23号): "Guowuyuan guanyu jin yi bu shenhua chengzhen zhufang zhidu gaige jiakuai zhufang jianshe de tongzhi" 国务院关于进一步深化城镇住房制度改革加快住房建设的通知 ("Notice of the State Council on Further Deepening Urban Housing System Reform and Speeding Up Housing Construction").

selected cities, they began to construct so called *xiaoqu* 小区. These are residential communities which are planned by such developers and built in accordance with certain planning and design principles. Because of the extremely dynamic real estate market, the cityscape in Chinese urban areas has also become very diverse. Except from this housing model, traditional housing originating from local culture persists, such as “courtyard” housing (siheyuan 四合院) in Beijing or “lilong” housing 里弄 in Shanghai. Then, there still are housing types such as residential communities of work-unit housing or migrant settlements, so called *chengzhongcun* 城中村 which developed in the course of rapid urbanization.

With the shift from a planned to a market economy, *xiaoqu* have become the dominant urban form³ and there now exist not only “commercial housing” residential communities, but also mixed forms including work-unit housing and government-funded social welfare housing. Consequently, it can be assumed that there are social differences in-between such residential communities. Furthermore, the housing units in these estates can be for rent as well as for sale. But as the focus of this paper is set on the social group of homeowners with at least a “middle class” income, only the types of social welfare housing which are for sale will be included. Moreover, this paper will only deal with *xiaoqu* in metropolitan areas and not include the recently urbanizing rural areas, as general conditions there are different from the larger cities.

There is a very rich literature on the emergence and development of the dual-track real estate market in China with subsidized housing on one and “commercial housing” on the other side as well as the concomitant social differentiation in urban areas. Scholars which have conducted research in this field are Wang and Murie⁴, Wu Fulong⁵, Zhu Jieming⁶ and Zhang Xing Quan⁷. Other scholars have focused on homeownership which they see as a major if not the most important premise for the emergence of something like a “middle class” (zhongchan jiecheng 中产阶级) in China. While Tomba⁸ talks about the ‘social engineering’ of the state in an attempt to foster internal consumption, Man⁹ confirms that changes in the distribution of housing and homeownership had great effects on people’s social and economic lives. The

³ Lu, Duanfang: *Remaking Chinese Urban Form: Modernity, Scarcity and Space, 1949-2005*, 2006, p. 45.

⁴ See Wang, Ya Ping; Murie, Alan: “The Process of Commercialisation of Urban Housing in China”, 1996, pp. 971-989 and Wang, Ya Ping: “Private-sector Housing in Urban China since 1949: the case of Xian”, 1992, pp. 119-137.

⁵ Wu, Fulong: “Changes in the Structure of Public Housing Provision in Urban China”, 1996, p. 1607-1627 and Wu, Fulong; Li, Zhigang: “Socio-spatial Differentiation and Residential Inequalities in Shanghai: A Case Study of Three Neighborhoods”, 2006, pp. 695-717.

⁶ Zhu, Jieming: “The Changing Mode of Housing Provision in Transitional China”, 2000, pp. 502-519.

⁷ Zhang, Xing Quan: “Privatization and the Chinese Housing Model”, 2000, pp. 191-204.

⁸ Tomba, Luigi: “Creating an Urban Middle Class: Social Engineering in Beijing”, 2004, p. 11. See also Tomba, Luigi: “The Housing Effect: The Making of China’s Social Distinctions”, 2010, pp. 193-216.

⁹ Man, Joyce Yanyun: “China’s Housing Reform and Emerging Middle Class”, 2010, pp. 179-192.

associated increasing residential segregation of social groups with a higher income in correspondence with their practice of lifestyle distinction has been observed by authors such as Choon-Piew Pow¹⁰. But as the housing enclaves where these social groups reside are unitarily denominated as ‘gated communities’, it remains unclear whether residents of these communities have the same or differing social and economic backgrounds.

There have been several studies where such specific ‘gated communities’ were examined in form of case studies, like “Hopetown” in Beijing by Tomba¹¹ or several communities in Shanghai by Wu Fulong¹². But while such case studies are helpful to shed light on the practice of community life in a limited context, they do not explain social differences between urban residential communities. Furthermore, analyses for concrete cities, like Wu and Sheng’s¹³ study on *xiaoqu* in Suzhou or Li Zhang’s¹⁴ research on housing estates in Kunming have revealed these social differences, but can not be assigned to Chinese cities in general. Finally, there are two studies which separately identified three socially different groups of *xiaoqu*, one also by Li Zhang¹⁵ and the other one by Tomba and Tang¹⁶. With Tomba and Tang’s study relying on material from Shenyang; both of them are focused on one city and their general description of the three groups is therefore only superficial. This paper aims to build on these approaches for a classification of Chinese urban area *xiaoqu* in general.

As mentioned above, the English literature mainly refers to the residential communities which shall be analyzed in this paper as ‘gated communities’. But since this term originates from an American form of housing where it has a fixed meaning, it is unclear what it refers to in the Chinese context. This paper will therefore use the Chinese term *xiaoqu* and clarify the scope of it in a concrete definition. Primarily, existing definitions of *xiaoqu* will be analyzed in section two under two focal points that are common planning and design principles, and social differentiation. In order to find a suitable definition, it will then be retraced in section three where the Chinese term “*xiaoqu*” comes from and which meaning it conveys after it had been adapted to the Chinese scholarly discourse.

¹⁰ Pow, Choon-Piew: *Gated Communities in China: Class, Privilege and the Moral Politics of the Good Life*, 2009.

¹¹ Tomba, Luigi: “Creating an Urban Middle Class: Social Engineering in Beijing”, 2004.

¹² Wu, Fulong: “Rediscovering the ‘Gate’ Under Market Transition: From Work-unit Compounds to Commodity Housing Enclaves”, 2005, pp. 235-254.

¹³ Wu, Fang 吴芳; Sheng, Chengmao 盛承懋: “Guanyu wo guo chengshi zhuzhai xiaoqu shehuixue leixing de diaocha yu sikao” 关于我国城市住宅小区社会学类型的调查与思考, 2005, pp. 47-51.

¹⁴ Zhang, Li: *In Search of Paradise: Middle-Class Living in a Chinese Metropolis*, 2010.

¹⁵ Zhang, Li: “Private Homes, Distinct Lifestyles: Performing a New Middle Class”, 2008, pp. 23-40.

¹⁶ Tomba, Luigi; Tang, Beibei: “The Forest City: Homeownership and new wealth in Shenyang”, 2008, pp. 171-186.

In the attempt to find out whether there are social differences between *xiaoqu* in the urban areas, it is further necessary to work out several common characteristics which on the one hand can be used to identify a *xiaoqu* and on the other hand to compare several *xiaoqu* with one another. Section four deals with the characteristics which constitute this urban form. According to Li Zhang, urban residential space in Chinese cities today is differentiated by factors such as property value, community service and the social characteristics of residents.¹⁷ It will therefore not be sufficient to look at spatial characteristics, but also social features. These are the two main criteria under which *xiaoqu* will be analyzed.

After it has been made clear how a *xiaoqu* is defined and which characteristics it has to show, the question arises whether the housing estates differentiate and whether this differentiation can be seen as the expression of an increasing polarization of the urban population in Chinese cities. As mentioned above, scholars have already found a socio-spatial differentiation and residential inequalities; so that the analysis will assume that there are three groups of *xiaoqu* which show significant differences. This author has had the chance to live in two different *xiaoqu* in the city of Beijing for two time periods of two months and three weeks in the years 2009 and 2011. But as the time was too short for a field study and gathered material is not enough for research purposes, the analysis will be conducted by detailed examination of three exemplary housing estates which are representative for the groups defined by this author.

In section five, following a general definition of the particular group, the exemplary *xiaoqu* will be examined under spatial and social aspects subdivided into the several characteristics explained in section four. Here, it will particularly be looked at the residents' tendency to organize themselves and how clashes of interest between homeowners, developers and management companies are solved in a framework where homeowners' committees have begun to compete with residents' committees, as has been observed by Wu Fulong¹⁸. Some scholars go as far as to see this as a kind of 'democratization' of the neighborhood.¹⁹

Finally, it is evaluated in a conclusion whether the classification of *xiaoqu* into three groups is reasonable. It will further be explained how distinctive the characteristics are for every group and whether the differences between the groups are big enough to speak of *xiaoqu* as an expression of urban polarization.

¹⁷ Zhang, Li: "Private Homes, Distinct Lifestyles: Performing a New Middle Class", 2008, p. 27.

¹⁸ Wu, Fulong: "Rediscovering the 'Gate' Under Market Transition: From Work-unit Compounds to Commodity Housing Enclaves", 2005, p. 245.

¹⁹ See Read, Benjamin L.: "Democratizing the Neighborhood? New Private Housing and Home-Owner Self-Organization in Urban China", 2003, pp. 31-59 and Li, Jun: "Home Ownership and Political Participation in Urban China", 2012, pp. 58-81.

2. Existing definitions of *xiaoqu*

For the purpose of analyzing the planning, design and social structure of *xiaoqu* in major Chinese cities, as well as of classifying them into different groups, it is necessary to become clear about what the term “*xiaoqu*” essentially refers to. A first step to achieve this could be to look at the linguistic meaning of the term. The word “*xiaoqu*” in Chinese consists of the two characters *xiao* 小 (“small”) and *qu* 区 (“area, region or urban district”), and is usually translated into English as “housing estate” or “neighborhood”. But while the basic meaning of *xiaoqu* is transmitted through these two translations, the Chinese term further conveys a functional meaning, which is lost in the English translation. As the paper will show, there are many aspects in which *xiaoqu* function as “microcosm” in the larger environment of the city. The Chinese term in this sense follows the Russian term for “neighborhood unit”²⁰ which literally also means “microcosm” and is explained in more detail in section three.

Although, at first sight, the housing model resembles so-called “gated communities” in western countries, especially in the United States of America, *xiaoqu* in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) are much more diverse. To use this term as an English translation which has been practiced by some scholars so far can therefore be misleading, as the housing model has not been imported to the PRC. Rather, it has developed over time with the Reform and Opening of the Chinese economy and concomitant housing reforms. Tested as pilot housing estates (*shidian xiaoqu* 试点小区) by the Chinese government in different cities similar to the method of establishing Special Economic Zones (SEZs), the housing model started to develop in the context of the attempt to solve housing problems in urban areas and establish a real estate market simultaneously. With the increasing commoditization of housing and an increasing market orientation in housing design and neighborhood planning, the housing model then began to diverge and is still highly dynamic.

Because of the diversity and social disparity of *xiaoqu* within the cities in the different regions of China, the approaches of scholars to deal with the housing model also differ. Therefore it is important to primarily define the urban form *xiaoqu*. As there is no complete definition to meet the requirements of this paper, several distinct understandings will be examined initially.

The testing of pilot housing estates by the government began in the second half of the 1980s. At this time, it also became necessary to determine what constitutes a *xiaoqu* and to differentiate it from other forms, e.g. the “housing block” (*juzhu jiefang* 居住街坊). In a

²⁰ Abramson, Daniel B.: “Urban Planning in China: Continuity and Change”, 2006, p. 199.

record from 1988, Zhu Changzhong 朱畅中²¹ defines the “juzhu xiaoqu” 居住小区 by use of some shared characteristics. Although he already distinguishes between different structural units of urban residential districts, his definition remains on a general level and mainly focuses on planning principles. According to him, a *xiaoqu* is a basic structural unit of urban residential district planning. It is the intermediate unit between the bigger *juzhuqu* 居住区 (“residential area”) and the smaller *zhuzhai zutuan* 住宅组团 (“housing cluster”). A *juzhuqu* can be made up of several *xiaoqu* and in turn every *xiaoqu* can be subdivided into several *zutuan*, according to need.

In a second step, he gives five requirements which a *xiaoqu* has to meet. Primarily, it has to be delimited from the rest of the city by certain boundaries like urban arterial roads, greenery patches, ponds, irrigation canals or slopes. The boundaries of the land have to be clear-cut, but the *xiaoqu* shall not be cut apart by arterial roads of the city or larger district. Secondly, the author defines the scope of the housing estate. He does not give any figures, but says that the scope has to be set under consideration of factors like traffic conditions of the city, natural conditions of topography, population density and a rational radius and complete set of living facilities and services. Hereby, the radius determines the number of facilities which have to be provided in a certain area to satisfy the needs of the residents (see section three). To measure the scope, he states that a *xiaoqu* has to have one elementary school and as many living facilities and services as to meet the needs of the residents. In comparison with the “housing block”, the land area of the *xiaoqu* is larger.

Third requirements are the daily living facilities and services which have to be provided in the *xiaoqu*. These include the elementary school, nursery and kindergarten, grocery stores, convenience stores, repair shops and others. Furthermore there can be a center for public activities (*gonggong huodong zhongxin* 公共活动中心). The facilities can be scattered around the estate or be arranged at the main entrance. The fourth requirement is an inner circulation system, where the roads of the *xiaoqu* shall be systematically arranged and preserve its independent and enclosed character. The intrusion of traffic from the cities’

²¹ Zhu, Changzhong 朱畅中: “Juzhu xiaoqu” 居住小区, 1988, p. 279.

The author was professor at the Institute for Architecture of Qinghua University. He was born in 1921 in the city of Hangzhou 杭州, Zhejiang province 浙江省. His fields of expertise were city planning, scientific research on scenery and gardens as well as their practical design. Zhu Changzhong graduated from the Institute for Architecture of Chongqing Zhongyang University 重庆中央大学 in 1945 and had later worked for planning committees in Wuhan 武汉 and Nanjing 南京. He was appointed as a teacher to the Institute for Architecture of Qinghua University in 1947 by Liang Sicheng 梁思成. In addition to his substantially corresponding publications, he supported the protection of scenic areas. In 1998, he died due to illness.

arterial roads has to be avoided. Finally, the *xiaoqu* has to have a determined area of public green spaces. When it comes to the arrangement of these green spaces, it has to be considered that they shall form a unity with the public activity center, children’s playgrounds and recreation spaces for the elderly.

A narrower and numerical definition has been given by the formerly Ministry of Construction (jianshebu 建设部), which is now the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (zhufang he chengxiang jianshebu 住房和城乡建设部) in 1993. In the national standard GB 50180-93 (guojia biao zhun 国家标准) with the title “Code of Urban Residential Areas Planning and Design” (Chengshi juzhuqu guihua sheji guifan 城市居住区规划设计规范) the Ministry also divides residential areas into the three units *juzhuqu*, *xiaoqu* and *zutuan*, according to the number of households or alternatively, population living in the area. The scope is defined as in the following table:

Table 1. Scope of residential area units

	juzhuqu 居住区	xiaoqu 小区	zutuan 组团
households	10,000-16,000	3,000-5,000	300-1,000
people	30,000-50,000	10,000-15,000	1,000-3,000

Source: Ministry of Construction of the People’s Republic of China: “Chengshi juzhuqu guihua sheji guifan”, p. 1.

Compliant with this table, the scope of a *xiaoqu* is limited to 3,000-5,000 households or a district population of 10,000-15,000 people. The national standard further contains a literal definition. According to this definition, “*xiaoqu*” relates to an area of inhabited land which is enclosed through arterial roads of the city or natural boundaries and whose population is within the limits of the above given scope for *xiaoqu*. Moreover it has to provide a set of public facilities and services which satisfy basic material and cultural needs of residents from the given estate.²² This literal definition corresponds to the characteristics in planning and design already stated by Zhu Changzhong.

A numerical definition resemblant to the one from the Ministry of Construction has also been given by Wang Meihan 王美涵, Li Ruxun 李儒训 and Geng Hanbin 耿汉斌 in the same year. But additionally to fix limitations of the population, they set a fixed number of land coverage.

²² Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo jianshebu 中华人民共和国建设部: “Chengshi juzhuqu guihua sheji guifan” 城市居住区规划设计规范, 2002, p. 3.

While the scope they fixed for the number of households is even narrower with only 2,000-3,000 households per *xiaoqu*, they determine the land coverage as 15-20 hectare. Their literal definition is totally equivalent to the ones described earlier and does not add any new aspects.²³ If only looked at the last two definitions presented above it is already apparent that numerical limitations can not be generalized. They are helpful to get an idea of what the dimension of *xiaoqu* are, but if one tries to transfer these limitations and make them a substantial criterion to determine a *xiaoqu*, one will hardly be successful. As mentioned earlier, *xiaoqu* are as diverse as the Chinese cities themselves and just as there are one-tier, two-tier and three-tier cities, the size and scope of *xiaoqu* are not the same in every part of the city.

As the city as such is a very dynamic concept and is constantly changing shape with space being used for differing purposes, the land available for building *xiaoqu* is very different in every individual case. This can best be illustrated by the example of “Haiqi Garden” 海琪苑 next to the “Waitan Central Commercial District” 外滩中央商务区 in Shanghai. This estate only has a land coverage of 15,000 km² and is inhabited by 1,300 people. According to the limitations set by the Ministry of Construction as well as Wang Meihan et. al., it can not be considered a *xiaoqu*. However, all other planning and design characteristics can be applied.

“Haiqi Garden” is enclosed through arterial roads and further intensifies this effect through an L-shaped arrangement of its buildings. On the whole, it only consists of four multi-storey buildings and one ground-level public building. It provides a set of living facilities and services as to satisfy the needs of residents, like commercial buildings, shops, a service center, green spaces and parking spaces. It further offers a salon and a central terrace where residents can socially interact. Inner circulation is regulated and made possible for pedestrians and motor vehicles. What it lacks is an elementary school and inner roads for cars, both infeasible due to a lack of space. Still it is not integrated into a larger residential area and is planned too comprehensive and independent to be considered a *zutuan*.²⁴ (For further illustration see appendix, figure 1). Consequently, the only rational conclusion is to consider it a *xiaoqu*. As the case of “Haiqi Garden” reveals, numerical definitions are too narrow to grasp the concept.

²³ Wang, Meihan 王美涵; Li, Ruxun 李儒训; Geng, Hanbin 耿汉斌 (ed.): “Zhuzhai xiaoqu” 住宅小区, 1993, p. 748.

²⁴ Shanglin guoji wenhua youxian gongsi 上林国际文化有限公司 (ed.): *Juzhuqu jingguan guihua 100 li* 居住区景观规划 100 例, 2006, pp. 352-355.

In a more recent definition, *xiaoqu* have then been treated as a more diverse housing model.²⁵ They are described as complete residential areas which are sectioned through urban arterial roads and natural boundaries (like rivers or mounds), but which are not cut across by thoroughfares. Inside the *xiaoqu* there is usually provided a complete set of special living facilities and a management mechanism for all kinds of services. After this short literal definition, it is differentiated between different groups of *xiaoqu*, although only two groups are named and described further, *chengshi shidian xiaoqu* (城市试点小区, “urban pilot project residential communities”) and *shengtai xing lüse jiyuan xiaoqu* (生态型绿色家园小区, “ecotype residential communities”). It is further explained that there are “common” (putong 普通) and “high-level” (gaodang 高档) *xiaoqu*.

While “pilot project residential communities” have been launched by the Chinese Ministry of Construction since the 1980s as prototypes to raise the level of urban dwellings, “ecotype residential communities” are a more idealistic concept which starts from the intrinsic qualities (pinzhi 品质) of a residential community. “**Pilot project residential communities**” have two fundamental goals which are to produce a good quality and to gain new experiences in planning, design, construction and engineering. Construction therefore shall follow four principles: “A high level despite low prices” (zaojia bu gao shuiping gao 造价不高水平高), “a high quality despite low standards²⁶” (biaozhun bu gao zhiliang gao 标准不高质量高), “full functionality despite small land coverage” (mianji bu da gongneng quan 面积不大功能全) and “a beautiful environment despite low occupation of space” (zhandi bu duo huanjing mei 占地不多环境美). Furthermore, there are some concrete requirements which the *shidian xiaoqu* have to fulfill. The land coverage of construction has to exceed 80,000 km²; the greening rate that is the ratio of green space to the total planned construction area, has to be higher than 30 percent and the amount of dwellings with sun exposure has to be at least 70 percent.

The “**ecotype residential community**” has to be understood as a modern organic unity of culture and nature. It follows the “ren wei zhongxin” (人为中心 “human-centered”) principle and combines high quality, environmental protection, comfort, affordability and technological

²⁵ Liu, Shibai 刘诗白; Zou, Guangyan 邹广严 (ed.): “Zhuzhai xiaoqu” 住宅小区, 2000, pp. 1983-1984.

²⁶ Here, low standards probably refer to regulations set for construction which have a direct influence on the quality of the completed community, e.g. construction materials. As the authors underline the preservation of ethnic and local characteristics, standards have to conform to local construction practices as well as the quality levels set for pilot project residential communities.

progress. The construction of the *xiaoqu* shall strive for harmony between man and nature and satisfy the resident's needs of sunlight, air, water, tranquility and others. Concrete requirements are a greening rate of more than 35 percent, a three-tiered greening system with different green spaces in the community center, the housing cluster and the courtyard, clear regulations for waste segregation, the avoidance of pollution and high-standard security measures, as well as the use of the latest construction material.

The definition also distinguishes four types of dwellings, namely *danyuan shi zhuzhai* 单元式住宅 (“dwellings arranged in units”), *gongyu shi zhuzhai* 公寓式住宅 (“apartment styled dwellings”), *huayuan shi zhuzhai* 花园式住宅 (“villa styled dwellings”) and *yueceng shi zhuzhai* 跃层式住宅 (“duplex apartments”). *Danyuan shi zhuzhai* is usually multi-storey housing with two to four households sharing one floor but with separate dwelling units. The land coverage for this type of dwelling is not high and prices are affordable. Every dwelling unit is equipped with the necessary living facilities, but the stairway, passageways, garbage cans etc. are jointly used. On the contrast, *gongyu shi zhuzhai* is a single-household dwelling structure, with only one household on every floor. This type of dwellings occurs mainly in metropolises and buildings are respectively high. Every unit is an apartment and therefore has all necessary living facilities available.

Huayuan shi zhuzhai refers to Western-style dwellings and is a kind of villa. The construction is usually not very high, with only two or three floors. It is also a single-household structure and includes all kinds of living facilities, from running water and electricity to telecommunication. It is normally purchased by people with a high income. Finally, the most recent dwelling type is *yueceng shi zhuzhai*. It is composed of two floors, one on top of the other, and can be crossed through an inner stairway, so that residents will not have to use public stairways to reach the other floor. The living space is relatively large and every space has a clear-cut function. In this dwelling, bedrooms, bathrooms, living room and kitchen are arranged on the two floors. The interaction between different households is accordingly low.

Although this definition describes two groups of *xiaoqu* (“pilot project residential communities” and “ecotype residential communities”), these two groups are not sufficient to cover all existing residential communities in Chinese cities. “Pilot project residential communities” still play an important role, but as there have been successfully completed projects as early as the 1990s, the housing model has already been established and is constructed on a large scale all over the PRC. “Ecotype residential communities” on the other

hand are very idealistic and as there is a high income required in practice to afford such housing, they are not representative as a general model. The criteria of this group are mainly met by “high-level” communities, as the paper will show. It is mentioned that there are *xiaoqus* of different levels which is undoubtedly in terms of income and social status, but there are no further details given. The four types of dwellings reveal income disparities, but it is not stated whether there is only one dwelling type per *xiaoqu* or how they are allocated.

The results of the analysis of existing definitions so far are summarized in the table below:

Table 2. Overview of existing definitions

author \ definition	literary (planning and design)	numerical (in people)	numerical (in floor space)	literary (social differences)
Zhu Changzhong	X	-	-	-
Ministry of Construction	X	X	-	-
Wang, Li, Geng	X	X	X	-
Liu, Zou	X	-	-	X

Source: based on this author’s analysis

The lines of the overview show the different authors whose definitions have been analyzed and the columns the sort of definition they have included. Definitions are subdivided into literary and numerical definitions and their unit or main characteristic is given in brackets. Table 2 illustrates that while all the above given definitions are to a greater or lesser extent consistent in a *xiaoqu*’s characteristic planning and design principles, they remain limited to this aspect and mainly lack the inclusion of social and structural features. One of these features would be the social background of residents living in a certain *xiaoqu* and to determine which population stratum has access to it.

Another aspect would be to know how social life is organized in the *xiaoqu* and who is responsible for maintaining both the functionality of day-to-day running through public services and the social exchange of residents among themselves. As the paper seeks to look at the coherence between the social composition of *xiaoqu* and their spatial structure, this approach, starting from social differentiation will later be followed further. Such an approach can provide an interior perspective of the *xiaoqu* in contrast to the mere exterior consideration by means of planning and design principles.

As has been mentioned in the last given definition from 2000, there are different levels of *xiaoqu* which, for instance, becomes apparent through variation in number and quality of facilities provided in different housing estates. This depends on the exclusiveness of the estate and the social background of the residents living in this compound, respectively. The social differences between *xiaoqus* within different areas of one city have been discovered by Wu Fang and Sheng Chengmao²⁷ as well, who attribute these differences to income disparities (shouru chayi 收入差异) and disparities in “natural conditions” (ziran tiaojian chayi 自然条件差异), such as the historical development of a housing estate or its location in the city. The authors analyzed three different types of *xiaoqu* in the city of Suzhou 苏州, which has experienced rapid economic development in recent years and which they therefore see as representative for major cities in China.

The first type is named *jiating xing xiaoqu* 家庭型小区 (“familial housing estate”). The most important characteristic of this type is that residents are acquainted and have contact with each other within the limits of the estate. They are further able to meet all their basic needs and most of their demands within the *xiaoqu*. 80.2 percent of the residents interviewed by the authors stated that they had a monthly income of less than 2,000 Yuan. The second type has a better location and better facilities and consequently is sold for higher prices. It is called *juzhu xing xiaoqu* 居住型小区 (“residential housing estate”). To meet basic needs and to go to work, residents usually leave the estate. The monthly income of 62.5 percent of the interviewees exceeded 3,000 Yuan.

The last type of housing estate identified by Wu and Sheng is called *zhongxin xing xiaoqu* 中心型小区 (“centre oriented housing estate”). This type is comparably new and situated next to an entertainment and recreation center in the city. The residents are of younger age and take advantage of the closeness to the entertainment center, where they spend their free time on holidays or the week-ends. Entertainment and recreation facilities comprise movie centers, shopping centers for famous clothing brands, fast food restaurants, book stores et cetera. 63.6 percent of the inhabitants of *zhongxin xing xiaoqu* indicated that they had a monthly income between 1,000 and 3,000 Yuan.

These circumstances illustrate the fact that there are social differences not only among varying forms of housing in urban areas, but also between *xiaoqus* in different areas of one

²⁷ Wu, Fang 吴芳; Sheng, Chengmao 盛承懋: “Guanyu wo guo chengshi zhuzhai xiaoqu shehuixue leixing de diaocha yu sikao” 关于我国城市住宅小区社会学类型的调查与思考, 2005, pp. 47-51.

city. It is therefore not easy to delimit the social group of people living in such housing estates in financial terms. Scholars often refer to this group as “middle class” who has evolved through housing reform as part of the Reform and Opening in 1978.²⁸ For example, Tomba and Tang explain that urban residents who were employed in State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) had been provided with housing by their work-unit (*danwei* 单位) and highly profited from the commercialization of housing when the work-units sold the housing to their employee-tenants at extremely low prices. According to them, this subsidization of ownership was a decisive factor in the creation of a “middle class”.²⁹

But although there has been done a significant amount of research on whether there is a “middle class” in China and how many people belong to this stratum, results widely scatter. One reason for this might be the different criteria to determine who belongs to the “middle class” and who does not. While some scholars use income as decisive factor, others argue that this criterion is misleading and a more cultural approach is needed, for example through self-evaluation. Consequently, a generally settled characteristic for the housing model *xiaoqu* as examined in the context of this paper can only be that people can afford to buy a home, in contrast to renting it.

The categorization by Wu and Sheng does not only show that there are social differences between *xiaoqu*, but also illustrates the final characteristic of the housing model, namely a shared lifestyle or “culture” among its residents. As their survey has shown, *xiaoqu* of certain characteristics are likewise inhabited by people who share at least one of these characteristics. Income clearly is very important as premise to live in a *juzhu xing xiaoqu*, given the fact that basic needs can not be met within the boundaries of the estate and because of its exclusive location, which raises selling prices. But inhabitants of the *zhongxin xing xiaoqu* seem to have rather differing financial backgrounds. What ties them together is more a shared lifestyle, that is, to go out in their free time to enjoy all sorts of entertainment. This characteristic should also occur in a potential definition of *xiaoqu*.

In search of a definition for a concept, it can be helpful to trace back the origin of the linguistic term used for its designation. In case of the housing model *xiaoqu*, a retrospective approach proves to be even more useful, because although the term has been directly

²⁸ See Goodman, David S.G. (ed.): *The New Rich in China: Future rulers, present lives*, 2008 and Li, Cheng (ed.): *China's Emerging Middle Class: Beyond Economic Transformation*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010.

²⁹ Tomba, Luigi; Tang, Beibei: “The Forest City: Homeownership and new wealth in Shenyang”, 2008, pp. 173-174.

translated from Russian, the basic planning principles derive from global endeavors to improve residential environment, reaching as far back as the early twentieth century.

3. Origin of the term and its adaptation to the Chinese context

With the beginning of the twentieth century, once again, new urban forms and planning concepts for residential areas were introduced by Western and Soviet planners. Two concepts which had a major influence on subsequent urban planning and the housing model *xiaoqu* as it prevails in today's Chinese cities, developed diachronically. These are the 'neighborhood unit' and the Soviet-style 'microdistrict'.

As a result of the industrial revolution, large-scale urbanization in Western Europe and the United States had brought pauperism to the cities. Severe housing shortages were accompanied by general problems such as pollution, disease, crime and social injustices. When 'rehumanization' of the city became an urgent issue, western architects and city planners began to focus on an improvement of urban landscapes and the conditions of habitation. Since these problems occurred across national boundaries, different solution concepts emerged. It is in this context that the concept of the neighborhood unit came into being.

The exact origin of the neighborhood unit is still a subject of controversial discussion among scholars and may remain unclear in the future due to its coincidental appearance in different parts of the world. While historians and social scientists primarily attributed the concept to the American social reformer Clarence Arthur Perry³⁰, the article "Origin of the Neighbourhood Unit" by Donald Leslie Johnson argued that the idea was formulated in the course of the Chicago City Club's competition in 1912 by the architect William Eugene Drummond. According to Johnson, former researchers trustfully relied on a statement by the General Director of the Russell Sage Foundation, Shelby Millard Harrison, in the late 1930s that the

³⁰ In the 1940s, the Sage Foundation initiated a compilation on the 'neighborhood unit' by James Dahir which conformed to Harrison's opinion (Dahir, James [comp.]: *The neighborhood unit plan: its spread and acceptance*, 1947). In 1950, the authors Richard Dewey and Arthur Banta Gallion implied in their works that they supported an attribution of the concept to Perry (Dewey, Richard: "The Neighborhood, Urban Ecology, and City Planners", 1950, pp.502-507 and Gallion, Arthur B.: *The Urban Pattern*. New York: van Nostrand, 1950). And in the 1980s, Christopher Silver referred to the 'neighborhood unit plan' as "Perry's seminal contribution" (Silver, Christopher: "Neighborhood Planning in Historical Perspective", 1985, p. 165).

neighborhood unit was first proposed by Perry in 1912.³¹ Furthermore, Perry himself claimed that the term was a result of his study on community planning.³²

In preparation of the National Housing Conference which was to be held in Chicago in 1913, a competition was organized by the progressive-oriented City Club one year earlier. The Competition was a reaction to the *Plan of Chicago* by architects Daniel Burnham and Edward Herbert Bennett, which aimed at a renovation of the city landscape. Critics considered the *Plan of Chicago* to be superficial and a waste of tax money in an act of aggrandizement by politicians and merchants.³³ The City Club therefore asked for more humanitarian propositions to solve persisting problems of living. Submissions should depict the physical structure of a neighborhood equipped with all necessary functional elements such as streets, house lots, commercial buildings, green spaces and educational buildings on an imaginary quarter-section (one quarter of a mile square, equal to 160 acres or 65 hectares).³⁴ Perry was enabled to attend the competition which was subsidized by the Russell Sage Foundation.

Drummond's neighborhood unit, as he termed it, was among the 39 submissions which were juried. In his plan, the whole city was divided into areas, so-called social and political 'units', just like the imaginary quarter-section in the competition. He defined the 'unit' as "an area which will permanently exist as a neighborhood or primary social circle"³⁵. At the center of the unit stands the institute, which is responsible for a neighborhood's social and political organization and can be reached conveniently by all residents. Business requirements, on the contrary, were located at the corners and intersections of boundary streets. This way, a limited competition for local trade and lower duplication should lead to an efficient and a minimum use by business, as a maximum use of space is to be assigned to inhabitants. The positioning of business centers at the corners of the unit had another advantage. The greatest amount of traffic should be directed to the boundary streets and relieve interior roads from noise and danger.³⁶

Regarding his propositions for spatial arrangement in the unit, Drummond placed special emphasis on resident's needs and interests. He suggested transforming the main business street into a residence street which should be provided with green spaces at the center and

³¹ Johnson, Donald Leslie: "Origin of the Neighbourhood Unit", 2002, p. 227.

³² Perry, Clarence: *The Neighborhood Unit from the Regional Survey of New York and Its Environs, Volume VII, Neighborhood and Community Planning*, 1998, p. 34.

³³ Johnson, Donald L.: "Origin of the Neighbourhood Unit", 2002, p. 230-231.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 232.

³⁵ Yeomans, Alfred B. (ed.): *City Residential Land Development: Studies in Planning: Competitive Plans for Subdividing a Typical Quarter Section of Land in the Outskirts of Chicago*, 1916, p. 39.

³⁶ Ibid, pp. 39-41.

both sides to save residents from noise and dust. As main forms of housing, he recommended apartment buildings, low cost single dwellings and the city block, which could consist of multiple as well as of single dwellings. Although the unit is planned, it develops over time and especially home sites are not fully determined in the first place. Therefore, when a neighborhood unit is built, the first step is to construct the ‘nucleus’, around which further homes can emerge, depicted as grey areas in the bird’s eye view of a possible unit (see appendix, figure 2). What is new to Drummond’s neighborhood unit is that residents are expected to co-operate. While individual dwellings usually had cared for themselves, the use of garden spaces, children’s playgrounds or dining-rooms should now be shared among community members.³⁷ This way, facilities could be used more efficiently.

Clarence Perry argues that a neighborhood plan addresses the needs and demands urban residents had on local environment in American cities of the 1930s. His definition of a neighborhood unit is slightly different from the one provided by Drummond. According to Perry, there are four universal neighborhood institutions in a residential community. These institutions are (1) an elementary school, (2) small parks and playgrounds, (3) local shops and (4) the residential environment³⁸. Concerning local shops, he explains that they have to be accessible, but not located in close proximity to the homes. They further shall be concentrated, as business flourishes in areas where it is pooled. Residential environment relates to elements of the external atmosphere of a home, such as architectural style, the course of the roads or the design of yards and open spaces.

The author states that especially urban families depend on “neighborhood services”, which are performed by these institutions. Parents who send their children to school want to be sure that their way to elementary school is safe and does not endanger their lives through traffic-ridden streets. They further worry about the environment in which the child grows up and therefore require homes in great distance to lots of noise and pollution. Finally, it is important to them that their children associate with children from the same social background. If all the required services are not coordinated and put into a “harmonious system”, they get into conflict. To prevent such a conflict, it is necessary to consider the role of institutions when a community is

³⁷ Yeomans, Alfred B. (ed.): *City Residential Land Development: Studies in Planning: Competitive Plans for Subdividing a Typical Quarter Section of Land in the Outskirts of Chicago*, p. 41.

³⁸ Perry, Clarence: *The Neighborhood Unit from the Regional Survey of New York and Its Environs, Volume VII, Neighborhood and Community Planning*, 1998, p. 34.

planned. Thus, Perry explains that the neighborhood unit has to be conceived more as a “living organism” or an “organic entity”.³⁹

Perry has formulated six basic principles on how he thinks that a residential community should be build. The elementary school is the central and defining element in his neighborhood unit and determines its size. The second principle refers to the boundaries of the unit. As the city is divided by streets, the arterial highways simultaneously function as boundaries and create a “cellular city”. Then, the residential community has to include open spaces, institution sites and local shopping districts. The last principle is an internal street system. Although through traffic is discouraged, residents still want to move through the unit conveniently.⁴⁰ Despite its bounded form, the unit is not completely isolated in the city, but like the cell, interacts with the environment. For example, for entertainment institutions and for services like fire and police protection the unit still depends on the municipality.

Regardless of who originally invented the concept, Drummond and Perry define the neighborhood unit in a very similar way. They both determine aspects like the size and the boundaries of the unit and allocate the institute or “neighborhood institutions” at the center. The integration of green spaces into the plan and the separation of commercial and residential space are important components of their units. The concept provided the basis for further discourse on community planning and as a ‘global urban form’ spread to other countries.

Lu Duanfang⁴¹ has given a short chronicle of experimentation with the neighborhood unit concept in China. The consideration of circumstances under which the concept came to China in the twentieth century shows that it was adapted to local conditions and culture and that it was attributed a different function than in the Western and the Soviet context. From the circles of architects and planners in Western industrialized cities, the concept of the neighborhood unit was imported to China in the Republican Era by the Japanese. Japan had occupied Manchuria in 1931 and started to remodel the urban landscape according to ‘modern’ planning ideas. For example, the residential districts of Changchun 长春, which was renamed Xinjing 新京 (Shinkyō しんきょう in Japanese) and set up as the capital of the puppet state Manzhouguo 滿洲国 were planned after the neighborhood unit schema. Another plan for the city of Datong 大同 in 1938 was only partly realized and it is therefore unclear whether or not

³⁹ Ibid, pp. 28-29.

⁴⁰ Perry, Clarence: *The Neighborhood Unit from the Regional Survey of New York and Its Environs, Volume VII, Neighborhood and Community Planning*, 1998, p. 33-34.

⁴¹ Lu, Duanfang: *Remaking Chinese Urban Form: Modernity, Scarcity and Space, 1949-2005*, 2006.

Japanese colonial planning experiments had contributed to the spread of the neighborhood unit concept in China.⁴²

Moreover, there were urban experiments on residential development in major Chinese cities like Nanjing 南京, Guangzhou 广州 or Shanghai 上海 which considered Western planning concepts but were suspended when the Sino-Japanese war broke out in 1937. Only after the war, when the rebuilding of many destroyed cities was an urgent need became the concept part of the Chinese social discourse. While in the American context the neighborhood unit concept was expected to strengthen social democracy and community bonds, it had changed its role to a more technical function, with Chinese planners adopting it in order to effectively distribute urban services and out of a need to ease housing shortages.⁴³

The major policy shift then brought about an orientation towards the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries. As a political ally, the PRC also turned to Russian patterns in the fields of architecture and urban planning. Once again experiments with urban forms of Russian origin were conducted in the 1950s and Soviet advisors introduced the two schemas ‘superblock’ (dajiefang 大街方) and ‘company town’.⁴⁴ The ‘superblock’ consisted of flats in four- to six-storey blocks to guarantee economical efficiency. Public facilities were located in the center and the blocks were arranged around this area in a quadrangle shape.

The company town also has its origin in early industrial capitalist society, where it was developed to accommodate workers who were engaged in the exploitation of resource sites. It was set up and managed by a single business enterprise, e.g. mining companies. Later on, the caring for the well-being of workers expressed through facilities provided by the developer became a major characteristic of the company town. But most important is the separation of its physical structure into industry and residence. This way, workers’ residences could be built on-site. In China, the living quarters (shenghuoqu 生活区) were built next to the workshops, separated by physical borders like greenbelts or walls. Various facilities were integrated.⁴⁵ Although such company towns were mainly built in rural and suburban areas, the two-tier structure is a dominant form found in many Chinese *xiaoqu* today.

When the superblock schema used in the cities turned out to suffer from major ailments, a new urban form, the ‘microdistrict’ (mikrorayon, Микрорайон in Russian), emerged. It was

⁴² Ibid, p. 25.

⁴³ Lu, Duanfang: *Remaking Chinese Urban Form: Modernity, Scarcity and Space, 1949-2005*, 2006, p. 28-29.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 31-34.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 34.

first used in the Moscow Plan in 1935 and when consultations of Western capitalist countries were terminated, transplanted to China in 1956 as basic unit for residential planning.⁴⁶ How important the new urban form was, can be seen in its inclusion into the Chinese social discourse. Besides a revisit of the already discussed neighborhood unit, Shui Yayou 水亚佑⁴⁷ also deals with the characteristics of the microdistrict concept in his article in the *Architectural Journal* from 1962. The author defines the Soviet-style microdistrict as:

«…由城市干道所包围，具有较完善的文化生活福利设施的城市住宅居住建设的基本单位， …»

“...a basic unit of urban housing construction, which is enclosed by urban arterial highways and which has relatively complete cultural and living welfare facilities,…”⁴⁸

The inner organizational structure of the district and the layout of open spaces have further to most conveniently and economically organize the life and the recreation of residents. The concept of the district comprises the overall arrangement of planned usable area, including the buildings, crafted and open spaces erected in the residential area.

The ideal microdistrict in the Moscow Plan comprised an area of 75 to 125 acres and offered space for 5,000 to 15,000 people.⁴⁹ It therefore made possible a larger scale and had a stronger hierarchical structure than the neighborhood unit. However, the basic principles of spatial organization in the microdistrict were very close to the neighborhood unit, but as Western planning concepts had become unpopular in favor of its soviet counterparts, the neighborhood unit was criticized to be “bourgeois in nature” and “isolated” within the city.⁵⁰ That the two concepts actually were almost equivalent in its principles for spatial and organizational structure becomes clear after having looked at Shui’s comparison. At the time of the Great Leap Forward (1958) the two concepts were more and more synthesized and built a new form of universal urbanism.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 37.

⁴⁷ Shui Yayou was awarded State Council Expert for Special Allowance 国务院特殊津贴专家 in 2012 and is a member of the China Architecture Design and Research Group 中国建筑设计研究院. He has published many articles on architecture and housing in journals such as the *Architectural Journal* 建筑学报, *Housing Science* 住宅科技 or *Urban Planning Overseas* 国外城市规划 dealing with the PRC, France, the US and Singapore.

⁴⁸ Shui, Yayou 水亚佑: “Guowai zhuzhaiqu he xiaoqu de xingzhi yu guimo” 国外住宅区和小区的性质与规模, 1962, pp. 21-22.

⁴⁹ Bater, James H.: *The Soviet City – Ideal and Reality*, 1980, pp. 109-111.

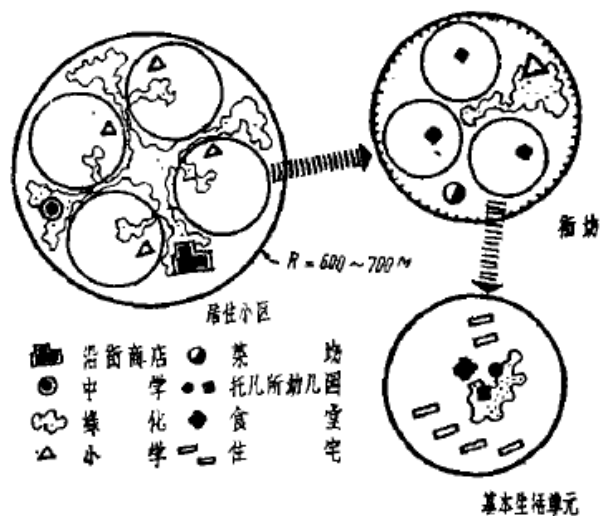
⁵⁰ Lu, Duanfang: *Remaking Chinese Urban Form: Modernity, Scarcity and Space, 1949-2005*, 2006, pp. 31-32.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 40.

Wang Shuoke 王硕克⁵² explained that the building of residential communities at that time was basically carried out in accordance with three concepts: the microdistrict, the neighborhood unit and a synthesized form of both concepts. The author analyzes new planning principles in reference to four xincun 新村 (“new neighborhoods”) in Shanghai: Caoyang 曹杨, Kongjiang 控江, Yunzao 蕴藻 and Pengpu 彭浦, which have been developed between 1959 and 1960. Following the results of these principles, he proposes a three-tier residential system. The system contains a ‘microdistrict’ as well as a ‘neighborhood’.

The smallest element is the ‘basic living unit’ (jiben shenghuo danyuan 基本生活单元), which is made up of housing (rectangular), a dining facility, green spaces, a nursery and a kindergarten (round), as can be seen in the lower right section of figure 1. Conforming to Drummond’s and Perry’s expositions, the facilities and green spaces are located in the center, surrounded by residential housing. This element could already function as a relatively autonomous unit, providing space for about 2,000 people, but is then incorporated into a larger context, the ‘neighborhood’ (jiefang 街坊) which is in the upper right section of figure 1. Exemplarily, in Wang’s scheme, three ‘basic living units’ form one neighborhood. The defining element for the second tier is an elementary school (triangular), which suits the needs from included housing units, that is about 8,000 people. It additionally offers more green spaces and greengrocer’s shops.

Figure 1. Three-tier residential system



Source: Wang, Shuoke: “Juzhu xiaoqu gui Hua”, p. 9.

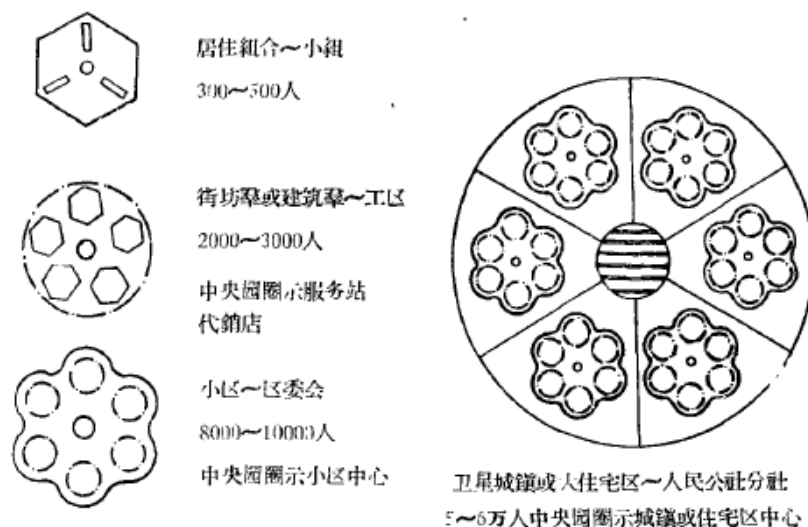
Finally, four second-tier elements are circularly arranged to form the last unit, consisting of about 30,000 people. The ‘residential microdistrict’ (juzhu xiaoqu 居住小区) is defined by another institution, which is not provided by the former two tiers, that is a middle school (an

⁵² Wang, Shuoke 王硕克: “Juzhu xiaoqu gui Hua sheji de shentao” 居住小区规划设计的探讨, 1962, pp. 8-11. The author was one of two members of the China Democratic League (Zhongguo Minzhu Tongmeng 中国民主同盟) at the Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture 北京建筑大学 in 1955, together with Lu Ye 鲁掖. He became committee chairperson of a branch of the China Democratic League at the university one year later. In 1958 he left for working at the Institute for Architecture and Science 建筑科学院. He published another article with the title “Jumindian fenbu gui Hua de yanjiu” 居民点分布规划的研究 (“Research on the Distribution and Planning of Residential Areas”) in 1959, also in the Architectural Journal.

inner and an outer circle). It further contains commercial sites and open spaces for recreation. What is interesting about this unit is that the middle school is located at the boundary section, just as commercial space and not as proposed by Drummond and Perry, in the center. Hereby, some housing units are much further away from this key institution than others. But, as a whole, the final district offers four elementary schools and one middle school, as well as other facilities and open spaces to satisfy the needs of its residents.

In another article by Wang Dingzeng 汪定曾 and Xu Rongchun 徐荣春⁵³ from 1962, a four-tier system is developed. The two authors also base their system on experiences from the Caoyang 曹杨 neighborhood, which they see not as an ideally planned compound, but as a useful basis for organizing residential living. In their portrayal of the different elements, they are not as precise as Wang Shuoke and it is not explicitly listed which sorts of spaces are included in every unit. But in the explanation of the residential community's organizational structure, it is made clear that again, the institutions define the size and scale of every unit.

Figure 2. Four-tier residential system



Source: Wang, Dingzeng; Xu, Rongchun: "Juzhu jianzhu gui Hua sheji", p. 6.

The basic element in their four-tier system is the 'residential association' (juzhu zuhe 居住组合), a small group which consists of 300 to 500 people and is much smaller than the smallest element from Wang Shuoke's three-tier system (hexagonal). According to figure 2, housing is also arranged circularly around the defining element, an elementary school. On the

⁵³ Wang, Dingzeng 汪定曾; Xu, Rongchun 徐荣春: "Juzhu jianzhu gui Hua sheji zhong ji ge wenti de shen tao" 居住建筑规划设计中几个问题的探讨, 1962, pp.6-13.

second level, five of these basic elements are built around a center, which includes different services and shops. Here, the commercial space is directly integrated into the centre and not located at the boundary, as proposed by Drummond and Perry. This ‘neighborhood complex or architectural complex’ (jiefangqun, jianzhuqun 街坊群, 建筑群) now offers space for 2,000 people and takes the shape of a work area (round).

In a next step, six of these complexes are then included into one ‘microdistrict’ (xiaoqu 小区). Similarly, they are arranged around the district center, but it is not specified what the center contains (flower-shape). The microdistrict is set up for 8,000 to 10,000 people and hence can be related to Wang Shuoke’s second tier. Additionally, it is an administrative center, as it is governed by an area committee. Finally, again six of the districts constitute the fourth tier (round), the ‘satellite town or large residential district’ (weixing chengzhen 卫星城镇, da zhuzhaiqu 大住宅区).

The in-depth engagements of Chinese authors with mixed housing forms, including the microdistrict as well as the neighborhood unit show that both concepts had been accepted as effective and economical means to organize residential housing and to restructure the urban landscape in Chinese cities. From then on, basic planning principles were established in a synthesized form and persisted through the period of commune planning in socialist China.

With the different determinations from section two and the understanding of the concept of the neighborhood unit as well as its adaptation to the Chinese cultural context, a definition of the housing model *xiaoqu* can be formulated. From now on, whenever the paper refers to *xiaoqu*, the housing model will be understood as in the following:

Definition

A *xiaoqu* is an area of inhabited land, which

- (1) has an enclosed building form. Conditioned by this form, it is delimited from the rest of the city. Boundaries can be city boundaries (urban arterial roads, fences, gates) or natural boundaries (greenery patches, ponds, slopes, etc.). The enclosed character can not be cut across by thoroughfares.
- (2) has a fixed scope. The scope has to be set under consideration of factors like traffic conditions of the city, natural conditions of topography and population density. The provision of a complete set of living facilities and services so that the needs of residents can be satisfied is determined through application of a rational radius. If the

radius remains within the limits of the estate, an elementary school is set up as its smallest defining element. Further, if the scope is wide enough, the estate may be integrated into the three-tier pattern: juzhuqu (“residential area”) – xiaoqu (“housing estate”) – zutuan (“housing cluster”).

- (3) provides daily living facilities and services for its residents. The provision of facilities and services has to satisfy the needs of its residents. Facilities include institutional facilities, commercial spaces, public spaces, green spaces and possibly cultural facilities. Services refer to all kinds of public services, especially maintenance by a property management company.
- (4) has an inner circulation system. The inner roads shall be systematically arranged and preserve its independent and enclosed character. The intrusion of traffic from the city’s arterial roads has to be avoided.
- (5) is planned and constructed by a real estate developer or several developers in a cooperative project.
- (6) is organized in a ‘neighborhood committee’ (juweihui 居委会). Depending on the degree of self-organization, residents may organize themselves in other forms of committees, e.g. a ‘homeowners committee’ (yezhu weiyuanhui 业主委员会).
- (7) shows a shared lifestyle or ‘culture’ among its residents. This shared lifestyle produces a certain kind of ‘group specificity’, evoked by social differences and visible through aspects like form of access, facilities and services provided or property management.

Now that a clear definition is set, the characteristics of the housing model are explained in more detail.

4. Characteristics of the Housing Model

4.1 Enclosed building form

The most eye-catching and visual shared characteristic of *xiaoqu*, if looked upon from a bird’s eye-perspective, is its enclosed building form. The residential compound forms a visually segregated area from the rest of the city, but is not completely shut off. As indicated above, enclosure does not always have to be obtained by a physical enclosure. There can be fences and gates set up around the residential compound, but arterial streets behind the buildings or natural boundaries can have the same function. In many residential compounds, one or several

entrances are marked through archways, which quite often incorporate the driveway of the compound but do not have extra gates. However, if the communities are gated, the entrance may further be supervised by a guard or the gate might be locked electronically and limit access to local residents.

The practice of enclosing the living area and to separate private from public life is rooted in ancient Chinese planning traditions. Just as Mesopotamia or the Indus valley, the North China plain is one of the regions where urban construction first emerged. Whenever the “ancient Chinese city” is mentioned in the following, it is precisely referred to planning traditions from the North China plain. According to Abramson, from the 10 largest cities in the world of the early 16th century, there were four in China. But as distinguished from modern urban development, the city in ancient China was not just an economical center. In contrast, it was a ritual and cosmological center, based on principles that ensured the legitimacy of the state. These planning principles supposedly originate from a canon of city layout, dating back to the Zhou dynasty (eleventh century BC to 256 BC).⁵⁴ Following the practice of the Zhou, the building of planned capital cities was a common practice to legitimate newly established dynasties, as well as to move the capital when the dynasty was threatened by military and political challenges or natural disasters.

Furthermore, there are some morphological features inherent in the design of ancient Chinese cities, especially imperial capitals, which persisted in urban planning over time. The ancient Chinese imagined the earth in the form of a square. According to the legend transmitted in the Shang shu 尚书, the hero-emperor Yu 禹 tamed the floods and divided ancient China into nine regions (jiuzhou 九州). The denotation for present-day China, “Middle Kingdom” (Zhongguo 中国), results from this legend, where it was located in the center of the nine regions and therefore simultaneously in the center of the world. The capital, as seat of the ruler, was symbolically perceived as microcosm corresponding to the world as a whole. The layout of the ideal royal Zhou city therefore had a square form, oriented on the cardinal directions, and consisted of nine units with the royal palace being situated in the center.⁵⁵

There are two elements of cosmic symbolism which were crucial traditional urban planning ideals: cardinal orientation and axuality. Cardinal orientation was applied to the square form of the city outline as well as individual elements of the city structure. For instance, thoroughfares

⁵⁴ Abramson, Daniel B.: “Urban Planning in China: Continuity and Change”, 2006, p. 198.

⁵⁵ Xu, Yinong: *The Chinese City in Space and Time: The Development of Urban Form in Suzhou*, 2000, pp. 34-35.

were oriented on the cardinal directions and thus ran straight towards the administrative center.⁵⁶ The ancient Chinese city was further characterized by the main axis running from south to north. This axis symbolized the celestial meridian and was of much greater importance than any street running from east to west. Consequently, the function of this axis was symbolic and not mainly visual as with the avenues in the European context.⁵⁷

Official buildings of high rank were lined up along the axis and faced south. Compliant with geomancy, the most powerful positions in the city were in the center and towards the north. Spatial organization thus revealed status and power structures in the city, the monument at the top of the hierarchy being placed directly on the north-south axis⁵⁸. The strictness wherewith these symbolic principles were effectuated declined with a city's rank in the administrative hierarchy. While Wheatley states that smaller cities oriented themselves towards the morphological features of the capital, Xu takes up a more skeptical position. He argues that regional and local administrative centers can not be considered miniatures of imperial capitals, as regional and local governments bear a completely different role from the Emperor, who was "commissioned by Heaven".⁵⁹

The above described principles certainly can not be universally applied to cities of different regions and hierarchical levels in China, given that there was not only the planned city, but also naturally sprawling settlements. However, that traditional urban planning concepts do matter can be seen in the tragedy of Anting 安亭, the German 'New Town' in Shanghai. One of the reasons why the newly built residential area remained unoccupied for years was the orientation of the residential units. Johannes Dell from the architectural office Albert Speer & Partner built the town according to a German understanding of space and had to realize later on that Chinese homeowners only want housing which faces south, a symbol of status that compels respect in the community.⁶⁰

Another characteristic whose influence can easily be identified in today's housing model *xiaoqu* is the erection of walls and gates. The ancient Chinese city showed different kinds of walls, like inner and outer walls with a number of different denotations depending on their

⁵⁶ Gaubatz, Piper R.: *Beyond the Great Wall: Urban Form and Transformations on the Chinese Frontiers*, 1996, p. 127.

⁵⁷ Wheatley, Paul: *The Pivot of the Four Quarters: A Preliminary Enquiry into the Origins and Character of the Ancient Chinese City*, 1971, p. 425.

⁵⁸ Wu, Weiping; Gaubatz, Piper R.: *The Chinese City*, 2013, p. 56.

⁵⁹ Xu, Yinong: *The Chinese City in Space and Time: The Development of Urban Form in Suzhou*, 2000, pp. 59-66.

⁶⁰ Schmidt, Thomas E.: "Ein Albtraum namens Anting", 2011, last accessed on 12.10.2013 under the URL: <http://www.zeit.de/2011/41/Germantown-Shanghai>.

function in the overall structure. And so, high walls which were built around courtyards in order to shield oneself were called *qiang* 牆, whereas the denotation *bi* 壁 was used for walls that fended something off and provided shelter from the wind and the cold. In turn, *yuan* 垣 connoted the wall's use for protective reasons and was a term applied to low walls one could lean on.⁶¹

While walls and gates both held symbolic and defensive functions, such as to enable the limitation and control of city access, walls additionally fulfilled a third function. Together with some other basic elements like a street grid and monumental structures, the walls and gates formed a superstructure which defined the city as a whole. Ancient Chinese city plans often only show this superstructure which in turn set the cardinal directions and therefore was much more significant than, for example, residential buildings. How defining the walls were for the city as a whole is expressed in the Chinese character *cheng* 城 which bears both meanings, “city” and “wall”.⁶²

But the walls also spatially differentiated public and private places in the city according to the hierarchical order. Administrative compounds, the so-called *yamen* 衙门, were built in the architectural layout of courtyards. They had a square form and were arranged along south to north axes. A compound consisted of several courtyards which were walled on the sides and had gateways at the corners to close one courtyard off from the others. The structure proceeded from public to private with the degree of privacy increasing the nearer the center.⁶³ This physical layout was applied to imperial complexes such as the Forbidden City in Beijing but could also be found in the smallest units of the city, the residential wards. Residential wards were built in the spaces enclosed by the grid pattern of the streets and comprised several courtyard dwellings. The inhabitants of these courtyards had clan or native-place ties and each ward was walled and gated so that it could be shut off at night.⁶⁴

This perception of the city as a microcosm seems familiar when thinking of the direct translation of the term *xiaoqu*. It is important to bring to mind once again that a microcosm can not be considered equivalent to a totally self-sufficient community. Even though the city was considered a symbolical replica of the cosmos and the residential wards were built in the square form imitating the walled city, interchange was carried out through the gates. Although

⁶¹ Xu, Yinong: *The Chinese City in Space and Time: The Development of Urban Form in Suzhou*, 2000, p. 197.

⁶² Wheatley, Paul: *The Pivot of the Four Quarters: A Preliminary Enquiry into the Origins and Character of the Ancient Chinese City*, 1971, p. 182.

⁶³ Wu, Weiping; Gaubatz, Piper R.: *The Chinese City*, 2013, p. 57.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 62.

this translation derives from its Russian model, basic principles of urban planning like the cellular structure of the wards asserted themselves and are a major characteristic of *xiaoqu* in urban areas today.

4.2 Public facilities and services

Another important characteristic which comes third in the definition of *xiaoqu* is the provision of daily living facilities and services. These public facilities and services are managed and maintained by private companies or in cooperation with organizations of the homeowners, like the “homeowners’ committee”. The scale of facilities provided depends on the type of housing compound and its exclusiveness. Generally, there is a stronger focus on facilities in merely “commercial housing estates”, because real estate developers try to dissociate themselves from competitors. The equipment with public facilities and services is further an important characteristic in view of social differentiation of the housing estate groups (see section five). Services include for instance security measures, such as guards controlling who enters the compound, waste segregation, parking attendants, or facility management.

There is a wide range of facilities which can be provided in such urban housing estates. The space between the housing units is often used for parking slots, as subterranean parking space is very limited and more and more urban residents can afford to buy at least one car. With the environment and greening having become an important issue for urban residents in recent years, public parks and places for a rest are structured in the compound centers or between two buildings. Furthermore, housing compounds can include educational institutions, like kindergartens, elementary and middle schools or facilities which are regularly frequented in daily life, like banks or post offices. There are all kinds of shops in urban housing compounds, not only for commodities, but also barbershops, copy shops and photographers. Depending on the size and exclusiveness of the estate, cultural facilities like libraries or dancing halls may be provided. Finally, there can be facilities for leisure activities as well as physical education, like gymnasiums, public swimming pools or movie centers.

The close connection between living facilities and services, and housing in urban China developed from the Mao Era, when membership in a work-unit was one of the defining characteristics of an urban resident and not only structured daily life, but made life in the city possible in the first place. The work-unit had its peak period as basic element of society from the mid-1960s until well into the 1990s. Because of its universal role to organize and control urban life, the *danwei* could assume different forms, the most common being the SOE where

all kinds of goods and services were produced. But the work-unit could just as well be a government department or a nonprofit public-service unit, still owned by the government.⁶⁵

Even today, work-units are more than an economic entity which regulates production. They also have political and social functions. Apart from composing a structure of governance, they provide relative job security and a number of social services, like health care services, access to primary and middle school education, and low-cost housing. The central role of the *danwei* for urban life is illustrated in Naughton's words. He denoted it as "fundamental building block, or cell, of urban society", which "had the physical form of a cell, with a perimeter brick wall enclosing a nucleus of productive activity". He goes even as far as to name the *danwei* a "microcosm of urban society".⁶⁶ This alignment with urban planning principles immediately suggests considering the work-unit even more than an administrative, social and economical structure. Indeed, scholars increasingly propose to look upon the work-unit under a spatial aspect, as well and to treat it as urban form.⁶⁷

If the *danwei* is regarded as a spatial framework, it signifies the integration of work, residence and social life. In contrast to Western industrialized countries where the place of residence tends to be separated from the place of work, the CCP used the *danwei* as a mechanism to assign people to housing depending on which workplace they were employed in. Based on the 'company town' introduced in section three, the territorial unit was divided in a living quarter (*shenghuo qu* 生活区) and a working quarter (*gongchang shengchan qu* 工厂生产区), with people employed in the same *danwei* also living in this *danwei*'s living quarter, given that the work-unit had enough resources. Besides, it provided a number of social facilities required in everyday life, like nurseries, schools, food markets, playing fields and others. The scale and quality of facilities increased with a higher rank in the administrative hierarchy.

Despite the *danweis* having been structured in a hierarchical system with housing being distributed according to such criteria as rank, job seniority or marital status, residential segregation was relatively low within the work-unit. Disparities rather existed between different *danweis*, because the higher their status in the administrative hierarchy the more funding and the better equipment they received. But in the unit itself, spatial equality had reached a high level. As residential space and space of production were located very close to

⁶⁵ Naughton, Barry: *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth*, 2007, p. 117.

⁶⁶ Naughton, Barry: *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth*, 2007, p. 118.

⁶⁷ See Lu, Duanfang: *Remaking Chinese Urban Form: Modernity, Scarcity and Space, 1949-2005*, 2006, pp. 51-67, and Bjorklund, E. M.: "The Danwei: Socio-Spatial Characteristics of Work Units in China's Urban Society", 1986, pp. 19-29.

each other, space was also never used exclusively and spatial as well as temporal crossings between work and home were much in evidence.

Bjorklund describes how social life functions as connective element between workplace and residence. When residents gather for spare time activities like sports or informal visits, they acquire the space most suiting their purpose. Similarly, the encounter of persons may take place in stairways, on sidewalks, on roadways, in front of apartments or outside the factory. This way, a part of a work space or domestic space can temporarily become a social space. If work place and living area are separated through a wall, the gate enables such a diversified use of space. But, it is also not uncommon that green and open spaces or roadways are the only boundary between these socioeconomic areas with social services being intermingled.⁶⁸

Although residents of *xiaoqu* mostly work outside of their residential community, the coexistence between public and private space persisted in “modern” urban housing estates. Through the provision of public facilities, different socioeconomic areas are united in a *xiaoqu* with the allotment of space being clear-cut. However, the exact location of these facilities can vary. Zhu Changzhong already named two possibilities in his definition, where the facilities can be scattered around the estate or be arranged at the main entrance.

While spatial arrangement of and equipment with public facilities are mostly an issue in the planning period of a *xiaoqu*, public services become important later on to ensure a certain standard of living. Such a common feature which can be found in every residential community is maintenance by a property management company. Because of the large number of housing units in one compound and the different ownership situations, that is some people are living for rent and others own their apartments, residents in these compounds have different interests of preservation and utilization. The management companies are charged with the maintenance of public facilities, management and public services within one compound, after it has been completed by the real estate developer. The residents have to pay this company management fees (wuye guanli fei 物业管理费) every month, which are calculated according to the number of square meters of every housing unit’s living area. This way, residents with larger apartments also have to pay a larger share of facility maintenance, etc. However, regardless of whether one is apartment owner or has only rented the housing, residents usually do not have a say in how the fee they pay to the management company is

⁶⁸ Bjorklund, E. M.: “The Danwei: Socio-Spatial Characteristics of Work Units in China's Urban Society”, 1986, pp. 22-23.

used. This, in turn, may result in conflicts between residents and management companies and encourage the formation of homeowners' committees.

4.3 Social and structural features

While housing estates comparable to nowadays *xiaoqu* have been built by work-units for their employees in the Mao Era, residential communities in contemporary Chinese cities are mainly constructed by private real estate developers. A housing estate is usually developed as well-planned construction project by one real estate developer or in cooperation of several developers. Moreover, it may be constructed on the basis of contracts made with the *danwei* or the state. On that account, there may appear different types of housing in one compound. The compounds may comprise “commercial housing”, housing still owned by work-units or even certain types of social welfare housing (e.g. *jingji shiyong fang* 经济适用房 “affordable housing”). This not uncommonly leads to conflicts among homeowners who have purchased their dwelling unit in the same compound under different circumstances.

Furthermore, the type of housing can change over time. At the beginning, when the *xiaoqu* is constructed, the property structure is relatively clear, with the above-mentioned three types of “commercial housing”, work-unit housing and social welfare housing possibly occurring. The real estate developer primarily constructs condominiums which can be sold. But when the first generation of homeowners moves out, they can sell their apartment as “housing that has been previously sold on the market” (*ershoufang* 二手房) or rent it out, depending on whether they have full or partial property rights. If social welfare housing is concerned, there are very strict regulations on when an estate can be conveyed, in the case of “affordable housing” only after five years.⁶⁹ So if the *xiaoqu* has been completed a certain time ago, the property structure becomes dynamic and homeowners as well as tenants may live next to each other.

It is important to know that dwelling units in *xiaoqu* can be for rent, but the paper will focus on first generation residents that are homeowners, because they simultaneously form a social interest group. As some scholars have noted, homeownership status can serve as criterion for identification with the emerging social stratum of the Chinese “middle class”. Li Zhang explains that homeownership status, shared consumer practices and property-based activism are part of the ‘everyday processes of class-making’ by which individuals reshape their

⁶⁹ Document No. 258 of 7 ministries (建住房 (2007) 258 号): “Jingji shiyong zhufang guanli banfa” 经济适用房管理办法, 2007, last accessed on 5.12.2013 under the URL: http://www.gov.cn/zwqk/2007-12/01/content_822414.htm.

identity.⁷⁰ Luigi Tomba also sees homeownership as decisive factor of social mobility and goes as far as to state that access to the privatization of housing often determines social status more than income. Residents of ‘gated communities’ which have been shaped through the commercialization of housing are no longer tied to traditional workplace relations and increasingly engage in activities based on collective interests.⁷¹

Homeownership therefore can be one of the identity-establishing criterions which encourages residents to organize themselves, among others in “homeowners’ committees” (yezhu weiyuanhui 业主委员会) to defend their rights and interests towards real estate developers or property management companies. While neighborhood administration had been handled by branches of the state in Maoist and Post-Mao periods, “homeowners’ committees” have been officially authorized only at the end of the 1990s and shall pose a challenge to established institutions.⁷² Their efficiency varies with the committees’ degree of independence and declines with the degree of control exerted by the real estate developer. Demonstrations and property-based activism are the expression of homeowners’ collective resistance against rights violations such as poor quality of housing, low compensations for housing demolition or changes of construction plans. An example for such a form of collective resistance where homeowners were partially successful was the “Lijiang Garden” 丽江花园 case in Guangzhou.⁷³

Another shared characteristic of *xiaoqu* which has been neglected in former definitions is its administrative organization. To understand this concept better, again a parallel is drawn to the ancient Chinese city. The ancient Chinese city functioned as administrative center integrated into a hierarchical system. Following this system, each urban center of a certain rank administered another urban center which was placed on a lower hierarchical level. For example, a county-level urban center administered the rural areas assigned to it and itself was put under the jurisdiction of a prefectural-level city. The state utilized this administrative

⁷⁰ Zhang, Li: *In Search of Paradise: Middle-Class Living in a Chinese Metropolis*, 2010, p. 8.

⁷¹ Tomba, Luigi: “Creating an Urban Middle Class: Social Engineering in Beijing”, 2004, pp. 6, 11.

⁷² Read, Benjamin L.: “Democratizing the Neighbourhood? New Private Housing and Home-Owner Self-Organization in Urban China”, 2003, p. 32.

⁷³ In 2002, a real estate company constructed a neighborhood nearby “Lijiang Garden” in Guangzhou and therefore built a road on “Lijiang Garden” land to connect the building to an existing roadway. The construction was not included in the plan approved by the city government and meant noise as well as environmental pollution for the residents. They were organized in a “homeowners’ committee”, but the committee remained inactive as it was largely controlled by the developer. The residents took collective action themselves and achieved significant concessions from the developer, such as the planting of trees next to the road and other measures for the reduction of noise and dust.

For further information see Cai, Yongshun: “China’s Moderate Middle Class: The Case of Homeowners’ Resistance”, 2005, pp. 783-789.

hierarchy to monitor the urban population and to control population mobility. This historic pattern of administering urban space is still applied in Chinese cities today and even ranges to levels below the municipality. Besides the urban structure of the *jiedao* (街道 “streets”) which refers to a subdistrict, many residential communities are governed by a *jumin weiyuanhui* (居民委员会 “neighborhood committee”).⁷⁴ As smallest element of urban spatial government, the “neighborhood committee” plays a crucial role for inhabitants of *xiaoqu*, because it sets the administrative framework in which the communities can develop.

Finally, it is important to know which population stratum occupies dwelling units in *xiaoqu*. But because of the different possibilities to get access to this form of housing, a precise answer to this question is problematic. Tomba speaks of “a large number of middle-to-high income earners”.⁷⁵ According to him, it is possible to locate the very first group of homeowners in *xiaoqu* that is the group of people who profited from economic reforms and “got rich first” as a result of the government’s attempt to foster housing consumption (*xianfu qunti* 先富群体). This target group already expanded in the 1990s to urban professionals and skilled employees in the public as well as the private sector. Nowadays it is not sufficient to treat economic factors as the only determinants for obtaining a dwelling unit in a particular residential area, but administrative barriers or cultural divisions can also play an important role. It is therefore more helpful to conceive the group of *xiaoqu* inhabitants in terms of shared characteristics which can be a consumer identity, a high willingness to invest in education, the status of ‘homeowner’, privileged access to housing and employment in a position where a certain level of responsibility is required.⁷⁶ Furthermore, they often show a shared lifestyle or ‘culture’, as will be explained in the following section.

4.4 Shared lifestyle or ‘culture’

In the maoist system, *danweis* were the defining element of spatial organization in urban residential areas. They not only formed economical and political units, but through the supplementary relationship between work-unit and neighborhood system created a community atmosphere and provided residents with a social identity based on an enclosed environment secured with gates. *Xiaoqu* which resemble the design and spatial structure of the *danwei* in important aspects partly took over this function of identification. While the criterion for

⁷⁴ Xu, Yinong: *The Chinese City in Space and Time: The Development of Urban Form in Suzhou*, 2000, p.199.

⁷⁵ Tomba, Luigi: “Creating an Urban Middle Class: Social Engineering in Beijing”, 2004, p. 5.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

identification formerly was employment in a *danwei*, residents of *xiaoqu* are connected through a shared lifestyle or ‘culture’.

It is in the course of the privatization of housing that demands and expectations of Chinese homeowners dramatically changed. In addition to a popular form of investment, the private home became a place of affluence to practice cultural distinction and cultivate ‘new concepts of living’. This change in expectations can be structured in a three-tier process, starting from a merely material priority over an increasing focus on a clean and proper environment to the cultivation of a common ‘culture’. In the 1980s, when the new stratum of home buyers just emerged and the majority of urban housing still was complimentary provided by the work-unit as compensation for low wages, the physical house was of central importance. In the 1990s, home buyers became environmentally more conscious and started to pay attention to community greenery (*lǐhuà* 绿化) and ecology (*shēngtài* 生态).⁷⁷

With the beginning of the 21st century, their focus further shifted to cultural taste (*wénhuà pǐnwèi* 文化品位) as part of home buyers’ cultivation of a certain lifestyle which in turn contributes to their identification with the community. The importance of a shared lifestyle or ‘culture’ within a residential community has simultaneously been fostered as marketing strategy by real estate developers. As they can no longer solely rely on contracts with work-units or the state, they changed their marketing strategy from the selling of apartments to a selling of images and ‘new concepts of living’. This strategy is expressed in the way newly developed housing estates are advertised as found by Li Zhang, as well as the increasing popularity of Western-style housing in the form of “Townhouses” and “villas” (*bieshù* 别墅).

The cultivation of culture within a *xiaoqu* can be expressed in different ways. The *xiaoqu* hereby has the role to enable this cultivation through the provision of facilities needed or the creation of other prerequisites. Examples for the cultivation of culture through special facilities are the visiting of libraries or public spaces linked to arts and music, like galleries, dancing stages, etc. Another very central way of cultivating a shared lifestyle is conspicuous consumption. Homeownership and community choice themselves are already part of performing social status. Within the *xiaoqu*, conspicuous consumption is practiced in terms of home’s interior design, car ownership or clothing style.⁷⁸ Again, integrated living facilities like ground-level and underground parking spaces or commercial spaces including all kinds of shops are set up to satisfy the needs of the residents.

⁷⁷ Zhang, Li: *In Search of Paradise: Middle-Class Living in a Chinese Metropolis*, 2010, p. 79.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 123.

A third way to pursue a shared lifestyle in a *xiaoqu* is the engagement in leisure activities. These can range from collective chess-playing in open spaces such as public places to the joining of the community clubhouse (huisuo 会所), depending on the financial capabilities of the residents. The practicing of different kinds of sports also belongs to these activities, with some *xiaoqu* showing their own tennis courts, gymnasiums or swimming halls. While activities practiced with neighbors include all kinds of basic interaction, among them the visiting of playgrounds with one's children as well as the elderly gathering for physical exercises, more exclusive activities like the membership in a fee-based clubhouse are centered on the gaining of prestige.

For many residents, the opportunities of their children's education are a central aspect of decision-making. Not uncommonly, it is a major criterion for their choice of the residential community they buy a home in, just as in the story told in the introduction. As education is further decisive for future career prospects and the maintenance of social status, the enablement to go to a good school is part of the residents' cultivation of culture. Depending on the size of the community, there can be set up an elementary school or as well a middle school in the *xiaoqu*. Especially business-owners who profited from economic reforms but did not enjoy higher education themselves are often criticized by society for their lack in *suzhi* (素质 "character, quality"). These parents are striving to enable their children access to premium education and extracurricular activities in hope for status protection.⁷⁹ The tendency of parents choosing their dwellings according to the educational opportunities for their child has also been found by Zhen Jinghui 甄静慧. The author explains that it is clearly regulated which elementary school the residents from which residential district (jiedao 街道) can get access to and the elementary school in turn determines the middle school, so that parents have to take these regulations into consideration.⁸⁰

Depending on the social background of residents, there are much more ways in which they cultivate a shared lifestyle. One example is the keeping of a pet dog and another one the employment of a nanny. If a broader framework is set, residents also show a resembling social background. But as the allocation of housing is not exclusively carried out by the Chinese real estate market, this criterion is partially disturbed through the provision of *danwei*-housing or social welfare programs. The proportion of a shared lifestyle among homeowners is higher the

⁷⁹ Zhang, Li: *In Search of Paradise: Middle-Class Living in a Chinese Metropolis*, 2010, p. 124.

⁸⁰ Zhen, Jinghui 甄静慧: "Qiangduo 'xuequfang' de beihou" 抢夺《学区房》的背后, 2011, p. 56.

more homogeneous the social background of inhabitants in a *xiaoqu*, because its cultivation is an important part of identity formation and social status.

5. Classification of *xiaoqu*

Although *xiaoqu* have some shared characteristics like the enclosed building form, public facilities and services and the maintenance of their compound by a management company, they are not the same in every place of the Chinese city. There are significant differences between *xiaoqu* in reference to architectural form and design, but apparently also in terms of wealth and social status. These differences are already revealed in the name of different housing estates, as observed by Hong⁸¹. According to the author, the commercialization of housing led to a more diverse demand of society with regard to their dwellings. Names of residential communities from *fujia huayuan* 富家花园 (“Garden of wealthy homes”) over *chengshi xincun* 城市新村 (“Urban new town”) to *lianjia zhuzhai* 廉价住宅 (“low-price residence”) reflect the different housing needs of high, middle and low-income classes. There can generally be observed trends in naming, like names of European towns for high-level neighborhoods, which will be explained further in the following.

Corresponding to the many and varied characteristics of *xiaoqu*, as seen in the preceding section, there are different possibilities of classifying them. While the method of classification by Wu and Sheng⁸² is helpful to reveal social differences between *xiaoqus* within one city and to show their characteristic of a shared lifestyle or ‘culture’, it seems not to be applicable in terms of coherence between spatial structure and social composition of residential communities. Firstly, the authors draw on research conducted in Suzhou, a city with a long tradition and historical development, which is adopted in their theoretical framework. However, the housing model *xiaoqu* is also a phenomenon of the great number of new emerging cities, where residential communities are entirely planned and city centers are newly created without regards for preservation. Secondly, numerical monthly income of residents is a determining factor in their line of argument. This approach, if only applied to one city in a certain time frame can indeed make clear social differentiation between *xiaoqus*, but it is

⁸¹ Hong, Liangping 洪亮平: “Wo guo chengshi zhuzhai xiaoqu guihua jianshe de xin fazhan” 我国城市住宅小区规划建设的新发展, 1995, p. 62.

⁸² Wu, Fang 吴芳; Sheng, Chengmao 盛承懋: “Guanyu wo guo chengshi zhuzhai xiaoqu shehuixue leixing de diaocha yu sikao” 关于我国城市住宅小区社会学类型的调查与思考, 2005, pp. 47-51.

hardly transferable to other cities as wage levels differ widely among different urban areas. Furthermore, Chinese real estate prices are extremely dynamic, so that a certain level of income does not designate equivalent standards of inhabitation.

Consequently, the paper takes up a more general approach, referring to housing type, the way residents can obtain their dwellings and social characteristics of the inhabitants as major principles of classifying *xiaoqu*. Social and economic backgrounds are taken into consideration in terms of professional groups rather than monthly income. Scholars increasingly turn to factors other than income to mark social stratification⁸³, which they see as a misleading criterion due to the rapid economic development and a constantly changing social structure in Chinese cities.

The classification follows two studies by Tomba and Tang⁸⁴ as well as Zhang and Ong, which divide residential communities into different groups. Tomba and Tang have done research on gated residential communities in Shenyang 沈阳 and identified three groups of housing compounds according to the way housing provided in the compound can be acquired. The first group is the so-called “commercial housing estate” (*shangpin fang xiaoqu* 商品房小区). Housing units from this group can solely be bought at market prices from the real estate market.

The second group they found contains housing compounds sponsored and controlled by work-units and government departments. The institutions fund the upgrading of housing conditions and provide extra discount or monetary compensations for the purchase of these housing units. The final group is a mixed form of commercial housing and work-unit sponsored dwellings. What has not been directly included into their classification but frequently appears in the housing model *xiaoqu* are commercial types of “guaranteed housing” (*baozhangxing zhufang* 保障性住房), which is subsidized by the state and can therefore be purchased by residents on prices significantly lower than the market price, like “affordable housing” or “resettlement housing” (*dongqianfang* 动迁房).

Zhang and Ong’s classification includes these types of subsidized housing and focuses more on the social stratification expressed through different residential communities. They rely on

⁸³ Zhang, Li: “Private Homes, Distinct Lifestyles: Performing a New Middle Class”, in: Zhang, Li; Ong, Aihwa (ed.): *Privatizing China: Socialism from Afar*, 2008, pp. 23-40.

Goodman, David S.G. (ed.): *The New Rich in China: Future rulers, present lives*, 2008.

⁸⁴ Tomba, Luigi; Tang, Beibei: “The Forest City: Homeownership and new wealth in Shenyang”, in: Goodman, David S.G. (ed.): *The New Rich in China: Future rulers, present lives*, 2008, pp. 171-186.

research conducted in Kunming 昆明 and draw sharp lines between the groups they identified, fixed with a precise amount of property value. Corresponding to the first group from Tomba and Tang, high-level neighborhoods contain only “commercial housing” and are marked through different housing types, like “gardens” (huayuan 花园) or townhouses/villas (bieshu 别墅). This group is therefore simply named “Gardens” and “Villas”.

The second group, the “Middle-Stratum Neighborhoods” (zhongdang xiaoqu 中档小区), is a mixed form with housing having been commercially developed, but with a complex social composition because of the different ways to obtain the housing units. Residents can either buy the apartments on the market similar to housing from group one or the dwellings are sold to them by the *danwei* on a subsidized rate. The last group is also mixed and comprises even another type of housing. It can include the same forms as group two, that is housing constructed by real estate developers and then sold on the market or by the *danwei*, as well as commercial types of “guaranteed housing”, which is subsidized by the state. This group can be distinguished from group two through its lower income and lower property values, respectively. The authors term this group “Gongxin Neighborhoods”, as they are marked by the residents’ fixed salary (gongxin 工薪).

In the following the paper will classify *xiaoqu* into three groups oriented on the classifications presented above. It is important to note that the boundaries between the three groups are not fixed and because of the dynamic development of the real estate market, the ways housing estates can be acquired not uncommonly change over time. As the social composition of *xiaoqu* is of peculiar interest, it is useful to divide the housing estates according to the residents’ different social status expressed through professional occupation. Because of the large divergence in real estate prices among different regions in China and their rapid change over time, a fixed monetary classification of housing estates and residents will be avoided.

The three groups of *xiaoqu* are ***gongxin jieceng xiaoqu*** 工薪阶层小区 (“lower-income neighborhoods”), ***zhongdang xiaoqu*** 中档小区 (“mid-level neighborhoods”) and ***gaodang xiaoqu*** 高档小区 (“high-level neighborhoods”). There is a social hierarchy between the groups with inhabitants of *gongxin jieceng xiaoqu* having the lowest and residents in *gaodang xiaoqu* having the highest social status. But yet the gap between the different groups is varyingly wide. While there is a significant and apparent gap between “high-level” and “mid-level” neighborhoods, the distance between “mid-level” and “lower-income” neighborhoods is not always obvious through characteristics like better facilities or a better geographic

location. The lowest group has therefore purposely not been named *didang xiaoqu* 低档小区 (“low-level neighborhood”), as its significant characteristic is the residents’ fixed income, as well as the way they can obtain their dwelling unit, but not necessarily a lower level in living quality. In contrast, the group with the highest social status has been termed *gaodang xiaoqu*, because it additionally contains other types of housing, not exclusively “gardens and villas” as in the study by Zhang and Ong.

It is therefore necessary to differentiate the groups from one another under several aspects. *Gaodang* and *zhongdang xiaoqu* primarily differ in facilities and services provided by the housing estate as well as the tendency to organize themselves and defend their interests. While the difference between *gongxin jieceng* and *zhongdang xiaoqu* lies in the way residents get access to it and the performance of property management. Another difference between the three groups is their approach to space. In *gaodang xiaoqu* there are more exclusive forms of open spaces, where the relatively homogenous group of residents can meet and cultivate a shared lifestyle. In addition to the more scattered social composition of *zhongdang* and *gongxin jieceng xiaoqu*, they are less segregated and community life takes place in basic public spaces like playgrounds or recreation facilities.

In the analysis, exemplary *xiaoqu* of each group will therefore be examined with regard to the relevant aspects, starting with “lower-income neighborhoods”.

5.1 Gongxin jieceng xiaoqu 工薪阶层小区

Gongxin jieceng xiaoqu or “lower-income neighborhoods” contain the lowest forms of housing which can be acquired as housing property. The various types of housing that can be found in these neighborhoods differ in the purpose for which they were constructed. The first type contains “commercial housing”. Because real estate developers increasingly turn to the construction of more exclusive *xiaoqu* where housing units can be sold for more profit, housing estates which only contain “commercial housing” on this level are comparatively few. But there are estates comprising “resettlement housing” which is constructed on behalf of city and provincial governments and therefore more marketable. This form provides a new home for relocated families who had to move to make room for large-scale urban development projects. The former homes of these families have usually been located near the city core.

The second type is housing developed under contract with specific *danwei*. Here, real estate developers directly negotiate with the *danwei* which then sells the dwellings to their

employees at significantly lower prices than the market price. This housing type also occurs in the group of *zhongdang xiaoqu*. The final form is housing built for lower-income families in the context of state-promoted housing projects and at an affordable price. This “affordable housing” is the one type of social welfare housing which is for sale and not for rent. The local governments make deals with the real estate developers and offer them benefits like special loans or tax breaks, so that a fixed amount of the housing units has to be sold to lower-income households who have qualified themselves for the purchase. The earliest project in this mould was the “Stable Living Project” (*anju gongcheng* 安居工程). Later on, the government launched a more diversified project with different kinds of social housing under the designation “guaranteed housing” (*baozhangxing zhufang* 保障性住房) of which “affordable housing” is part.

As these housing compounds are “salary-” or “wage-based communities”, the target groups are residents with relatively fixed incomes. Facilities and services provided in such *xiaoqu* therefore satisfy basic needs of the residents but do not offer any more exclusive features found in estates of the “high-level neighborhoods” for example. They include basic educational and commercial sites as well as green spaces and public spaces where residents can practice their social life. But they do not have extra cultural facilities like museums or art galleries.

Corresponding to the definition, the residents are organized in a neighborhood committee. In theory, the neighborhood committee should be a self-governing organization of the residents of a housing estate at the grassroots level. Through ‘self-management, self-education and self-service’ it is supposed to deal with the different problems arising among the residents and act as mediator, to safeguard the residents’ rights and interests in accordance with the law and to provide public services.⁸⁵ Furthermore, the neighborhood committee has a monitoring and enforcement function. On one hand, it should report the residents’ opinions and demands to the government and on the other hand it should ensure compliance with governmental regulations such as public health or family planning.

It is not entirely clear to what extent the neighborhood committee itself has to be considered a governmental organization. Town and municipal governments are to ‘help and support, but not intervene in the work of the committees. According to Benewick et al., the Party branch

⁸⁵ Quanguo Renmin Daibiao Dahui Changwu Weiyuanhui 全国人民代表大会常务委员会: *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo chengshi jumin weiyuanhui zuzhifa* 中华人民共和国城市居民委员会组织法, 1989, article two and three.

plays a ‘core role in leadership’, but the Party itself was not mentioned in the Organic Law on Urban Residents’ Committees. When the law was adopted, party control in urban areas was primarily exercised through the *danwei* which was responsible for the provision of basic services and welfare. The neighborhood committees were either responsible for more trivial and intrusive tasks, like distributing newspapers or collecting fees.⁸⁶ However, in *gongxin jieceng xiaoqu*, neighborhood committees play an important role, as will be shown later on.

Because the profit real estate developers can make with housing units from these groups is limited, the property management services they offer are also limited and the function they take on is not as important for community life as for the other two groups of *xiaoqu*. As community bonds are stronger between residents, they take on many tasks themselves in form of voluntary work which normally should be carried out by the property management companies, like the guarding of community entrances. This organization in voluntary work projects is part of the residents’ shared lifestyle, along with other activities practiced in the estate’s open spaces.

Now that the characteristics of a *gongxin jieceng xiaoqu* have been outlined, an example representative for this group shall be analyzed.

Shanghai Sanlinyuan 三林苑

“Sanlin Garden” (Sanlinyuan 三林苑) is a *xiaoqu* located in the city of Shanghai in the southwestern region of “Pudong New Area” (Pudong xinqu 浦东新区). It has been constructed at the beginning of the 1990s as a pilot project and has later been honored as most outstanding pilot district by the Chinese Ministry of Construction. In 1986 the Ministry for the first time launched three pilot projects of neighborhood construction (*shidian xiaoqu* 试点小区) in the cities of Tianjin 天津, Jinan 济南 and Wuxi 无锡.⁸⁷ In the second round, “Sanlin Garden” was built as the second pilot district in Shanghai and the first one in “Pudong New Area”. The housing estate was built in less than two years with construction having started in May 1994 and the project being completed in January 1996.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Benewick, Robert; Tong, Irene; Howell, Jude: “Self-Governance and Community: A Preliminary Comparison between Villager’s Committees and Urban Community Councils”, 2004, pp. 13-14.

⁸⁷ Jianshebu xinxi zhongxin 建设部信息中心: “Quanguo chengshi zhuzhai shidian xiaoqu yi da 244 ge” 全国城市住宅试点小区已达 244 个, 1997, p. 6.

⁸⁸ Wang, Zhonggu 王仲谷: “Shanghai de “shidian zhi hua”: Sanlinyuan juzhu xiaoqu guihua sheji gaikuang” 上海的“试点之花”: 三林苑居住小区规划设计概况, 1996, p. 14.

Corresponding to the definition in section one, “Sanlin Garden” which has the status of a *xiaoqu* is integrated in a larger residential area or *juzhuqu*. It is located in the center of “Sanlin Community” (Sanlin cheng 三林城 or Sanlin shequ 三林社区) which in turn is part of “Sanlin Town” (Sanlin zhen 三林镇). “Sanlin Town” comprises six “communities” (shequ 社区) with a total of 41 residential areas and 120,000 registered permanent residents. “Sanlin Community” currently consists of 10 residential areas and 40 *xiaoqu*, “Sanlin Garden” being one of them. The social composition of the 40 *xiaoqu* is very diverse, as there are different ways of how the housing units could be purchased and the time of entry also differs. 18 of the *xiaoqu* are “Commercial housing estates”, 17 are “resettlement housing estates” and five are “mixed housing estates” (hunhexing xiaoqu 混合型小区). Residents had started to move into four estates before 1989 and another 18 estates have each been opened for moving in from 1990-1999 and after 2000.⁸⁹ The exemplarily analyzed “Sanlin Garden” is a “mixed housing estate” and falls into the middle section concerning time of entry.

“Sanlin Community” has been developed in a cooperation based on an agreement by the Municipal Government of Shanghai and the Government of Singapore. The successful development of “Sanlin Garden” had enabled this agreement. For the project of developing housing of moderate prices in the southern part of “Sanlin Community”, a special project developer was founded, the Singapore China Cooperation Company for the Development of “Shanghai Sanlin Community” (Zhongxin hezuo Shanghai Sanlincheng kaifa youxian gongsi 中新合作上海三林成开发有限公司).⁹⁰ As Singapore had started as early as 1959 to involve the solution of housing problems under the slogan “juzhe you qi wu” 居者有其屋 (“Every person in need should be able to obtain housing”) into its national policy, it was a qualified partner for the Chinese government to similarly support the housing reform in the PRC.

After completion of the project in 1996, “Sanlin Garden” won the gold medal from the Ministry of Construction among all pilot project districts in China, of which 23 had been put into operation. In April, on the fourth working conference for the construction of urban residential pilot project districts in Shanghai, the vice-premier of the State Council Zou Jiahua 邹家华 together with the vice-minister of the Ministry of Construction Tan Qinglian 谭庆琏 awarded “Sanlin Garden” and “Lüyun xiaoqu” 绿云小区 from Zhengzhou city 郑州市 with

⁸⁹ Sanlinzhen renmin zhengfu 三林镇人民政府: “Sanlin shequ” 三林社区, last accessed on 07.11.2013 under the URL: <http://www.sanlin.gov.cn/shequsanlin.html>.

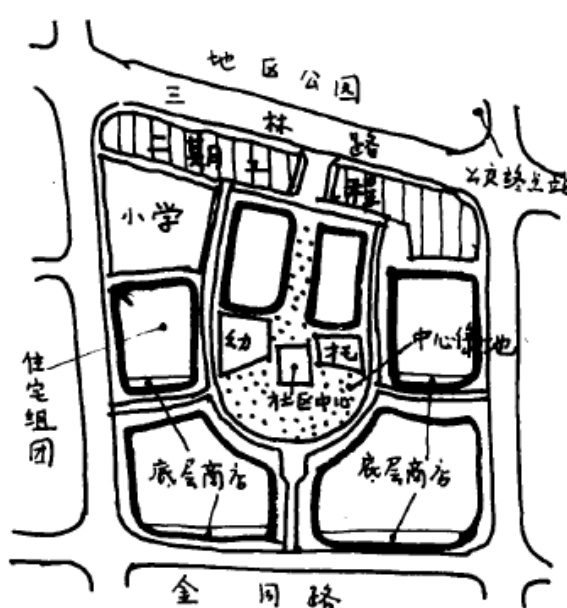
⁹⁰ Singapore China Friendship Association 新中友好协会: Kaifa Shanghai Sanlincheng pingjiafang xiangmu 开发上海三林城平价房项目, last accessed on 07.11.2013 under the URL: <http://www.singapore-china.org/profile/selected4.shtml>.

the first prize. “Sanlin Garden” further won the first prize in the three categories planning and design, construction quality and progress in science and technology. For the design of the buildings, “Sanlin Garden” only won the second prize, but there was no first prize awarded.⁹¹ In addition to that the estate obtained the Lu Ban prize 鲁班奖⁹² and the “White Orchid” prize 白玉兰奖 from the city of Shanghai. It has been visited by important party and state leaders, like Jiang Zemin 江泽民, Qiao Shi 乔石, Zhu Rongji 朱镕基 and Rong Yiren 荣毅仁, who came to “Sanlin Garden” for an inspection.⁹³

“Sanlin Garden” has a floor space of 13.8 hectare and offers space for 2,092 households. It is praised for being planned and designed after the “ren wei zhongxin” 人为中心 (“human-centered”) design principle. The *xiaoqu* is subdivided into six *zutuan*, the smaller structural unit of a residential area as determined in the definition. Its exact structural layout shall be explained in the following by use of two illustrations:

Figure 3 shows the ground plan of “Sanlin Garden” with the upper side pointing north. As can be seen in the figure, the six *zutuan* which are illustrated as blank spaces are of different size and arranged around the center of the *xiaoqu*. While four of them have direct contact to the boundaries of the estate, two *zutuan* are part of what can be called the district center and is in a U-shape. Furthermore, there is a community center (*shequ zhongxin* 社区中心) in the middle of the “housing clusters” which in turn is surrounded by green spaces (see appendix, figure 3). What is striking when

Figure 3. Ground plan of “Sanlin Garden”



Source: Wang Zhonggu: “Shanghai de ‘shidian zhi hua’”, p. 14.

looking at figure 3, is the symmetrical arrangement of the different elements of the estate. There is exactly the same number of *zutuan* on the right-hand side of the center as on the left-hand side. The community center is facing south and there is a main inner road running from

⁹¹ Jiang, Qin 蒋勤: “Chengshi zhuzhai xiaoqu jianshe shidian di si ci gongzuo huiyi zai hu zhaokai” 城市住宅小区建设试点第四次工作会议在沪召开, 1997, p. 162.

⁹² Lu Ban 鲁班 was a master craftsman of the Spring and Autumn period (770-476 B.C.) and is since deified as patron saint of the carpenters.

⁹³ Ling, Yan 凌岩 (ed.): “Shanghai Sanlincheng kaifa youxian gongsi” 上海三林城开发有限公司, 1997, p. 30.

the main entrance in the south directly towards the center. This arrangement brings to mind the cardinal orientation of ancient Chinese cities, as described in section 4.1.

The *xiaoqu* is enclosed by four arterial roads of the outer city which delimit the district area. The ground plan further shows that there are four entrances positioned at every side of “Sanlin Garden”. An inner circulation system of roads runs around the U-shaped district center and leads to every of the four entrances. The inner roads simultaneously function as borderlines between the different *zutuan*. On the left-hand side of the community center are the kindergarten and the nursery on its right-hand side, respectively. Their central position guarantees accessibility for all residents as well as a minimum of danger through inner district traffic as it has been suggested by Perry in his description of the neighborhood unit. Figure 3 also shows that an elementary school which is an important element in the definition of *xiaoqu* is established in the upper left corner of the housing estate. Finally, the striped spaces in the north of “Sanlin Garden” indicate the location of three commercial high-rise buildings.

Figure 4 is a bird’s eye view of the completed construction project. The orientation of the estate in the picture is different from figure 3. The upper side which has been north in figure 3 is west in figure 4, with the high-rise buildings being on the right-hand side in the picture. One can clearly see the U-shaped arrangement of the residential buildings around the community center:

Figure 4. Bird’s eye view of “Sanlin Garden”



Source: Wang, Zhonggu: “Yuan ‘shidian zhi hua’ changkai”, p.12.

The picture shows the altogether 37 dwelling houses as well as public and commercial buildings. One can see that the height of the buildings is oriented on direction and position within the *xiaoqu*. While the commercial high-rise buildings are in the north, the lower residential buildings are in the middle and in the south of the estate. The dwelling houses at the border regions are slightly higher than the ones positioned nearer to the center. This layout enforces the enclosed building form of “Sanlin Garden”. While the multi-storey dwelling houses at the border regions are six floors high, the inner houses have four to five floors.

Regarding the composition and design of dwelling groups, planners oriented themselves towards local Shanghai “lilong-housing” (lilong zhuzhai 里弄住宅), as well as traditional Chinese courtyard-styled (yuanluoshi 院落式) housing. Instead of applying the single building method, dwelling groups were composed into courtyard units. And these courtyard units which represent the basic spatial units of the estate then form six *lilong*, in the case of “Sanlin Garden” equivalent to the six *zutuan*. As can be seen in figure 4, there are straight-lined and curved *lilong*. The space in between the several dwelling groups is clearly segmented into different functions, with some courts being open to people and vehicles and others for pedestrians only. This technique of using existing space to the fullest derives from traditional Chinese courtyard housing.⁹⁴

Furthermore, construction and design principles from local “lilong-housing” were applied, like the integration of storied buildings which run over a street or a small lane and are passable from below (guojielou 过街楼), see figure 4 at where the *xiaoqu* borders on the road and two rows of buildings are connected with each other. Other techniques are the peaked roof on top of the buildings or the terraces as well as on the housetop. As a great amount of the residents were to move in the estate as part of resettlement projects, planners probably integrated these elements from “lilong-housing” to make it easier for them to identify with their new environment.⁹⁵ Another reason might be the harmony with the rest of the city. If the housing estate shall function as “microcosm” in interaction with its environment, an area which is totally different in its appearance might be harder to integrate.

There are a number of living facilities and services provided in “Sanlin Garden”. Probably because of its exemplary function, the establishment of green spaces had already been included into the planning of the community. There are three types of green spaces in the

⁹⁴ Wang, Zhonggu 王仲谷: “Shanghai de “shidian zhi hua”: Sanlinyuan juzhu xiaoqu guihua sheji gaikuang” 上海的“试点之花”: 三林苑居住小区规划设计概况, 1996, p. 16.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

xiaoqu: courtyard green spaces, *zutuan* green spaces and public green spaces. The public green spaces include a park with a Western-style playground for children as well as physical exercise facilities provided for the elderly. Furthermore, there can be found some elements of scenic design like a water canal next to the pedestrian street, a pond or a sculpture depicting a group of fish. Public facilities provided are public bathrooms and telephones on the basic level and more specific ones like covered corridors where one can spend time for recreation and a garbage station. The estate is bounded by a fence and the entrances are guarded, but not completely shut off.

Planners of “Sanlin Garden” moreover included the provision of parking spaces for bicycles, motor cycles or scooters and cars. As space in the cities is always very scarce, the provision of parking space is a major challenge for every residential community and becomes even more aggravated with the number of vehicles in Chinese cities increasing steadily. In the mid-1990s, planners of “Sanlin Garden” still calculated 1.5 bicycles per household and one motor cycle as well as one car for every seven households. All in all there are 3,138 parking spaces for bicycles provided in the estate and 300 parking spaces for motor cycles and cars each. The problem of spatial scarcity has been solved through underground parking spaces and the number of open and roofed car parks is approximately half of it. In expectation of future development, there have additionally been constructed 200 car parks under the green space of the public park.⁹⁶

Another special feature of “Sanlin Garden” which responds to the scarcity of space is the “first floor built on stilts” (*diceng wei jiaokongceng* 底层为架空层). It both has the advantage of saving space and of functioning as open space where residents can socially interact. The multi-storey buildings are constructed on stilts so that the space underneath the first floor can be used as public space instead of dwelling units. This feature was adopted in imitation of twentieth century housing construction in Singapore and under the rationale that land in the PRC belongs to the state and this way can be publicly used by the residents (mainly children and the elderly). The free space therefore is partly being used for parking and partly as public open space for recreation and various activities.⁹⁷

After having looked at the planning and design of “Sanlin Garden”, its social structure is now analyzed. As already explained above, the housing estate was partly constructed for

⁹⁶ Wang, Zhonggu 王仲谷: “Zhuzhai xiaoqu sheji de yi ci chenggong changshi: Sanlinyuan shidian juzhu xiaoqu jieshao” 住宅小区设计的一次成功尝试: 三林苑试点居住小区介绍, 1996, p. 12.

⁹⁷ Wang, Zhonggu 王仲谷: “Sanlinyuan shidian xiaoqu zhuzhai diceng jiaokong de yanjiu” 三林苑试点小区住宅底层架空的研究, 1996, pp. 23-24.

households who had to be resettled (dongqianhu 动迁户) and partly for salary earners (gongxin jiecheng 工薪阶层). The resettled households were Shanghai residents who had to move out of their homes because of the expansion of Chengdu Street 成都路 and its transformation into an elevated highway. To realize this project, 5,053 households from Luwan district 卢湾区 had to give up their homes of which 4,295 had to be resettled.⁹⁸ The influence of “Sanlin Garden” having been planned as residential community for “resettlement housing” includes the design, which, as described above, was adapted to traditional “lilong-housing”.

The primary organization of the residents is represented by the “Sanlin Garden neighborhood committee” (Sanlinyuan juweihui 三林苑居委会). It is one of the 32 neighborhood committees currently established under the administration of Dongming street residential district (Dongming lu jiedao 东明路街道) and is located in the north of the estate, next to the entrance. However, it becomes clear in several aspects that the neighborhood committee of “Sanlin Garden” has a close connection to the CCP. The head of the committee, as announced on the website of the Dongming Street residential district, additionally holds the post of general Party branch secretary (dangzongzhi shuji 党总支书记).

Furthermore, the site presents some distinctive features concerning the committee’s work. One of these features has been set up for older cadres, reservists and party members in particular. The project “Sunshine Spirit” (yangguang xinling 阳光心灵) is aimed at helping them out of occurring problems and to take care of them once in a while. It is executed by volunteers. Another project is called “Party members protect green spaces” (dangyuan hulü 党员护绿). This project encourages party members to improve the environment of the housing estate. Therefore, the general Party branch of the neighborhood has mobilized party members to contribute money and to plant trees and plants of their own initiative.⁹⁹

According to the website of Dongming Street residential district, there are more than 350 people engaged in voluntary work.¹⁰⁰ These volunteers in turn are organized in the Branch Association of Volunteers from the ‘Sanlin Garden’ Neighborhood Committee (Sanlinyuan

⁹⁸ Wu, Peizhong 吴培忠: “Xinxi minzhong qingqian gaojia: Ren da daibiao guanxin Chengdu Lu gaojia gongcheng dongqian jumin jishi” 心系民众情牵高架: 人大代表关心成都路高架工程动迁居民纪实, 1994, pp. 8-9.

⁹⁹ Dongming lu jiedao 东明路街道: “Sanlinyuan juwei” 三林苑局委, last accessed on 14.11.2013 under the URL: http://dmljd.pudong.gov.cn:8080/sqjw_new/detail_sqjw.jsp?columnid=1052.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

juwei zhiyuanzhe fenhui 三林苑局委志愿者分会). In their self-portrayal and the description of their work, their affinity to the CCP also becomes clear. They see themselves as important provider for the construction of a ‘spiritual civilization’ (jingshen wenming 精神文明). The association is in charge of the daily work of the CCP’s Propaganda Department, as well as the Executive Council (lishihui 理事会) on the district level of ‘Pudong New Area’. Their main tasks are to organize public welfare activities, as well as work in the fields of planning, management, training, research and foreign exchange.¹⁰¹ In the description of their daily work, one can see the influence of the Propaganda Department. It is portrayed how volunteers remained on duty although they suffered from various diseases and the temperature was unbearably high. For example, one of the volunteers took on two posts when the community expected the central inspection party to come, although she suffered from a heart disease and it was sultry weather.¹⁰²

In addition to the work projects, there are many activities organized in “Sanlin Garden”, especially to support the elderly. One example for such an event was the public viewing of a program on Shanghai Education Channel (Shanghai jiaoyu dianshitai 上海教育电视台) in fall this year. The study group (dushu hui 读书会) of the community had organized this event for the elderly on the occasion of the Chinese Moon-festival (zhongqiu jie 中秋节). The group watched the program “Shenghuo, rang wannian geng jingcai” (生活, 让晚年更精彩 “Life, it makes age more splendid”).¹⁰³

In 2012 the neighborhood committee invited a doctor and started to give a course of lectures on how to take medicine rationally and [to achieve] a healthy and long life (heli yong yao jiankang changshou 合理用药健康长寿). The reason for this was the beginning of spring time when one easily catches a cold and especially the elderly get ill if they do not use

¹⁰¹ Shanghai ‘Pudong New Area’ Volunteers Association 上海市浦东新区志愿者协会: “Pudong Xinqu zhiyuanzhe xiehui jianjie” 浦东新区志愿者协会简介, 2008, last accessed on 14.11.2013 under the URL: <http://www.pdvolunteer.org.cn/?act=post&id=206>.

¹⁰² Shanghai ‘Pudong New Area’ Volunteers Association 上海市浦东新区志愿者协会: “Dongming shequ Sanlinyuan zhiyuanzhe zai chuangping quanguo wenming chengqu zhong de hao ren hao shi” 东明社区三林苑志愿者在创评全国文明城区中的好人好事, 2011, last accessed on 14.11.2013 under the URL: <http://www.pdvolunteer.org.cn/?act=post&id=4958>.

¹⁰³ Sanlinyuan juweihui 三林苑居委会: “Shoukan yuancheng jiaoyu – Shenghuo, rang wannian geng jingcai” 收看远程教育-生活, 让晚年更精彩, 2013, last accessed on 14.11.2013 under the URL: <http://www.88547.com/news/details/884330>.

medicine rationally. The doctor informed them on how to take the medicine correctly and how to build up one's health through nutritional food instead of tonic.¹⁰⁴

But although the residential community is presented as harmonious and tranquil, where people with diverse social backgrounds and of different age are living together on confined space, conflicts between the residents are likely to occur. One example of such a conflict is the external influence of people listening to loud dance music on local residents who try to recover from work. As reported by Yang Yifei 杨依靠 in July 2012, there are people using loudspeakers to broadcast dance music in “Sanlin Park” (Sanlin gongyuan 三林公园) every evening and thereby disturbing the regular life of the other residents. “Sanlin Park” is located next to several *xiaoqu* in “Pudong New Area”, but directly borders on the southern side of “Sanlin Garden”. The residents from the *xiaoqu* involved had jointly reported the circumstances, but as standards for regulation were missing, the problem had become long-standing.

Mrs. Gu who lives in “Sanlin Garden” reported that she had raised her complaint to the residential district, the department responsible for complaint letters (qu xinfang ban 区信访办), all in all more than 110 departments. However, the residential district and the Bureau for Environmental Protection (huanbao ju 环保局) replied that they do not have the authority to enforce the law and that they can only ask the administrative office of the park to intensify their management. In the process of interviewing there were also other residents who thought that the music in the park was too loud. According to the reporter, the older people's demand for entertainment is confronted with the other resident's right to have a rest. At the time of the interview, already more than a month had passed and the administrative office of the park had still not taken any measures.¹⁰⁵ In contrast to what one might assume, the residents did not set up a homeowners' committee to deal with the problem. This is different in the next group of *xiaoqu*.

5.2 Zhongdang xiaoqu 中档小区

Zhongdang xiaoqu or “mid-level neighborhoods” other than *gongxin jieceng xiaoqu* which can be developed in the context of social housing programs are commercially developed. But

¹⁰⁴ Sanlinyuan juweihui 三林苑居委会: “Heli yong yao jiankang chengshou” 合理用药健康长寿, 2012, last accessed on 15.11.2013 under the URL: <http://www.shmzj.gov.cn/gb/shmzj/node6/node592/u1ai31874.html>.

¹⁰⁵ Yang, Yifei 杨依靠: “Gongyuan gaoyin laba gai kong haishi jin? Dianzi jiance shouduan zaoyu chengben pingjing” 公园高音喇叭该控还是禁? 电子监测手段遭遇成本瓶颈, 2012, last accessed on 14.11.2013 under the URL: <http://sh.eastday.com/m/20120713/u1a6703287.html>.

they still consist of two different housing types, because the ways how the housing units can be obtained by homeowners differ. The first type again is straight “commercial housing” which is purchased by private buyers from the market. The market price of this type of housing is influenced by factors such as size, quality and location. “Commercial housing” compounds can further involve special forms, such as “compensation housing” which will be explained in the following example. But it is important that homeowners purchase these units and do not obtain them in the course of social welfare programs.

The second type comprises housing units sold by the *danwei*. Because the *danwei* are able to purchase housing in bulk, they can negotiate better prices than individual buyers. As they see themselves in the tradition of providing welfare housing to their employees as compensation for low wages, they continue to sell these housing units to their employees at subsidized rates.¹⁰⁶ It would be interesting to additionally analyze an example of *danwei* housing, but the scope of this paper is too limited to contribute more than one example per group of *xiaoqu*.

Zhongdang xiaoqu feature an enclosed building form and are mostly gated. Privacy is one of the incentives for home buyers to purchase their homes there but public spaces where neighbors can be met are also integrated into the planning. Security is equally important and additionally to physical barriers, the gates are staffed with security guards. But although emphasis is put on technically well-equipped security systems, they are still different from high-standard security systems in “high-level neighborhoods”.

In accordance with the definition of *xiaoqu*, they provide basic living facilities and services for their residents. These facilities include institutional facilities, commercial spaces, public spaces where the residents can meet and interact but not necessarily cultural facilities. Similarly, they do offer green spaces and usually have a greening rate which is higher than in *gongxin jieceng xiaoqu*. Furthermore, there are facilities for recreational purposes, like sports or other leisure activities, where residents can practice a shared lifestyle.

With the objective to define a target group of potential home buyers according to profession, four main groups have been analyzed by Zhang Li. These are firm managers, independent business owners, highly specialized professionals and intellectuals with sideline incomes.¹⁰⁷ While *gongxin jieceng xiaoqu* are inhabited by residents who just succeeded in purchasing a home either through social welfare programs or their own financial resources, home buyers in *zhongdang xiaoqu* range from those who can profit from employment conditions and get

¹⁰⁶ Zhang, Li: “Private Homes, Distinct Lifestyles: Performing a New Middle Class”, 2008, p. 30.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

access to housing through their *danwei* to those who have the means to buy an estate with certain standards but not in such exclusive communities as *gaodang xiaoqu*. These housing estates' social composition is therefore the most diverse among all three groups.

On the one hand this diversity enhanced by the different forms of access to the housing units can make it necessary to establish a divided property management. As homeowners with different financial backgrounds are not willing to pay different management fees for the same services, this not uncommonly leads to conflicts between homeowners and property management companies. A new model called “one district, two systems” (*yi qu liang zhi 一区两制*) or “one district, several systems” (*yi qu duo zhi 一区多制*) is currently emerging in Chinese cities and will also be explained in more detail below. On the other hand, residents are more likely to form interest groups and set up self-organization institutions like a homeowners' committee to defend their interests. The following example among other aspects shows how such shared interests can produce homeowner organizations.

Beijing Jianxiangyuan 健翔园

The *xiaoqu* “Jianxiangyuan” 健翔园 is situated in Haidian district 海淀区 in the city of Beijing next to the crossroads of the Fourth Ring Road and Jingzang Highway 京藏高速. It is not only a *xiaoqu* but simultaneously has the status of a community (Jianxiangyuan shequ 健翔园社区 “Jianxiangyuan' community”). Together with 26 other communities “Jianxiangyuan” is under the jurisdiction of Xueyuan Lu residential district (Xueyuan lu jiedao 学院路街道).¹⁰⁸ When they were built in 1999, the dwellings were constructed to become housing units for intellectuals who were employed in Zhongguancun 中关村, Beijing's Science and Technology Park. Of the 800 dwelling units built, about 700 were to be sold to employees of Zhongguancun. These employees can be designated as “white collar” workers, who just started their career and still have to be promoted, so they can not raise high funds to spend on housing.¹⁰⁹

At first, the architectural layout of “Jianxiangyuan” and the utilization of space within the *xiaoqu* are analyzed. As distinguished from “Sanlin Garden” and the ancient Chinese city, where the ground plan had a quadrangle form, the ground plan of “Jianxiangyuan” is in a

¹⁰⁸ Beijing Haidian qu Xueyuan lu jiedao banshichu 北京市海淀区学院路街道办事处: “Shequ qingkuang” 社区情况, last accessed on 30.11.2013 under the URL: <http://hdxyl.bjhd.gov.cn/sqjs/sqgk/>.

¹⁰⁹ Ying, Hua 英华: “Zhuan wei Zhongguancun zhishi fenzi jingxin dazao de jingguan shequ Jianxiangyuan” 专为中关村知识分子精心打造的景观社区健翔园, 2001.

triangular shape. It therein follows the city and natural boundaries which delimit the residential area. The housing estate features both sorts of boundaries, with city boundaries being arterial roads or highways and a natural boundary that is an artificially adjusted river. Xiaoyue River 小月河 is running along the eastern side of the residential community and is attached to green spaces. There are more green spaces enclosing “Jianxiangyuan” on its southern end.¹¹⁰

The estate consists of five dwelling buildings, which are arranged one behind the other along Xiaoyue River on the eastern side of the *xiaoqu*, as can be seen in figure 5:

Figure 5. Eastern side view of “Jianxiangyuan”



Source: Ying, Hua: “Zhuan wei Zhongguancun zhishi fenzi jingxin dazao de jingguan shequ Jianxiangyuan”.

Figure 5 is a promotional photograph of “Jianxiangyuan” precisely showing the east side of the residential community which shall be used to explain the structure of the dwelling buildings in the first instance. It is plainly visible that the dwelling buildings are oriented diagonally and off-centered, so that there is no building obliterating the sun of another building. The designation of the buildings is very simple, with the first building in the north being called Building no. 1 (yi hao lou 一号楼) and the other buildings following the counting up to Building no. 5 (wu hao lou 五号楼) in the south. Every dwelling building is 24 stories high. Besides there are three buildings containing different facilities, but no other structures and the *xiaoqu* occupies no more than 3.8 hectares.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Ying, Hua 英华: “Zhuan wei Zhongguancun zhishi fenzi jingxin dazao de jingguan shequ Jianxiangyuan” 专为中关村知识分子精心打造的景观社区健翔园, 2001.

¹¹¹ SouFun Limited 搜房网有限公司: “Jianxiangyuan xiaoqu wang” 健翔园小区网, 2013, last accessed on 15.11.2013 under the URL: <http://jianxiangyuan.soufun.com/>.

“Jianxiangyuan” has an inner circulation system which connects the different dwelling buildings with one another and leads to the arterial roads of Haidian district. It has several public and green spaces in between the dwelling and facility buildings, like a garden in the center, as well as around them. The total greening rate amounts to 47 percent¹¹², which is relatively high. Because of the limited space of the housing estate itself, there are more open spaces directly around “Jianxiangyuan”, creating an ecological environment. Furthermore there are several parks, like Qingshui Leyuan 清水乐园 and public spaces for roller skating and fishing.¹¹³

Another characteristic for a *xiaoqu* as part of the above given definition is the provision of living facilities and services. “Jianxiangyuan” has its own kindergarten which is one of the facility buildings and can be attended by children who are living in the *xiaoqu*, as well as children from outside. The other two buildings are a service building for community services (shequ fuwu lou 社区服务楼) and another service building with a wider scope (zonghe fuwu lou 综合服务楼). The *xiaoqu* has its own property management company which is called Jianxiang Wuye 健翔物业. The residents have to pay two Yuan per month for every square meter of their dwelling unit.¹¹⁴ One of the services provided is the cleaning of public places and sanitation work being carried out every day. Moreover, the housing estate has high-standard security facilities. Primarily, the estate is fenced and the gates are controlled by a management firm. Secondly, there is a public security service which is on duty 24 hours a day. But the residential community has also been well-equipped on a technical level. Inside the different buildings there have been installed electronic security devices, like an intercommunication system where one can see the person at the door and can directly call the public security office in an emergency.¹¹⁵

The *xiaoqu* has good traffic connections due to its location at the Fourth Ring Road and the interchange with the outer system that is Haidian district, is ensured. But except for the kindergarten there are no educational establishments, especially no elementary school, which is seen as a central criterion in some definitions of *xiaoqu*. Because of its small floor size,

¹¹² SouFun Limited 搜房网有限公司: “Jianxiangyuan xiaoqu wang” 健翔园小区网, 2013, last accessed on 15.11.2013 under the URL: <http://jianxiangyuan.soufun.com/>.

¹¹³ Ying, Hua 英华: “Zhuan wei Zhongguancun zhishi fenzi jingxin dazao de jingguan shequ Jianxiangyuan” 专为中关村知识分子精心打造的景观社区健翔园, 2001.

¹¹⁴ SouFun Limited 搜房网有限公司: “Jianxiangyuan xiaoqu wang” 健翔园小区网, 2013, last accessed on 15.11.2013 under the URL: <http://jianxiangyuan.soufun.com/>.

¹¹⁵ Ying, Hua 英华: “Zhuan wei Zhongguancun zhishi fenzi jingxin dazao de jingguan shequ Jianxiangyuan” 专为中关村知识分子精心打造的景观社区健翔园, 2001.

educational institutions from outside the estate can still cover “Jianxiangyuan” when measured by radius. The needs of its residents can therefore be met by educational institutions from Peking and Qinghua University as well as other peripheral institutions. If taking the periphery into account, the residents’ daily need for other facilities like banks, hospitals or post offices can also be met.¹¹⁶

The residents are organized in a neighborhood committee which deals with problems on a basic level and organizes activities for its residents. “Jianxiangyuan” additionally set up two bodies, a homeowners’ committee and a “building committee” (louning yezhu weiyuanhui 楼宁业主委员会). The homeowners’ committee has been established in January 2005, when “Jianxiangyuan” community convened the first meeting of the general homeowners’ assembly (yezhu dahui 业主大会). There have been elected seven committee members by vote in accordance with the rules of procedure (yishi guize 议事规则). Although the last step on the way to establishment, the “obtaining of official approval” (bei’an 备案), is often complicated by tedious formalities, the homeowners’ committee of “Jianxiangyuan” was successfully approved according to law in February the same year.¹¹⁷

Further, in June 2008, the homeowners of building one in the estate decided to establish a temporary building committee. Seven homeowners of this building were elected as representatives with more than 72 percent of the votes. There are several reasons why property management more and more becomes an issue of self-government. When the number of buildings and homeowners in a *xiaoqu* is high, the costs for the establishment of a general homeowners’ assembly and a homeowners’ committee are also high and real estate developers as well as property management companies oppose it. If they manage to be set up, they lack the standards and authority to solve diverging desires between homeowners as well as experience of self-government. Different kinds of homeowners also have different expectations of property management which can easily lead to conflicts. The realm of management in the building committee of “Jianxiangyuan” is limited to building one, so that problems can be solved more advantageously and service demands can be met. In the

¹¹⁶ SouFun Limited 搜房有限公司: “Jianxiangyuan xiaoqu wang” 健翔园小区网, 2013, last accessed on 15.11.2013 under the URL: <http://jianxiangyuan.soufun.com/>.

¹¹⁷ Wang, Zhanqiang 王占强: “Yewehui bei’an zhidu de sheli bu shi baiseshe” 业委会备案制度的设立不是摆设, 2008, p. 43.

exemplarily observed *xiaoqu*, the building committee took over tasks such as the repair of elevators, or the management of lightning protection facilities.¹¹⁸

The necessity for a more detailed management model partly results from the split social structure of the *xiaoqu*. Four fifths of the dwelling units or four out of five buildings in “Jianxiangyuan” are straight “commercial housing”. The last building contains “compensation housing” (*huiqian fang* 回迁房) which is given to the former residents of an inhabited area as compensation after the real estate company had levied the land for development.¹¹⁹ “Compensation housing” is not a type of social welfare housing as provided within the scope of housing from *gongxin jeceng xiaoqu*. But the retail price of “compensation housing” is usually significantly lower than the price of “commercial housing”. Consequently, people living in the same estate have paid different prices for their dwelling unit.

The two kinds of homeowners, meaning those of “commercial housing” and those of “compensation housing” which are living together in one *xiaoqu* in fact have different demands on property management. While homeowners of “commercial housing” ask for high quality services, the owners of “compensation housing” are hoping for low charges. In view of this fact there are often conflicts coming up between homeowners, property management companies and the homeowners’ committee. To solve these conflicts, “Jianxiangyuan” residential community has formulated a draft for a new property management model in April 2011: “Yi qu liang zhi” (一区两制 “One district, two systems”). “One district” (*yiqu* 一区) implies that there is one general homeowners’ assembly, one homeowners’ committee and that there is applied a unitary system of charging and property management to the public areas of the *xiaoqu*, like greening, security, sanitation work and parking space provision. The share which the homeowners will have to contribute is determined by the size of their dwelling unit. “Two systems” (*liang zhi* 两制) refers to the inner part of the dwelling buildings one to four (“commercial housing”) and five (“compensation housing”) The two kinds of homeowners shall formulate service standards for their buildings by themselves, corresponding to their

¹¹⁸ Ren, Chenguang 任晨光: “Hangshi jianzhu quhua yezhu zizhi de jichu: Jianxiangyuan yi hao lou shijian jianli louning yezhu weiyuanhui” 夯实建筑区划业主自治的基础: 健翔园 1 号楼实践建立楼宁业主委员会, 2008, p. 21.

¹¹⁹ Ren, Chenguang 任晨光: “Hangshi jianzhu quhua yezhu zizhi de jichu: Jianxiangyuan yi hao lou shijian jianli louning yezhu weiyuanhui” 夯实建筑区划业主自治的基础: 健翔园 1 号楼实践建立楼宁业主委员会, 2008, p. 21.

own needs.¹²⁰ The term apparently is a variation of Deng Xiaoping's slogan "Yi guo liang zhi" (一国两制 "one country two systems"), then referring to the PRC and Taiwan.

In fact, the model "One district, two systems" has already existed in "Jianxiangyuan" much earlier. In the beginning of 2005, the community set up a general homeowner's assembly and elected a homeowners' committee. They adjusted the management fee for "commercial housing" at that time from 2.34 Yuan per square meter to 1.65 Yuan per square meter. The management fee for "compensation housing" was fixed at one Yuan per square meter, though. The argumentation was that in the building for "compensation housing" there was no 24 hours security service provided and there were no heaters installed in the corridors. Furthermore, there was no public lighting and after 10 pm there was only one elevator still moving.¹²¹

The division of residents into two groups based on income becomes even clearer when looking at the payment procedures within the community with regard to children's pre-school education. In April 2011, 20 homeowners of "Jianxiangyuan" sought to express their discontent with the different procedures of fee collection and curriculum towards the Commission of Education from Haidian district (Haidian qu jiaowei 海淀区教委) as well as their hope that the system would be brought into line. According to many homeowners living in the *xiaoqu*, the facilities for a kindergarten in the estate had been let lie idle for three years.¹²² The Commission of Education from Haidian district then submitted a tender in 2004 and a branch institution of the Artistic Kindergarten of the Chinese Music Academy (Zhongguo yinyue xueyuan yishu youeryuan 中国音乐学院艺术幼儿园) was established in "Jianxiangyuan". The resulting standard for collecting fees differentiated between children of homeowners and the children of people not living in the *xiaoqu* (fei xiaoqu yezhu 非小区业主). While homeowners had to pay 1,800 Yuan for a place in the kindergarten every month, the fee for children who were living outside of "Jianxiangyuan" was 2,300 Yuan.¹²³

In October 2010, the kindergarten then separately raised the fee for homeowners and non-homeowners of the estate to 3,800 Yuan and 4,800 Yuan per month. The homeowners were

¹²⁰ Zhang, Shuling 张淑玲: "Jianxiangyuan yewehui yu tui 'yi guo liang zhi'" 健翔园业委会欲推《一区两制》, 2011, last accessed on 19.11.2013 under the URL: <http://news.163.com/11/0421/01/724L538900014AED.html?f=jsearch>.

¹²¹ Zhang, Shuling 张淑玲: "Yi guo liang zhi shi jie shequ shangpin fang baozhang fang hunda maodun" 一区两制试解社区商品房保障房混搭矛盾, 2011, last accessed on 19.11.2013 under the URL: http://news.xinhuanet.com/house/2011-05/23/c_121446680_2.htm.

¹²² Yao, Yao 姚瑶; Zhu, Kaiyun 朱开云: "Beijing yi youeryuan xian shoufei shuang biao zhun, yezhu zhiyi qi pinfu fenban" 北京一幼儿园现收费双标准, 业主质疑其贫富分班, 2011, last accessed on 20.11.2013 under the URL: http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2011-04/14/c_121301912_2.htm.

¹²³ Ibid.

dissatisfied with the rise of the fee and asked the Commission of Education as well as the PRC National Development and Reform Commission (Guojia fazhan he gaige weiyuanhui 国家发展和改革委员会) several times to find a solution. The solution the kindergarten came up with was a completely new standard of collecting fees. According to this standard, homeowners of “Jianxiangyuan” have to pay 900 Yuan a month for their child and will then receive basic education. If parents additionally pay 3,900 Yuan, the child will enjoy an extended curriculum, including piano lessons, foreign language and dancing courses. Non-homeowners in turn have to pay a unitary fee of 4,800 Yuan a month. The new model has been criticized by homeowners as “yi yuan liang zhi” 一园两制 (“One kindergarten, two systems”).¹²⁴

The discussion on the new property management model “one district, two systems” had been initiated through the “boiler plant incident” (guolufang shijian 锅炉房事件). Since the housing estate has been constructed, it had always used the boiler plant of another enterprise for heating. When the “homeowners’ committee” asked the real estate developer to build their own boiler plant, a conflict arose between homeowners and committee members with “commercial housing” and “compensation housing” dwelling units. The conflict between the two parties revolved around the registration of property rights for the boiler plant and its management. The representatives for “compensation housing” units were against the construction of the boiler plant, because they feared that owners of “compensation housing” would have to pay the same heat costs as “commercial housing”-owners when they had accepted the boiler plant.¹²⁵ However, through the setting up of the homeowners’ committee the two groups came to an agreement and the plant was successfully set up.¹²⁶ As has been shown, the second group of *xiaoqu* shows a high degree of self-organization.

5.3 Gaodang xiaoqu 高档小区

Gaodang xiaoqu or “High-level neighborhoods” are the most homogenous group in reference to ways of obtaining the housing and the social composition of the estate. The occupational

¹²⁴ Yao, Yao 姚瑶; Zhu, Kaiyun 朱开云: “Beijing yi youeryuan xian shoufei shuang biao zhun, yezhu zhiyi qi pinfu fenban” 北京一幼儿园现收费双标准, 业主质疑其贫富分班, 2011, last accessed on 20.11.2013 under the URL: http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2011-04/14/c_121301912_2.htm.

¹²⁵ Zhang, Shuling 张淑玲: “Yi qu liang zhi shi jie shequ shangpin fang baozhang fang hunda maodun” 一区两制试解社区商品房保障房混搭矛盾, 2011, last accessed on 19.11.2013 under the URL: http://news.xinhuanet.com/house/2011-05/23/c_121446680_2.htm.

¹²⁶ Li, Yanlai 李彦来; Mu, Peng 穆鹏 (ed.): “Gongnuan gongzuo” 供暖工作, 2012, p. 369.

background of residents is not limited to one sector, but can include public servants and professionals as well as private business owners who do not have access to subsidized housing.¹²⁷ However, they need to have the financial means to purchase the housing units as they are “commercial housing” sold at the market without exceptions. In this aspect, the group of residents from *gaodang xiaoqu* is more homogeneous than those from *gongxin jieceng* or *zhongdang xiaoqu*. Housing units can be characterized by their roominess. They are often spacious condominiums, high-rises or multi-storey structures, but not exclusively. Here, housing form is connected with the location of the estate. There are mainly three types of housing which can be distinguished from one another, “Gardens”, “Townhouses or villas” and “New Towns”.

“Gardens” (*huayuan* 花园 or *yuan* 苑) are generally constructed in prime downtown areas or core urban districts and due to scarcity of building land and space in this area consist of multi-storey structures. There is often added a final term like “Garden” (*huayuan* 花园 or *yuan* 苑) to their name, e.g. “Shiji Huayuan” 世纪花园 (“Century Garden”) in Shanghai Pudong District or “Mingzhu Huayuan” 明珠花园 (“Jewel Garden”) in Shaoguan City 韶关, Guangdong.

In contrast, “Townhouses” or “villas” (*bieshu* 别墅) are intentionally located in the suburban areas, away from the noisiness of the city, narrowness of space and other unwanted influences like industrial smog or other sorts of pollution. The concept of the buildings is based on Western suburban townhouses, so that they usually are not more than three stories high. But the housing design does not necessarily have to be in Western style, it can also be in traditional Chinese style, as illustrated in the example for this group of *xiaoqu*. The residents of this housing type can afford to lead a life further apart from the city, because they have enough income to support their lifestyle and go to work by car, for example.

“New Towns” (*xincheng* 新城) are not bound to a fixed location; their common characteristic is rather the construction in Western-style architecture. It happens quite frequently that whole Western towns are imitated in architectural style in order to add a special “cultural flavor” to the estate. The most famous examples are the nine “New Towns” in Shanghai, among them the English-style “Thames Town” (*Taiwushi xiaozhen* 泰晤士小镇) and the German-style “Anting New Town” (*Anting xincheng* 安亭新城). But there are also “New Towns” in

¹²⁷ Tomba, Luigi; Tang, Beibei: “The Forest City: Homeownership and new wealth in Shenyang”, 2008, pp. 173-176.

Western China, like “Xiexin Town cheng” (协信 Town 城) in Chongqing 重庆 which is built in the style of Spanish Mediterranean housing.

Particularly interesting for this group of *xiaoqu* is the naming of the estates. Other name endings as “Garden” also point to “high-level neighborhoods”, e.g. “Huangjia” 皇家 (“royal housing”), “Zungui” 尊贵 (“noble housing”), “Haozhai” 豪宅 (“mansion”) to give some examples. What becomes more and more fashionable is not only housing designed in the Western style, which is designated as “oushi” 欧式 (“European styled”) or “meishi” 美式 (“American styled”), but also the naming after Western existing residential communities. One example for this is the housing estate “Seine Elysee” (Sainalishe 塞纳丽舍) in the city of Taicang 太仓. “Saina” 塞纳 is the Chinese designation for the river “Seine” which flows through Paris and is one of the longest rivers in France. “Lishe” 丽舍 means as much as “beautiful residence” and probably is an allusion to the official residence of the French president, the “Palais de l’Élysée”. “Seine Elysee” therefore already reflects the estate’s thematic focus and the dwelling buildings are accordingly designed in European style.

Gaodang xiaoqu, no matter what housing type, show some shared characteristics which conflate them into one group and differentiate them from *zhongdang* and *gongxin jieceng xiaoqu*. One of these characteristics is the great emphasis put on security. Residents have a strong demand for high security standards and share a deep fear of being robbed. The communities are therefore shielded through lockable gates and fences which intensify the segregation already achieved through the enclosure from arterial roads. Furthermore, other facilities and services like surveillance cameras and guards are often provided and increase the value of the estate.

Living facilities and services have been analyzed as a common characteristic of the housing model *xiaoqu* as such. But when it comes to “high-level neighborhoods”, these are certainly one of the most significant signs of distinction. Facilities and services in *gaodang xiaoqu* are numerically and qualitatively superior to the ones of *zhongdang xiaoqu*. While *xiaoqu* of every group in general offer commercial buildings, educational institutions, green spaces and parking spaces, there can be found extra facilities like tennis courts or swimming pools in *gaodang xiaoqu*. They further offer cultural facilities like museums or libraries and usually have an exclusive and fee-based community clubhouse.

Residents in “high-level neighborhoods” additionally cultivate a distinct lifestyle or “culture” which is an important part of identity establishment. This is revealed by different features of

the housing estates. Primarily, there may be built some culturally related facilities like libraries, art exhibition halls or stages used for dance performances. Moreover, residents stronger value issues like preservation of the environment and ecology (shengtai 生态). Real estate developers react to this development and increasingly advertize their estates as “ecological communities” (shengtai xiaoqu 生态小区). In other projects, waste segregation and recycling are organized and respective facilities are established.

Advertisement is closely linked to this distinct lifestyle. Because the housing units are sold on the market, advertisement becomes very important for real estate developers. It is often extremely idealized and promotes aspects such as happiness and affluence. The developers not uncommonly design extra logos for the housing projects which may also be characterized through elements such as Western-style emblems. Common themes which can be found when looking at such advertisements are privacy, the aspiration for a higher social status and conspicuous consumption. These are also the main features connecting this social group. Consequently, it is not typical for them to organize themselves in interest groups supported by a homeowner committee. This will be illustrated by means of the following example for *gaodang xiaoqu*.

Suzhou Yiyunshuian 依云水岸

“Evian Town” (Yiyunshuian 依云水岸) is a *xiaoqu* located in the suburban area of Suzhou at the crossroads of Yangcheng Lake East Road and Tianda Gang River. It belongs to Xiangcheng district 相城区 and is integrated into the larger context of Zhongjing community (Zhongjing shequ 众泾社区). The housing estate has been developed by Zhaoshang Property Development (short: Zhaoshang dichan 招商地产), a well-known Chinese developer who is part of the China Merchants Group (Zhaoshang ju jituan 招商局集团). *Zhaoshang dichan* is one of China’s earliest real estate developers and in 2012 sold 46 housing projects in 18 Chinese cities, among them Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen, Tianjin and Qingdao.¹²⁸

The name of the estate is particularly interesting, as it does not only highlight its exclusiveness but simultaneously refers to some European-style design principles. “Evian Town” is an allusion to the French community “Évian-les-Bains” located on the southern bank of Lake Geneva. Here, the element which has been used to connect the two communities

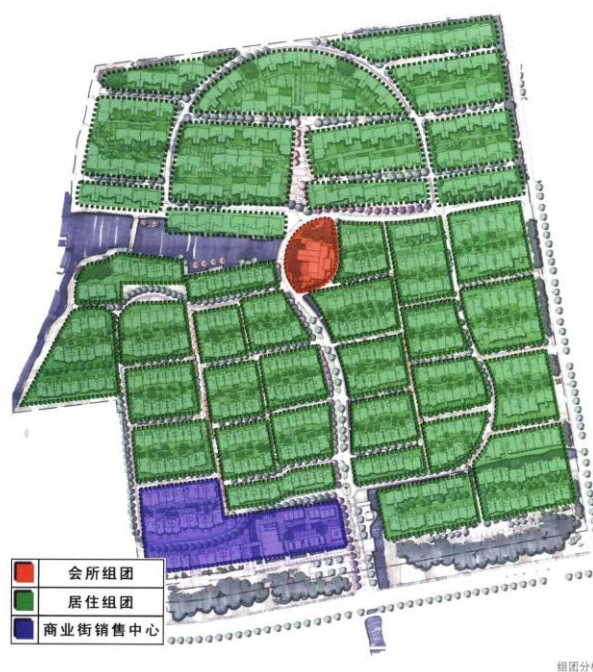
¹²⁸ Zhaoshang dichan 招商地产: “Jia zai qing zai, gongsi jianjie” 家在情在, 公司简介, last accessed on 2.12.2013 under the URL: <http://www.cmpd.cn/zhaoshang/abouts/abouts.jsp>.

is water. “Évian-les-Bains” is famous for its mineral water, whose curative qualities had been discovered in 1790 by a nobleman from Auvergne. By now, Évian is known as spa town with some springs being open to the public the whole year.¹²⁹ In Suzhou, where waterways are an important part of local culture and with its location at the bank of Tianda Gang, the naming of the estate is easily comprehensible. “Evian Town” therefore can be seen as reflection of the estate’s thematic focus, as will become clear in the following analysis.

Analogous to the other two groups of *xiaoqu*, the planning, design and spatial structure of “Evian Town” will be analyzed primarily. For this purpose a ground plan of the estate is given in the following:

Figure 6 shows that the basic structure of the *xiaoqu* only partly corresponds to the concept of the quadrangle ground plan, with the left-hand side showing a triangular protrusion due to its adaptation to the environment. The structure therefore is only partly symmetrical, but there is a middle axe running from the southern entrance crossing the backwards shifted center to the north of the *xiaoqu*. The middle axe which divides the estate into a left-hand and a right-hand section is visible in form of an inner roadway flanked by an artificially adjusted water canal (only partly visible in figure 6).

Figure 6. Ground plan of “Evian Town”



Source: Shanglin guoji wenhua: “Juzhuqu jingguan guihua”, p. 68.

The third section of the estate stretches over the whole expanse from left to right and occupies the northern section of the *xiaoqu*. The buildings in the middle of this section are arranged in crescent shape. The three sections of the whole estate have also been developed in three different periods, starting with the section on the left-hand side and terminating the project with the northern section.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Town of Evian: “Evian and water”, last accessed on 1.12.2013 under the URL: <http://www.ville-evian.fr/anglais/DT1207322642/page/Evian-and-water.html>.

¹³⁰ Shanglin guoji wenhua youxian gongsi 上林国际文化有限公司 [ed.]: *Juzhuqu jingguan guihua 100 li* 居住区景观规划 100 例, 2006, p.67.

With a total land coverage of 22.6 hectare, “Evian Town” belongs to the large scale communities in Suzhou. It is therefore necessary that the compound is subdivided into different *zutuan*. This arrangement is also illustrated in the ground plan. The several *zutuan*, each comprising 14-15 households, are marked in green. Section one on the western side consists of 13 “housing clusters” and a commercial center at its southern end which is marked in blue. Section two on the eastern side has 14 “housing clusters” and comprises the community clubhouse situated in the center and illustrated in red. Finally, the northern section altogether consists of another 12 *zutuan*.

Figure 6 further shows the inner circulation system of “Evian Town” which supports the whole structure of the *xiaoqu*. Although there is the wider roadway running along the middle axe of the estate, it is still narrower in scope than the arterial roads and does not isolate the two sections. The delimitation of “Evian Town” to the outer city is very clear. Like “Jianxiangyuan” the *xiaoqu* features city as well as natural boundaries. To look at the estate’s structure as a whole, a bird’s eye view can be helpful.

Figure 7. Drafted bird’s eye view of “Evian Town”



Source: Shanglin guoji wenhua youxian gongsi: “Juzhuqu jingguan guihua 100 li”, p. 68.

The orientation of the draft follows the orientation of the buildings, so that North is in the upper left section of figure 7. Three sides of the estate are delimited through arterial roadways and the last one through Tianda Gang River. However, in the case of “Evian Town” Tianda Gang has a greater function. It not only delimits the west side of the *xiaoqu*, but also becomes

part of the landscape design with one waterway diverting from it, running to the center of the estate, then bending right and running parallel to the inner road which structures the two front sections to the southern entrance.

Figure 6 further illustrates that “Evian Town” is a mere mansion district without high-rise buildings. It contains four different housing types which are row villas (*lianpai bieshu* 联排别墅), garden villas (*huayuan bieshu* 花园别墅), layered townhouses (*diejiashi* 叠加式) and assembled townhouses (*jiheshi* 集合式). While the northern section only consists of townhouses, the other two sections have mixed arrangements of these housing types.¹³¹ In contrast to “Seine Elysee” in Taicang, the design of the housing units follows traditional Chinese principles and local culture (see appendix, figure 4). For example, in the eastern section, there have been constructed planted courtyards in every villa in-between living room and kitchen according to Suzhou tradition. Furthermore there have been used elements such as covered corridors or wooden bridges and an enclosed structure of the commercial complex. Even the complementation of Yin and Yang (*yinyang hubu* 阴阳互补) in the relation between buildings and gardens has been considered.¹³²

“Evian Town” provides a set of daily living facilities and services for its residents. Yet they show some differences from the facilities and services provided in “Sanlinyuan” and “Jianxiangyuan”. The community clubhouse (see appendix, figure 5) forms the center of the estate and is constructed in a C-shape. While its building style also is related to traditional Suzhou culture, it offers a swimming pool and a particularly designed landscape with bridges and corridors. There are several open spaces for the residents to meet, like the second floor which is constructed in the form of a large terrace and a recreation area with restaurants and pubs. The estate further has its own kindergarten with six classes, spacious rooms and a music classroom.¹³³ For further education, there is a QSI (Quality Schools International) school which usually offers elementary as well as secondary education.¹³⁴

In the west section of the *xiaoqu* further stands the community library as well as a Zhaoshang bank and a supermarket of a well-known chain. The commercial center which is constructed as an enclosed unit as shown in figure 6 has already been mentioned. Additionally, there are

¹³¹ Shanglin guoji wenhua youxian gongsi 上林国际文化有限公司 [ed.]: *Juzhuqu jingguan guihua 100 li* 居住区景观规划 100 例, 2006, pp. 66-67.

¹³² RMJM: “Suzhou Yiyunshuiian erqi” 苏州依云水岸二期, 2011, pp. 127.

¹³³ Ibid, pp. 127, 129.

¹³⁴ Quality Schools International: “QSI Curriculum Site”, last accessed on 30.11.2013 under the URL: <http://curriculum.qsi.org/Default.aspx>.

some facilities for physical education, like a basket ball court, a tennis court, and a fitness center. The local golf course is located directly vis-à-vis of “Evian Town”. The villas and townhouses themselves are also well-equipped with a famous brand air conditioning system and some having their own elevator.¹³⁵ There are lots of green spaces with a garden in every “housing cluster” and a green belt running along the artificial water canal. The greening rate of the estate is considerably high with 50 percent. Of course, parking spaces have also been integrated in the planning. There are ground-level parking spaces in the northern section as well as next to the commercial center and temporary parking spaces scattered around the other two sections. The rate of parking spaces to households is 1:1.¹³⁶

“Evian Town” is maintained by Zhaoshang’s own property management company “Zhaoshang ju wuye guanli youxian gongsi” 招商局物业管理有限公司 and the residents have to pay 2.5 Yuan per month for every square meter.¹³⁷ On its website, the group promotes that it has 25 years of property management experience and provides services for some of the world’s top 500 companies, like Motorola or Samsung. This 24 hour service includes fields such as guest service, facility management, property management, quality supervision and security services.¹³⁸ The security service includes the erection of an enclosing wall and security systems on different levels that are in-house, in every building compound and in the estate as a whole. Examples for this high-tech security measures are an access system with admission cards, a system for reporting fire alarm and intercommunication systems at the entrances. Furthermore, the several *zutuan* have security checkpoints at both ends and security within the *zutuan* is guaranteed through an Integrated Circuit Card system.¹³⁹

An important feature of *gaodang xiaoqu* is the way they are advertised. As the housing units are all “commercial housing”, marketing is more important than for other types like *danwei* or subsidized housing. As the dwelling units in “Evian Town” are already sold and there is no information on its advertisement available, this analysis will draw on material from a *xiaoqu* with the same name from the same developer in Foshan 佛山. *Zhaoshang dichan* has

¹³⁵ Yan, Yanli 颜艳丽: “Zhaoshang Yiyunshui: shenghuo dianfan, bieshu lingxiu” 招商依云水岸: 生活典范, 别墅领袖, last accessed on 30.11.2013 under the URL:

http://sz.house365.com/project/2008/8/zt_20080809_zswy/.

¹³⁶ Anjuke 安居客: “Yiyunshui” 依云水岸, last accessed on 30.11.2013 under the URL:

<http://suzhou.anjuke.com/community/view/165968>.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Zhaoshang dichan 招商地产: “Guojiji wuguan, shijie 500 qiang yuyong pinpai” 国际级物管, 世界 500 强御用品牌, last accessed on 30.12.2013 under the URL: <http://www.sd888.org/house/yiyunsui/wuye.html>.

¹³⁹ Shanglin guoji wenhua youxian gongsi 上林国际文化有限公司 [ed.]: *Juzhuqu jingguan guihua 100 li* 居住区景观规划 100 例, 2006, p.66.

constructed a similar project there which even partly contains villas of the same design and is advertized under the same logo. The project was completed only at the beginning of 2010.¹⁴⁰

In March 2009, an advertisement of “Evian Town” was published in the *Guangzhou Daily* (*Guangzhou ribao* 广州日报).¹⁴¹ The advertisement shows a couple standing on an imaginary footbridge which is set up between the two banks of Dongping River 东平河 which the estate also borders on (see appendix, figure 6). In the background one can see the skyline of Foshan as well as the “Shiji lian tiyu zhongxin” 世纪莲体育中心, a large sports stadium in the neighborhood of “Evian Town”. The advertisement says that there are villas and townhouses for sale on both sides of the river banks and that the official “VIP” registration will start on March 5th. Furthermore it says: “Infinite happiness reservations” and “Xingfu shenghuo xianzai yuding!” 幸福生活现在预定! (“A happy life can now be reserved!”). The example shows that what is advertised in the newspaper is not the housing estate itself, but a sort of life. It lies in the hand of the potential homeowner to “buy” a happy life. Furthermore, to buy an estate from the given project shall bestow the homeowners with status. With the denomination “VIP” the developer aims to address the aspirational “middle class”. What is sold here is not the material housing unit, but the image of a socially segregated class.

In another advertisement which appeared in the same newspaper, the potential homeowner’s hope for an affluent lifestyle becomes plainly visible¹⁴². The advertisement shows the front buildings of “Evian Town”, which are in a golden gleam and proportionately much bigger than the rest of the city. It further shows the stadium which is shaped like a crown and placed into the center, directly above the river surface and also shining. On the right-hand side are two cars, a Ferrari and a Maserati as the text clarifies. The arrangement of the buildings around the river is totally fictional and does not represent the real layout of the district. The advertisement states that “Evian Town” resembles a “gathering of potentates” and aims to create the life of celebrities. And while one can have material objects be custom-made, life can be similarly exclusive. Again, the advertisement does not introduce the different housing units, but promote an affluent lifestyle, where one can purchase the “king and queen” of world famous-brand cars. The advertisement shows that it is not enough to be able to purchase a

¹⁴⁰ SouFun Limited 搜房网有限公司: “Yiyunshuian muqian goufang xiang 95 zhe, zuixin yangbanfang diezhao xinshang” 依云水岸目前购房享 95 折 最新样板房谍照欣赏, 2012, last accessed on 1.12.2013 under the URL: http://newhouse.fs.soufun.com/2012-03-07/7186742_all.htm#p=1.

¹⁴¹ Zhaoshang dichan 招商地产: “Yiyunshuian” 依云水岸, in: *Guangzhou ribao* 广州日报, 2009, last accessed under the URL: http://gzdaily.dayoo.com/html/2009-03/04/content_488645.htm.

¹⁴² Zhaoshang dichan 招商地产: “Yiyunshuian” 依云水岸, in: *Guangzhou ribao* 广州日报, 2009, last accessed under the URL: http://gzdaily.dayoo.com/html/2009-08/14/content_667470.htm.

housing unit in this *xiaoqu*, but that a certain shared ‘culture’ among the residents marked through consumption practices is necessary.

Finally, the social structure of homeowners in “Evian Town” is considered. Like every *xiaoqu*, “Evian Town” is administered by a neighborhood committee, the “Zhongjing shequ juweihui” 众泾社区居委会. In accordance with the *xiaoqu* from the other two groups, Party branch representative organizations engage in activities which are closely linked to basic community life. For example, in May 2011 they organized a festivity on occasion of the Chinese Dragon Boat Festival for the residents of “Evian Town” in Zhongjing community. The activity has been organized in cooperation with Zhaoshang’s property management company who also took part in the moderating.¹⁴³ Similarly, they organized a party at the Chinese Moon Festival in September 2011. The program included dancing, interactive games and musical entertainment.¹⁴⁴

However, there is no information of a higher degree of homeowner organization as for the defense of shared interests. The homeowners of “Evian Town” have not organized a homeowner’s committee, yet. The reason for this is not that there are no interests that would make them organize themselves. As one journalist reports, a homeowner from “Evian Town” complains about cracks in the walls and serious seepage problems. Because he had already engaged in reparations for one year and the property management company continuously shifts responsibility onto others, he now approached the media.¹⁴⁵ This was in April 2012. The homeowner also said that he knows other homeowners who have the same problem.

Despite all that there is no information on any further organization on the part of the homeowners. There are several reasons which might explain this phenomenon. Primarily, the estate is considerably larger than the other two examples. As homeowners in *gaodang xiaoqu* highly appreciate privacy, it is harder for them to get into contact with their neighbors. This can also be seen at the security measures on every level, from the single villa to the estate as a whole. Another reason might be that this social group turns to different measures to solve their problem. As they have the capital to retain a lawyer for example, they are likely to solve

¹⁴³ Yuanhe jiedao tuangongwei 元和街道团工委: “Zhongjing shequ Yiyunshuian tuanzhibu juxing duanwujié huodong” 众泾社区依云水岸团支部举行端午节活动, 2011, last accessed on 30.11.2013 under the URL: <http://tw.szxc.gov.cn/Show.asp?id=3284>.

¹⁴⁴ Yuanhe jiedao tuangongwei 元和街道团工委: “Zhongjing shequ Yiyunshuian tuanzhibu juban ,yue man Zhongqiu, jia zai Yiyun” 众泾社区依云水岸团支部举办“月满中秋、家在依云”中秋晚会, 2011, last accessed on 30.11.2013 under the URL: <http://tw.szxc.gov.cn/Show.asp?id=3496>.

¹⁴⁵ Zong, He 综禾: “Zhaoshang Yiyunshuian qiangti kailie shenlou yanzhong, yezhu wunai weiquan” 招商依云水岸墙体开裂渗漏严重 业主无奈维权, 2012, last accessed on 30.12.2013 under the URL: http://news.2500sz.com/news/szxw/2012-4/17_1432702.shtml.

their problem with the developer or the management company individually. Finally, this group of homeowners is in a constant fear of social decline. They only just succeeded in life and therefore are susceptible for the advertisement of an aspirational lifestyle. They are not willing to risk their status by attracting attention in terms of forming organizations which might threaten social order.

6. Conclusion

This paper has shown that *xiaoqu*, in accordance with the meaning of the Russian counterpart the term has been translated from, function as ‘microcosms’ in the larger environment of the city. While they are spatially and socially segregated from the outer city, they are not completely isolated but interact with their environment as proposed by Drummond and Perry. Spatially, this is visible through the connection of the inner circulation system with arterial roads. This connection is controlled through gates which can be opened and closed according to need. Socially, they are integrated into the wider context of the ‘community’ (shequ 社区). The residents can decide to what degree they take part in social activities organized by this community.

However, *xiaoqu* are not a Western concept but developed under the influence of the ‘neighborhood unit’ which was introduced to China as a global concept of urban planning. The examination of characteristics these housing estates share in section four has shown that basic features like the enclosed building form and the provision of living facilities which is an influence of *danwei* housing go back to the very origin of Chinese urban planning tradition. When the urban forms of the Soviet-style ‘company town’ and the ‘microdistrict’ were introduced to China at the end of the 1950s, they entered the scholarly discourse and were adapted to the Chinese context, as can be seen by Wang Shuoke’s three-tier and Wang and Xu’s four-tier residential system. This author therefore argues against a translation of the term into “gated communities” which evokes a direct connection to residential luxury compounds in the USA. As the analysis has shown that there are significant social differences between *xiaoqu* in Chinese cities, such a translation can be misleading.

The Chinese *xiaoqu* can be identified by means of shared spatial and social characteristics. While spatial characteristics have already been considered in the early definitions as illustrated in section two, this is different for social characteristics. Existing definitions do not

include social aspects such as the social background of residents or answer the question whether there are ‘social spaces’ and how they are used by inhabitants. Although Liu and Zou point out that there are differences between housing estates, they only name ‘common’ and ‘high-level’ *xiaoqu* but do not explain this differentiation further. Especially the self-organization of residents in the context of their new role as ‘homeowners’, is not considered.

The enclosed building form refers to the spatial layout of the estate, marked through the delimitation by city and natural boundaries and an inner circulation system as well as the enclosure through walls, fences and gates. The function of walls and fences with gates is to separate private from public life as has become clear in the case of “Evian Town” where gates were not only put up at the compound entrance, but also at two sides of the several *zutuan*. Other elements from traditional urban planning which still can be found in *xiaoqu* are the square form, cardinal orientation and axuality. All three exemplarily examined *xiaoqu* showed this enclosed building form. While “Jianxiangyuan” did not correspond to all traditional planning principles due to infrastructural limitations, the other two showed a square form and a middle axe, running from south to north. The residential buildings of “Sanlin Garden” which was constructed as a pilot project following clear instructions were built perfectly symmetrical.

Living facilities as well as public services are closely connected to housing in urban China since the Maoist Era when the *danwei* was the basic unit of society. Living facilities include educational institutions, commercial sites, green spaces and open spaces for recreational purposes as well as for leisure activities. Depending on the exclusiveness of the estate, it can additionally have cultural facilities. Public services mainly refer to security services and property management and are carried out by management companies or in cooperation with homeowner organizations. The analysis of the exemplary *xiaoqu* has shown that all three estates feature facilities and services as in the definition. It has further made clear that facilities and services provided are a major criterion to differentiate the groups of *xiaoqu*. While “Sanlin Garden” and “Jianxiangyuan” are similarly equipped, “Evian Town” shows more exclusive facilities and is the only estate with a library.

Social and structural characteristics comprise the social background of inhabitants, housing type and administrative as well as self-organization of the residents. As has been explained earlier it is not possible to delimit this group in terms of income and to describe them as “middle class” is problematic and not helpful in terms of a classification. It is more useful to follow some scholars who refer to the homeowners in terms of occupation with Tomba

describing them as urban professionals, skilled employees in the public and private sector as well as entrepreneurial elites.¹⁴⁶ There are different types of housing which simultaneously have a significant influence on the social composition of the *xiaoqu*. As has been shown, the homeowners of “Evian Town” are the most homogeneous group as the estate only comprises “commercial housing” and is not mixed as in the other two cases.

Xiaoqu have to be planned and developed by a real estate company or there may be more than one company involved in a cooperative project. This criterion applies to all three exemplary housing estates. Following the administrative organization of residential communities in Chinese cities, all three estates were further administered by a neighborhood committee. This committee primarily deals with problems in everyday life and organizes festivities as part of community life. Then, residents in some cases form interest groups which evolve from their role as a ‘homeowner’ which in turn is an important part of their identity. They organize themselves in homeowner committees as in the case of “Jianxiangyuan” to defend their interests against the developer or the management company.

Another aspect which is important for the formation of a social identity is a shared lifestyle or ‘culture’. With the commercialization of housing, the home in urban China became a place of affluence and to practice cultural distinction. This change in expectations had developed from a focus on the mere materiality of the home over environmental expectations to the cultivation of a shared lifestyle. This cultivation can be carried out in public spaces. Children’s education, the engagement in leisure activities and the gathering in parks are all ways of practicing a shared lifestyle. If the estate is more exclusive, conspicuous consumption is of central importance for identity formation as has been illustrated in the analysis of “Evian Town” advertisement.

This paper further has shown that there are social differences between *xiaoqu* in Chinese cities. If spatial and social characteristics of the housing estates are compared with each other, *xiaoqu* can be divided into three groups, *gongxin jieceng xiaoqu* or “lower-income neighborhoods”, *zhongdang xiaoqu* or “mid-level neighborhoods” and *gaodang xiaoqu* or “high-level neighborhoods”. *Gaodang* and *zhongdang xiaoqu* can be distinguished through differences in facilities and services they provide as well as the residents’ tendency to organize themselves and defend their interests. While the facilities and services in *gongxin jieceng* and *zhongdang xiaoqu* do not differ markedly, their difference lies in the professional

¹⁴⁶ Tomba, Luigi: “Creating an Urban Middle Class: Social Engineering in Beijing”, 2004, p. 4.

occupation of residents, the types of housing with *gongxin jieceng xiaoqu* also including social welfare housing, and the performance of property management.

If only spatial and design characteristics are considered, a possible differentiation of the groups is very limited. They all share the enclosed building form as well as an inner circulation system. The symmetrical arrangement of buildings according to cardinal orientation along a middle axe can appear in a *gongxin jieceng xiaoqu* and equally in a *gaodang xiaoqu*, as can be seen in the analysis. What points to a distinct group is the overall size of the estate with “Evian Town” being significantly larger than the other two estates. Furthermore, the design of the residential buildings may be decisive, as two types of housing in *gaodang xiaoqu* are distinct from the other forms. “New Towns” are built in Western-style according to American or European characteristics and townhouses or villas can easily be identified through their design and limited number of stories. Like “Evian Town”, the buildings can also be designed in local traditional style and be adapted to local culture. But as there is also the type of multistory housing in downtown areas which belongs to the group of *gaodang xiaoqu*, these characteristics are not enough for a classification and do not differentiate between *zhongdang* and *gongxin jieceng xiaoqu*.

What further can point to a certain group of *xiaoqu* is the name of the housing estate, as also observed by Hong¹⁴⁷. While *gaodang xiaoqu* often have fashionable names with English components, the exclusiveness of the names decrease with the groups down to *gongxin jieceng xiaoqu* which have the type of social welfare housing indicated in their name and indicating its “affordability”. But this can also only be partially applied, as developers of lower group *xiaoqu* increasingly imitate these fashionable names to raise their value. It is therefore necessary to include other characteristics for a clear differentiation.

A characteristic which provides clearer boundaries are the living facilities and services in the estates. Here, the analysis has shown significant differences between “Evian Town” and the other two estates. While “Sanlin Garden” and “Jianxiangyuan” provide facilities which are necessary to maintain daily life, the facilities in “Evian Town” are much more exclusive. In addition to physical education facilities like the tennis court and the swimming pool, “Evian Town” is the only estate which had a cultural facility, namely its own library. Moreover, while residents of “Sanlin Garden” and “Jianxiangyuan” have the possibility to cultivate a shared lifestyle in public spaces, like “Sanlin Gardens” *jiakongceng* 架空层 which has been

¹⁴⁷ Hong, Liangping 洪亮平: “Wo guo chengshi zhuzhai xiaoqu guihua jianshe de xin fazhan” 我国城市住宅小区规划建设的新发展, 1995, pp. 62.

built for this purpose, residents of “Evian Town” go to the fee-based clubhouse to meet. The calculation of one parking space per household in this estate shows that residents of *gaodang xiaoqu* are not dependent on facilities provided in their estate, but are able to get their daily necessities outside of the *xiaoqu* and by car. “Sanlin Garden” and “Jianxiangyuan” can hardly be differentiated by means of facilities. They both provide kindergartens as well as open and green spaces and lack cultural facilities. Indeed “Sanlin Garden” has its own elementary school, but the reason why “Jianxiangyuan” does not have one is because of the limited floor area. If a rational radius is applied, residents have access to primary and secondary education.

When it comes to services, there is a visible gradation between the different groups. As has been explained, the maintenance and property management of “Sanlin Garden” is mainly carried out by volunteer organizations of residents who take on tasks such as the guarding of the entrance gates which is normally performed by the property management company. This points out that the management services in the estate are comparatively poor. “Jianxiangyuan” shows two different service buildings for community services and has its own management company which is directly allotted to the estate. Moreover, it has a 24 hour public security service and high-standard security facilities. “Evian Town” in turn has an even more exclusive security customer service and in addition to the fact that it is also served by a management company which is part of the developer, the company promotes on its website that they have 25 years of experience in services and are hired by prestigious enterprises.

To enable a definite differentiation between the three groups it is necessary to look at social characteristics, especially administrative and self-organization. In this aspect, the three groups also differ from one another. In “Sanlin Garden”, the neighborhood committee plays an important role and takes up major social tasks such as care for the elderly. It has been shown that the committee has a close connection to the CCP and coordinates the estate’s volunteer organization. Party members are involved in property maintenance, for example in an improvement of the environment through the planting of trees which normally is carried out by the management company. However, there is no information of residents organizing themselves in a homeowners’ committee, although there are cases where their rights are violated, like the disturbance with dance music in “Sanlin Park”.

This is different in “Jianxiangyuan”. Here, residents have not only set up a homeowners’ committee, but also a building committee to overcome problems with the management company, like the “boiler plant incident” and to solve problems arising from their diverse social composition that is a divided management system. To introduce this new property

model supports the interests of residents from “compensation housing” units, as they do not have to fear that the management fee is too high and “commercial housing” homeowners similarly do not have to worry that they get an inferior service because the fee is too low. In “Evian Town” the aspect of privacy is stronger than in the other two examined estates. While it is also administered by a neighborhood committee, this committee only deals with the organization of festivities to practice community life, but does not have a great influence on the residents’ daily life. Although they would also have reasons to set up a homeowners’ committee, as seen in the report of one homeowner talking about construction defects, there is no information that such an organization has been set up. A possible reason for this are that life in “Evian Town” is more anonymous as the estate is greater and private spaces are more separated than in the other two groups. Furthermore, homeowners may solve their problem with the developer or the management company individually, as they have the financial resources. Finally, they are not willing to risk their status by being regarded as responsible for disrupting social order.

The analysis has shown that there are significant differences between the *xiaoqu* of the three groups. If spatial as well as social criteria are applied, the groups can clearly be separated from one another, with *gongxin jieceng xiaoqu* being the lowest and *gaodang xiaoqu* being the most exclusive group. This exclusive group is also the only group which can solely consist of “commercial housing”, while the other two groups can have mixed housing types in one estate. The housing model can therefore be seen as an expression of an increasing urban polarization in Chinese cities, analogous to the diverse real estate market and in positive affirmation of this paper’s title question.

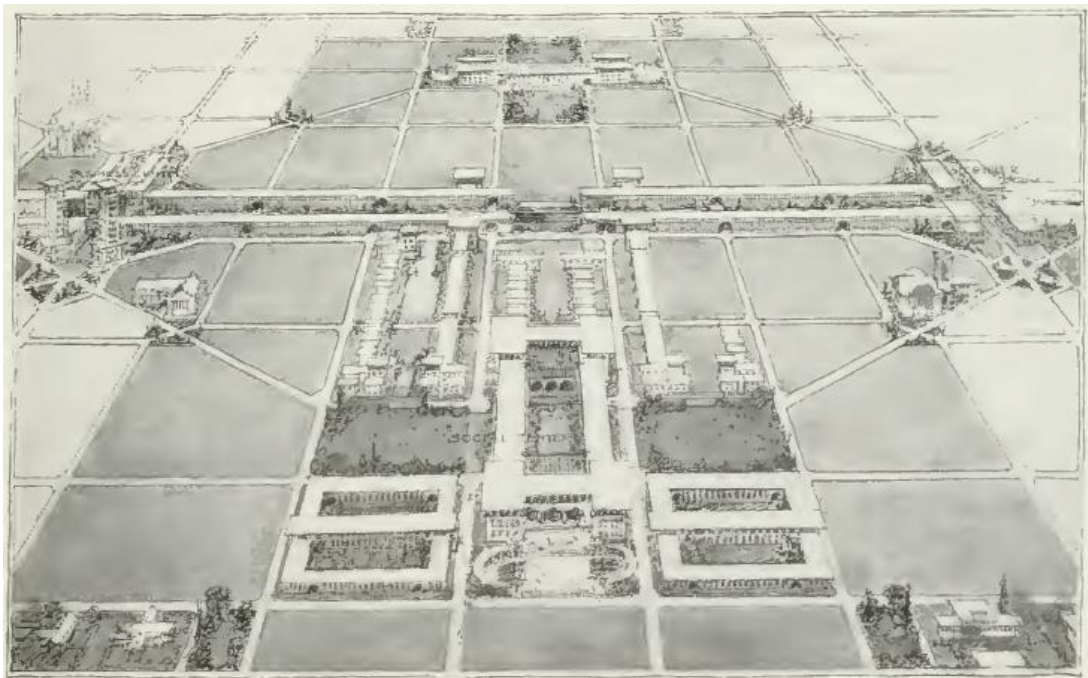
7. Appendix

Figure 1. Bird's eye view of "Haiqi Garden"



Source: Shanglin guoji wenhua youxian gongsi 上林国际文化有限公司 (ed.): *Juzhuqu jingguan guihua 100 li* 居住区景观规划 100 例 ("100 Cases of Community Planning"). Wuhan: Huazhong keji daxue chubanshe, 2006, Vol. 2, p. 353.

Figure 2. Bird's eye view of a possible neighborhood unit after Drummonds



Source: Yeomans, Alfred B. (ed.): *City Residential Land Development: Studies in Planning: Competitive Plans for Subdividing a Typical Quarter Section of Land in the Outskirts of Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916, p. 43.

Figure 3. Community center of “Sanlin Garden”



Source: Ling, Yan 凌岩: “Shanghai Sanlincheng kaifa youxian gongsi” 上海三林城开发有限公司 (“Shanghai ‘Sanlin Town’ Development Company Limited”), in: *Shanghai jingji nianjian* 上海经济年鉴, 1997, p. 29.

Figure 4. Villas in “Evian Town”



Source: RMJM [Robert Matthew Johnson Marshall, architecture firm]: “Evian Town (Phase 1-3), Suzhou, China”, 2013, last accessed on 5.12.2013 under the URL: <http://www.rmjm.com/portfolio/evian-town-phase-2-china>.

Figure 5. Clubhouse of “Evian Town”



Source: RMJM [Robert Matthew Johnson Marshall, architecture firm]: “Evian Town (Phase 1-3), Suzhou, China”, 2013, last accessed on 5.12.2013 under the URL: <http://www.rmjm.com/portfolio/evian-town-phase-2-china>.

Figure 6. Advertisement for “Evian Town”



Source: Zhaoshang dichan 招商地产: “Yiyunshuian” 依云水岸 (“Evian Town”), in: *Guangzhou ribao* 广州日报, 2009, last accessed under the URL: http://gzdaily.dayoo.com/html/2009-03/04/content_488645.htm.

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