

# Gated Community: The Past and Present in China

Qiong Yao, and Wei Wei

**Abstract**—Gated community has gained its dominant in residential areas development that it has become the standard development pattern of the newly built residential areas in contemporary China. The form of gated community has its own advantages and rationality that meet the needs of quite a lot of residents, but it's also believed by researchers that the form has great damage to the urban morphology and development, and has a negative impact on residents' living style. However, there is still a considerable controversy of the origins and outcomes.

Though recognized as a global phenomenon, gated community developed in China is greatly to do with the specific local forces, respect to the unique historical, political and socio-cultural momentums. A historical review of the traditional settlements in China and the trends that how Gated community has gained its contemporary form, is indispensable for comprehending the local forces, and provide a new perspective to solve the controversy.

**Keywords**—Gated community; Traditional form of settlements; modeling process.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**G**ATED community has gained its dominant in residential areas development that it has become the standard development pattern of the newly built residential areas in contemporary China. The form of gated community has its own advantages and rationality that meet the needs of quite a lot of residents, but it's also believed by researchers that the form has great damage to the urban morphology and development, and has a negative impact on residents' living style. However, there is still a considerable controversy of the origins and outcomes. Though recognized as a global phenomenon, gated community developed in China is greatly to do with the specific local forces, respect to the unique historical, political and socio-cultural momentums. A historical review of the traditional settlements in China and the trends that how Gated community has gained its contemporary form, is indispensable for comprehending the local forces, and provide a new perspective to solve the controversy.

## II. DEFINITION OF GATED COMMUNITY

The American sociologist Edward J Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder proposed the concept of gated community for the first time, in their monograph "Fortress America" in 1997, which is defined as "only part of the person are allowed to enter the area,

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in these regions, usually in public areas such as streets and gardens open to residents only. These areas with walls, fences and gates surrounded, residents and visitors must be authenticated before entering these regions. "

In recent years, Chinese scholars also started research on gated community, while absorbing foreign research results and combined with the actual conditions in China, summarizing the definition of gated community in China. First, there are translations of gated community as "closed settlements ", "closed community" and so on. Based on the domestic situation, concepts that are used to describe the settlements space are residential areas, residential quarters and community in administrative management. Starting from the definition of gated community, the concept includes three levels of meaning: [1] the enclosed spatial form; [2] Closed-off management; [3] Property rights and responsibility for the residential quarters. In this sense, residential quarters of closed-off management are most consistent with the concept of gated community. Finally, in order to be distinguished from the top-down construction of community by authorities and highlight physical form, the paper applies the concept of gated community to define the scope of the study.

In this paper, the scope of gated community is defined mainly by two characteristics, [1] the enclosed spatial form and [2] property rights and responsibility for the residential quarters.

## III. TRADITIONAL FORM OF SETTLEMENTS IN CHINA: HISTORY AND EVOLUTION

The phenomenon of gated community, which is featured with enclosed defense, drew initial attention of researchers in USA. In the perspectives of the gated community study, through a review of the traditional Chinese form of settlements, the enclosed form of residential area is deeply rooted in history, which forms its historical origins and cultural connotations. In generally, traditional form of residential areas has experienced a process from closure to open-up, then a relative closure. The enclosed form of residential areas is manifested on three dimensions, residential districts differentiation, the enclosed form of residential areas and traditional introverted courtyard pattern.

Retrospect to an early period of slave society, there is a definite and rigorous partition of residential areas from aristocracy to the poor with the emergence of the city. Giving prominence to the hierarchical order of feudal etiquette, the residential area was divided into palace area, aristocracy area and the slum, mainly by classes and occupation. Stepping into the feudal society, the ideology of residential differentiation

continued, which the enclosed residential area of ordinary people was called *li fang* since the Sui Dynasty. Along with the economic growth in the Tang Dynasty, the residential form of *li fang* gradually disintegrated, coming into being the form of *fang xiang* in the northern Song Dynasty. However, the differentiation of residential areas did not collapse according to the hierarchical system.

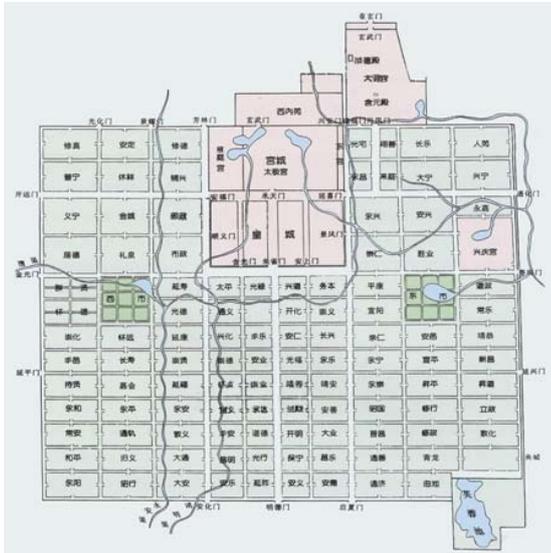


Fig. 1 The City of TangChang'an, represent *li fang*

In the perspective of organizational form of residential areas, the form of well-field system as rural settlements progressed into the residential pattern of *li fang*, then involved into the form of *fang xiang*, till the street-hutong-courtyard form in Yuan Dynasty. The enclosed form of residential areas, such as *li fang*, conformed to the control of centralized feudal monarchy, that the residents were strictly refined in the boundary walls. Commercial function was restricted in the east and west markets, separated from the residential areas. Until the Tang Dynasty, the residential form of *li fang* gradually disintegrated as a result of the development of commodity economy. Commercial streets were combined with residence, a new spatial pattern taking shape.

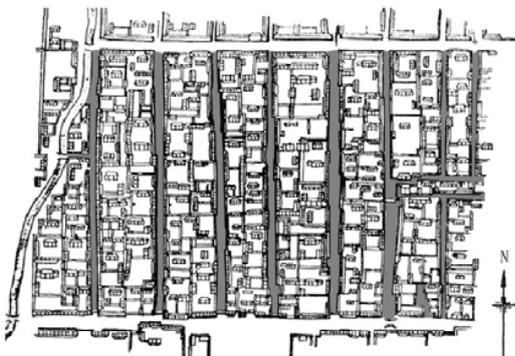


Fig. 2 Typical pattern of street-hutong- courtyard

The enclosed form of traditional residential areas in history accounts for the historical origins of contemporary gated community. The enclosed form of residential areas was not only responsible for the domination of centralized feudal monarchy government, also met the residents' requires of peace and possession of private property. Consequently, the history of traditional residential culture has impact on contemporary residence on three levels, [1] paternalistic centralized governance, [2] planning concepts of enclosed spatial form and residential districts differentiation, [3] recognition of introverted form and closed-off management by residents.

#### IV. MODERN DESIGN EFFECT ON CHINESE RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Lately, the contemporary gated community has gradually come into being in China and gained overwhelming prevalence in the commodity housing market. Based on the socio-cultural and institutional-economic background in China, developers, the government and residents, as well as planners involved in the process of residential construction, interact to form gated community, illustrating the formation mechanism and modeling process of gated community at present.

##### A. The Government

The shaping of gated community is ingrained in the institutional-economic background in contemporary China, which has mainly to do with the Chinese Government. With China's reform and opening up since 1987, a series of housing reform programmes has been launched by the Chinese government, which has a decisive impact on the establishment of a commodity housing market. As a result of the housing reform, the real estate developers have taken place of the government, work units or individual on residential construction. Now the construction of residential areas is totally market-oriented, and a living spatial form called residential quarter gained its prevalence in the commodity housing market, which tends to evolve into gated community.

Owing to the economic, social and housing reform, the original social relation has rapidly disintegrated. Most urban residents have move to the new houses, which are settled in gated community and totally unfamiliar. Besides, the ownership of private property is legitimated by the government. The right to use of local streets and facilities are granted to the residents who own the house in residential quarters, which are therefore exclusive.

Furthermore, the reform brings about rapid urbanization. The Government regulates the newly developed lands and programs mainly through the urban master plans, regulatory plans and site plans, and the control is neither strong nor exhaustive. But the form of residential areas is limited as compliance with the regulation, and gated community based on residential quarter is well matched.

##### B. Developers

Developers purchase lands the right to use from the government, who are responsible for the construction of residential quarters, for the purpose of house sales and profit.

As long as not breaking the laws, regulations and urban plans, developers build houses and residential quarters which are popular with the residents. Gated community well accepted by the residents make the "Matthew Effect", Self-reinforcing.

Especially, after property management services were legitimated, the property management company takes responsibility to maintenance of the residential areas, which is paid by the residents as their private property. Thus, gated community gains its recognition unanimously by residents, in order to prevent the encroachment of foreigners which will increase maintenance costs. Though closed-off management is not strictly carried out, there are usually several entrances with janitor's room and boundary walls, which have been premeditated and built during the construction process of the residential area, that make it gated community.

### C. Residents

Residents prefer gated community to other styles of residential quarters on account of two main reasons, [1] preclusion from free-rider problem and [2] more quiet and safe environment. First, the residents would like a quiet and safe residential environment, where they have a rest and assurance of no potential harm to their property, which gated community make guarantee physically. Especially, on the condition that frequent population movements aggravate since China's reform and opening up, urban residents need more sense of security and belonging. Besides, the whole area of residential quarters is the private property of residents who own the houses. For the residents' perspective, they pay for the construction and maintenance of the residential quarters, which consequently are exclusive, making gated community popular with the residents.

## V. CONCLUSION

A conclusion section is not required. Although a conclusion may review the main points of the paper, do not replicate the abstract as the conclusion. A conclusion might elaborate on the importance of the work or suggest applications and extensions.

Gated community at present is inevitably the continuation of the traditional introverted enclosed form of living space and the centralized management, combined with the modern planning concepts of residential areas. As a result, there are two prominent impacts on the conformation process of contemporary gated community: [1] more acceptable for the residents, and [2] introverted but with more other features of the spatial form pattern, which eventually take effect on gated community to take shape.

After China's reform and opening up since 1987, a commodity housing market has gradually been set up, and nearly become the only way for ordinary people to buy a house to settle down. With rapid urbanization, the Government regulates the newly developed lands and programs mainly through the urban master plans, regulatory plans and site plans, and the control is neither strong nor exhaustive.

Residential quarters have gained overwhelming prevalence in the commodity housing market. The developers assume to build the local streets and facilities, and grant residents the right to use who own the house in residential quarters, which are

therefore exclusive, and tend to evolve into gated community. Moreover, gated community gain its popularity on account of [1] legitimated property management services and [2] the sense of security and belonging which meet the needs of the residents.

The Study of China's gated community just commence, that it has not reach a consensus on its defects. Thence this has led to negligence from the government, developers, designers and residents, that all has ignored the phenomenon of gated community at present. To sum up, the modeling progress of gated community continues to self-reinforce in China.

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