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Gated Communities and the Transitional Economy of Guangzhou: Implications for Urban Sustainability

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Aim

To investigate the causes and the sustainability implications of the mushrooming of gated communities in Guangzhou.
Structure of presentation

- The conceptual issues
- The scale of gated communities in Guangzhou
- The causes
- The urban sustainability implications
Gated communities in the West

- Mostly higher-end and larger housing projects.
- Contentions: implications for urban development, spatial integration, public space utility, community building and social integration within the residential enclaves and with the neighbouring areas.
- Many of these are also sustainability concerns, especially the social aspects.
Figure 1. Social sustainability of housing

- Socially sustainable housing
- Equitable housing distribution and consumption
- Quality housing & living environment
- Harmonious social relations
- Social preconditions conducive for ecologically sustainable housing
The conceptual issues

- Sustainability issues of gated communities
  - Choice of housing sites – brownfield or greenfield sites
  - Internal planning and design – comfort, safety, convenience (accessibility), community building, identity building, life style
  - Connectivity/integration with the neighbouring areas – physical and residents’ aspiration
Location of Guangzhou
## Gated community development in Guangzhou

### Table 1. Housing development in Guangzhou

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Residential floor space (1 000 sq.m)</th>
<th>Gross residential space/person (sq.m)</th>
<th>Living space/person (sq.m)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>39 743</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>79 521</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>180 295</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth rate 1990-2007</td>
<td>454%</td>
<td>262%</td>
<td>250%</td>
</tr>
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Note: Registered population was applied in calculation. Living space is equal to internal floor space.
Figure 2. Current land use in Guangzhou

Figure 3. 100 popular housing projects in Guangzhou
Housing development in Guangzhou
Gated community development in Guangzhou
Gated community development in Guangzhou
Gated community development in Guangzhou
Gated community development in Guangzhou
Gated community development in Guangzhou
Gated community development in Guangzhou
Clifford Garden
Why sprawling gated communities

- Rapidly growing affluence creating demand for higher quality housing
  - Growth in GDP/capita
    - 1990 - US$1,061/capita
    - 2007 - US$9,311/capita
Why sprawling gated communities

- Change in economic structure – growth in middle class
  - Value of secondary industry (billion USD)
    - 1990 – 2.85
    - 2007 – 36.93
  - Value of tertiary industry (billion USD)
    - 1990 – 3.3
    - 2007 – 54.64
- The above two reasons do not necessarily give rise to urban sprawl but raise demand for higher quality housing.
Why sprawling gated communities

- Land governance and land sale policy in rural areas
  - Collectively-owned land is ‘resumed’ by local government, then leased to developers on project bases – boost GDP
  - Developers responsible for infrastructure construction and planning within the site boundary
  - No overall district planning and government loses control of the planning of residential projects
Why sprawling gated communities

- Outside the boundary - remains undeveloped, creating leapfrogged residential enclaves, which are gated and segregated from the rural undeveloped areas
- Government revenue generated from land sale used for other development projects
Why sprawling gated communities

- Increasing use of private cars
  - 2000 - 208,000 cars
  - 2007 - 481,000 cars
  - Car industry a major industrial activity in Guangzhou
  - Railway development in the pipeline
Sustainability implications

- Choice of housing sites
  - Mostly greenfield sites, including a green belt (6.9 sq km) in the main urban area (Zhujiang Xincheng).
  - Peripheral areas - commuting to/from main urban area for work and entertainment, creating traffic jams (transport energy, CO₂ emission)
Sustainability implications

- Connectivity/integration with the neighbouring area
  - Less a problem for gated-communities in the urban area as there are almost contiguous gated community projects of a similar type supporting a similar lifestyle.
  - Great problem in the peripheral areas – polarization between the residential projects and the surrounding rural areas – physical, social and spatial development.
  - Tight security – no desire to integrate with the surrounding areas
Gated community in Guangzhou

Outside Clifford Garden

Clifford Garden
Gated community in Guangzhou

Outside Guangdi Garden

Guangdi Garden
Villages in Guangzhou
Sustainability implications

- Internal planning and design
  - Large projects (e.g. Clifford Garden of 4.33 sq km) provide a full range of facilities – opportunities for community building
  - Small projects – facilities and community building are minimal
  - Boasting an exotic lifestyle of the upper-middle class
Phoenix City Court
Baoli City Garden
Overall, an undesirable urban development process form the sustainability perspective.
Thank you!