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**Gated communities in Chinese cities: social networks, mobilities
and segregation**

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Abstract

Significant urban and social transitions have occurred in Chinese cities following the economic reforms of the late 1970s. One key change has been the emergence and dominance of private gated communities. This study seeks to understand why this kind of enclosed style of urban living has come to dominate many Chinese cities, how they have influenced neighbourhood and social-spatial relationships in cities and what they indicate about the desire for safety and status in Chinese urban society today. Underpinning this work is particular concern, not only with the interior social life of these gated communities' residents, but also with their spatial mobility and the kinds of resulting inequality and segregation at the wider urban scale. An in-depth case study of two upscale gated communities in Zhanjiang, a middle-tier Chinese city, were conducted with one community examined in the central city area and another in the city's suburban districts. These studies were carried out to examine the kinds of neighbourhood life, social networks, mobility patterns and engagement with public spaces of their affluent middle-class residents. The data was collected using qualitative research methods including semi-structured interviews, documentary analysis and observation. A series of sets of findings emerged from this empirical work. First, the development of these communities has contributed to the formation of privileged residential spaces for emerging middle-class residents in Zhanjiang in which the symbolic meaning of these spaces has been mobilised to cultivate a sense of superior social status and distinctive social and cultural forms of capital within changing Chinese class cleavages. The wealthy residents of gated communities, through considering themselves as superior 'insiders' in their neighbourhood lives and daily social interactions, exclude and stigmatise other social groups as 'outsiders'. Secondly, a fear of crime and of poor citizens generally has become one of the most important factors driving wealthy groups to prefer living in gated communities. However, the lack of social integration and informal social control in gated communities further exacerbates their concerns and anxieties about safety and erodes neighbourhood cohesion and mutual trust between urban residents. Thirdly, the investigation of the mobility and engagement with public space of these wealthy residents indicates that their shielded mobilities, invisibility in public spaces, their discrimination and stigmatisation of other social groups, exclusive/exclusionary social networks and retreat from local public

services all contribute to complex forms of segregation and inequality in contemporary Zhanjiang. Finally, in many ways such communities are diverse areas with the suburban case area displaying high-density, the accommodation of many poor urbanites and a lack of sufficient public infrastructure and services. The study contributes to our understanding of gated communities in Zhanjiang which serves as an example of similar middle-tier Chinese cities. It thus widens the geographical reference point of much current Chinese urban research beyond major cities. The study also engages with key urban theories in Western literature, particularly established/outside, fear of crime and urban mobilities, to unpack the dynamics of segregation and inequality caused by gated communities in China. Overall, the study informs scholarship on gated communities, neighbourhood change, spatial mobility, segregation and inequality in Chinese cities and will be of interest to those who are concerned about the gradual rise of more unequal and divided cities.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

Research background

The rapid worldwide spread of gated communities has been an important feature of urban landscapes in many cities in the last few decades (Atkinson and Blandy, 2005; Glasze, Webster and Frantz, 2004). These enclosed residential housing estates, or gated communities, range from: suburban middle-class neighbourhoods in America (Low, 2003; Blakely and Snyder, 1997); secure residential housing estates in the war-torn Arab-world (Glasze and Alkhayyal, 2002); polarised South-American (Coy, 2006) and post-apartheid South-Africa (Landman and Schönteich, 2002); work-unit compounds (Bray, 2005) and commodity housing estates (Wu, 2005) in China. Although gated communities from different regions and countries have diverse historical roots and specific spatial forms, most of them are demarcated by visible or invisible boundaries (He, 2013) that separate a homogeneous social group, usually affluent residents, from the wider public world. Thus, despite some suggested positive aspects of gated communities, such as economic efficiency (Webster, 2001), service provision (Glasze and Alkhayyal, 2002), and social integration (Manzi and Smith-Bowers, 2005; Salcedo and Torres, 2004), most commentators suggest that the rapid increase of gated communities not only manifests issues of social stratification and inequality, but also exacerbates the problems of social segregation (Le Goix, 2005; Atkinson and Flint, 2004; Marcuse, 1997) and urban fragmentation (Coy, 2006; Graham and Marvin, 2002). Some commentators further relate them to other negative consequences such as increasing social tensions (Lang and Danielsen, 1997), fear of outsiders (Low, 2003), encroachment on public space and destruction of meaningful public life (Glasze, Webster, and Frantz, 2004; Low, 2003; Jürgens and Gnad, 2002; Sennett, 1992). In general, the dynamic development of gated communities has been context-sensitive, by exploring the emerging forms of housing estates, we can further understand underlying social and urban transformations in contemporary cities.

In the Chinese context, significant economic and social change since the economic reform of the late 1970s has been accompanied by striking transformations in the urban environment. The emergence of gated communities, normally called 'gated commodity housing estates' in the Chinese literature (He, 2013; Wissink et al., 2012), has been a key element of such changes. Gated communities have proliferated at an astonishing rate and now dominate the landscape of a large number of cities across the country (Miao, 2003). Some indication of the scale of the constructions of gated communities can be understood from statistics gathered between 2000 and 2008, which show that approximately 80% of all newly-built communities in China are gated communities (Song and Zhu, 2009). These changes have also been underwritten by the "National Plan of New Urbanization 2010 - 2014", published by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, which contained a number of new policies that sought to replace the poor public housing and work-unit compounds in inner-cities with gated commodity housing estates. From these perspectives, both the social, economic and political circumstances of modern China have created fertile soil for the rapid growth of gated communities in Chinese cities.

Despite the notable rise of gated communities, when compared with urban built environments in the West where gated neighbourhoods are relatively new at the urban scale (Webster, Glasze, and Frantz, 2002; Blakely and Snyder, 1997), gated living, for instance in the form of courtyard housing, has been a traditional form of neighbourhood living for many years in China (Huang, 2004). More recently, in the pre-reform era (1949-1978) when egalitarianism was the dominant ideology (Wu, 2005), gated work-unit compounds were also commonly seen in most Chinese cities; gates in this period were not designed to reinforce the separation of residents from others but to reinforce state control and collective consumption (Wu, 2005). However, what is novel about the current process of 'gating' in China is that since the market reforms of 1978 and the further commodification of housing from the 1980s, private gated commodity housing estates have begun to dominate the residential landscape in China. In many of these developments, only middle or high-income households could afford to purchase commodity housing units in line with the expansion of a Chinese middle-class (Wu, 2002). Some argued that these private commodity housing developments revealed

growing and underlying social segregation and inequalities that were increasingly emerging in China at this time (Li and Wu, 2008). Thus, it has become of interest of this study to consider how the developments of these privatised gated communities have transformed the urban built environment, socio-spatial patterns and the social life of middle-class residents in contemporary Chinese cities.

In the Chinese literature on gated communities, researchers often draw on theories from the Western countries, among which the discourse of fear, club goods theory, economic globalisation, and neoliberal ideology are the most relevant. When applying these Western theories, they also pay particular attention to the local contexts and characteristics of Chinese cities. For example, many western scholars recognise that the widespread popularity of gated communities is due to the residents' fear of crime (Blakely and Snyder, 1997), or perceived crime (Low, 2003), and the failure of governments to provide safe environments. These concerns for safety are seen by some (Davis, 1996; Bagaeen, 2015) to promote the postmodern 'militarisation' of the city in which gates, walls, private police are used in affluent gated neighbourhoods to secure private housing estates and lifestyle. However, based on the Chinese contexts, Wu (2005) critically indicates that the discourse of fear is not adequate for understanding Chinese gated communities and suggests that the 'club goods theory' would be more appropriate in understanding the rapid emergence of gated communities. On the other hand, some scholars have pointed out those similarities between China and Western countries. For instance, many scholars (e.g. Zhang, 2012; Pow and Kong, 2007; Wu, 2004) indicate that gated communities in China are transplanted from Western-style high-end housing estates in a process of economic globalisation and market-driven transformation (Wu and Webber, 2004), and, in turn, shape the modern and elite urban lifestyle in the cities. Pow (2009) also argues that the emergence of gated communities is entwined with the neoliberal ideology in the housing market that shapes the imagined 'good life' and middle-class territoriality in Chinese cities. Although these theories and concepts originated from Western literature, they can also deepen our understanding of the formation mechanism and social implications of gated communities in China. This research starts from the conceptual frameworks found in Western studies to examine how, and to what extent,

they fit into Chinese urban reality, while paying adequate attention to Chinese cities' urban and historical contexts (Pow, 2015).

Some of the existing research in urban studies tend to see gated communities as universal urban forms transplanted from North America, and do not carefully consider the local complexities of meaning attached to these housing estates, or how this 'neoliberal urbanism' forms and reforms in different spatial contexts (Pow, 2015). The structural explanations for the emergence of gated communities such as economic globalisation and the retreat of the welfare state (Marcuse and Van Kempen, 2011) and the negative consequences of social division and urban fragmentation are dominant in Western academic discussions. However, when studying gated communities in a non-Western context such as China it is important to avoid directly applying Western theories and models of urbanisation and pay more attention to the historical and social characteristics of local contexts of Chinese cities in order to critically understand how these Western theories works in different contexts and evaluate the meanings and effects of these gated communities.

Considering the academic progress of research on gated communities in China, early researchers tend to explain gated communities in terms of Chinese historical roots, cultural inheritance and context-based economic-political systems. For example, some scholars point out that the gates and walls of work-unit compounds and courtyard housing are ingrained in the historical housing built-form and traditional urban design (Lu, 2006; Bray, 2005). Some researchers suggest that gates and walls, in the socialist era, helped to demarcate the residential space for collective production and consumption (Xu and Yang, 2009; Huang, 2006) and strengthened the grassroots political control by the governments (Huang, 2004, 2006). Shen and Wu (2012) analysed the political-economic backgrounds of Shanghai and suggested that the rapid development of gated communities is an outcome of the entrepreneurial strategies of local government to stimulate economic growth and construct liveable urban environments. Until recently, researchers have begun to pay more attention to other implications of gated communities, such as crime control (Wang et al., 2021), neighbourhood attachments (Du, Song, and Li, 2020; Lu, Zhang, and Wu, 2018; Zhu

and Fu, 2017), social segregation (Deng, 2017), and community governance (Wu Xiaolin and Li Haoxu, 2020; Lu, Zhang, and Wu, 2020). These concepts and research derived from Chinese local contexts also contribute to our recognition of the meanings and functions of gated communities.

Drawing on discussions of the political, social and academic backgrounds of gated communities in China, this thesis explores the changing Chinese urban and social context in which income and class, built form and changing social aspirations are re-shaping city life in China today. The study seeks to engage with affluent residents in upscale gated residential developments in a specific ordinary Chinese city (Zhanjiang). Its primary goal is to explore and understand the question of why this kind of fortified urban space has come to dominate new urban landscapes; how these physical housing forms come to influence distinctive social-spatial relationships in cities; and what these patterns of use say about desires for, and expressions of, safety and status in Chinese urban society today. Underpinning this work is a particular concern not only with the interior social life of gated communities but also the mobility and social networks of residents at the wider urban scale.

Why does this study matter?

In February 2016, a government document called “Instructions of the State Council on Strengthening the Administration of Urban Planning and Construction” was published by the State Council of China. This document indicated that new residential developments should promote an open style and that existing gated residential developments should be gradually opened, which means physically getting rid of existing gates and walls. The main purpose of this governmental initiative was to address the severe traffic congestion issues caused by the privatisation of urban roads and streets in the gated communities. However, subsequent reactions and social practices have shown that this government policy - a ‘suggestion’ and exploratory attempt - is difficult to implement because of opposition by large groups of urban residents, mainly those living in gated communities. Residents raised a series of issues regarding privacy, safety, property rights of homeowners, the management of

neighbourhoods and economic disputes that stood in the way of implementing this policy. Although this policy demonstrated some of the underlying negative impacts of gated communities, the objections raised by the residents and the difficulties in applying the policy indicates that gated living is entrenched in contemporary urban built environments and, more importantly, gated communities are not necessarily perceived as disadvantageous urban forms by their residents (He, 2013). Residents justify gated living by referring to personal safety, private property, privacy, individual residential choice and alternative living style, and these justifications are hard challenge. However, the individual choices of affluent residents may have far-reaching implications for underprivileged groups, such as the displacement of crime into their areas, increasing social division and segregation and wider questions of social justice, urban fragmentation, and the destruction of public life, which are entirely ignored in most discussions.

These are invisible urban problems that are obscured by simplistic ideas about demolishing gates and walls, and are not easily understood, in a country with 'gated history' of over two thousand years (Zhang, 2002). The contradiction between government policy and public reaction, the transformation of the urban built-environment and social structure, and the complex and implicit consequences of these gated housing estates, all form the interest of this study. Based on these economic, historic, political and social contexts of China, this study seeks to explore the underlying implications of t enclosed housing estates and understand contemporary social and spatial transformation through the prism of rapidly emerging gated communities in Chinese cities.

Traditionally, urban researchers and policymakers have long been concerned about deprived communities and urban spaces occupied by poor residents and ethnic minorities. However, with the booming economy and development of urban space, wealthier groups who control key resources have tended to retreat from the public urban realm into their private domains (Low, 2003), of which the gated community is arguably the most significant urban spatial form. Thus, in this context, urban issues such as social segregation (Musterd, 2006), the fragmentation of urban space

(Graham and Marvin, 2002), middle-class disaffiliation (Watt, 2009; Atkinson, 2006), and fear of crime (Davis, 1996) are unfolding. But to better understand these emerging urban issues and how the urban system operates as a whole, it is necessary for urban researchers to study, not just urban deprivation and poverty, but also the spatial distribution and social life of the urban rich (Atkinson and Ho, 2019). Only in this way can we know more about how these urban problems come about and how to solve them at their sources. This is the first rationale that forms the basis of the research.

The second key point is that the research on mobility patterns of residents inside gated communities is not well understood. Until recently, most community and social science studies were static, primarily focusing on residential patterns (Sheller and Urry, 2006). However, with the development of the automobile over the last half century, urban space has contracted, largely transforming modern time-space patterns. But traditional studies have tended to ignore the systematic movements of people for work and family life, leisure and pleasure (Sheller and Urry, 2006). Urry and Sheller (2006) call for a 'mobility turn' in the social sciences, suggesting the need for more recognition of the complex patterns of social experiences caused by transactions, the movement of bodies and the role played by communication at-a-distance. In developing the 'mobility turn' in social science, researchers have conducted a series of studies detailing socio-spatial separation and segregation based on the mobility perspective (Birtchnell and Caletrío, 2013; Wang, Li, and Chai, 2012; Atkinson and Flint, 2004; Graham and Marvin, 2002). Gated communities have usually been understood as quite extreme forms of residential segregation. However, relatively little research into gated communities have focussed on the mobility patterns of these affluent residents to understand their dynamic forms of segregation from other social groups, although there has been some work done in recent years (Atkinson, 2016; Wang, Li, and Chai, 2012). Thus, this thesis seeks to fill this gap by employing the mobility patterns of residents in wider urban scale to contribute to the literature of gated communities research in the specific Chinese social and urban context.

The last key rationale for this research is to contribute to a fuller development of specifically Chinese work concerned with gated communities. Since the beginning of

research on Chinese gated communities, much of this work has tended to focus on the mechanisms of their formation mechanism and development (Huang, 2006; He and Wu, 2005; Wu, 2005; Miao, 2003), socio-spatial implications (Lu, Zhang, and Wu, 2018; Deng, 2017; Wang, Li, and Chai, 2012; Pow, 2007; Pow and Kong, 2007) and mode of internal governance (Lu, Zhang, and Wu, 2020). Despite these emerging studies of gated communities, there is still a lack of empirical research on the motives for gated living, neighbourhood life, mobility patterns and social networks of these emerging wealthy groups inside gated communities, also called propertied middle-class (Zhang, 2012), in Chinese cities. In this sense, this research aims to address this gap by exploring these wealthy residents from these multiple dimensions to fully understand the social effects brought about by gated communities and the social and spatial transformation in Chinese cities in the post-reform era more generally.

1.2 Research aims and questions

This research first aims to explore the consumptive aspects of urban living in these upscale gated communities, including the motives for gated living and neighbourhood life of the emerging wealthy groups inside gated communities. This research also aims to understand the broader social-spatial implication of gated communities by examining those residents' mobility patterns, activity space and social networks on the wider city scale, which help to understand broader social impacts of gated communities in terms of dynamic patterns of social segregation and exclusion. The deeper rationale underpinning this research is to understand how gated communities shapes the integration/exclusion and connection/segregation of these wealthy residents with other social groups not only on their residential scale but also in the wider urban space more broadly.

In order to address the above research aims, four research questions were posed:

1. Why do people choose to live in gated communities?

This question sets out to investigate the motivations and housing aspirations for living in gated communities. It also examines how those explanations, such as club goods and fear of crime, based on Western literature fit into the Chinese context. It pays particular attention to how the rapidly changing urban and social environment in modern China reshapes people's perceptions and motivations towards gated living.

2. What is the residential life like in gated communities in terms of their neighbourhood activities, social networks, neighbourhood governance?

This research question first seeks to explore the neighbourhood life and social networks of residents living inside gated communities to better understand their perceptions of community boundaries, power relationships and changing community lifestyles in these newly built housing enclaves. Second, it examines the role of different formal and informal organisations, such as management companies and homeowner organisations, in the neighbourhood management process to explore the emerging 'contractual neighbourhood governance' in the Chinese context.

3. What are the mobility patterns and activity spaces of residents of gated communities within the wider urban setting, and what are their attitudes toward other citizens and public spaces in the city?

This question focuses on the social-spatial implications of gated communities from a dynamic perspective. It examines the social division and segregation between residents inside gated communities and other social groups not only in the residential spaces but also in their activity spaces and mobility patterns on a wider urban scale. It also investigates their actual social interactions in public spaces to understand their values and attitudes toward other citizens and meaningful public life.

4. Are the social networks and urban lives of residents of gated communities disengaged from the local neighbourhood and other social groups in the city?

The last question first seeks to understand the detachment and disaffiliation of gated communities' residents from local social environments from another perspective: their

social networks (neighbourhood, family and friendship). It also investigates their usage of public services in the cities to reveal the extent of their retreats into private and exclusive zones and their 'partial exit' from public spaces and services.

1.3 Thesis structure

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 critically discusses the literature on gated communities and urban transformation and development of the research contexts in China. This chapter contains five sections. The first section reviews relevant literature on gated communities from all over the world, including the definition of gated communities, the emergence and development of gated communities based on different contexts and the implication of rapid development of gated communities. The second section introduces China's urban and social development in the last half-century, focusing on the economic reform and urbanisation process. The third section outlines the community development of China in three periods: the pro-socialist era, socialist and modern. Section four discusses the research development and primary debate in Chinese literature about gated communities. And the last section detailly illustrates those theoretical perspectives and concepts used in this research, containing theories in a community study, urban study, mobility, public spaces, and urban criminality.

Chapter 3 shows the methodology and research design of this study. Firstly, the research questions and related theoretical foundations are discussed. Then it illustrates the rationale of employing a case study research design to solve the research questions. Finally, the research methods and selection of cases are elucidated to give a comprehensive understanding of how this research is being operated.

Chapter 4 builds on the motivations and aspirations of gated living by residents in contemporary Chinese cities. First, it analyses the diverse reasons and motivations for residents to choose to live in gated communities while discussing how those theories, such as 'club goods theory' and cultural capital, from Western literature fits into

Chinese urban contexts. Then, it shows how affluent residents take advantage of gated communities, as a private commodity, to further their resources and search for more homogeneous social environments, which have far-reaching consequences on their next generations. Specifically, it critically discusses whether the discourse of fear of crime fit into the motives for gated communities in China.

Chapter 5 focuses on describing the neighbourhood relationship and participation of residents in gated communities and pays particular attention to how these emerging gated communities transform the traditional collective neighbourhood life and social relationships. In particular, it examines the inclusiveness and exclusiveness of social networks by these residents from a group-level perspective by employing Norbert Elias' established/outside' model (Elias and Scotson, 1994). It also explores the role of different formal/informal organisations, such as management companies, homeowner organisations, Residential Committee, and Street Office, in the neighbourhood governance to understand the extent of emerging 'contractual governance' on the neighbourhood level in the Chinese context.

Chapter 6 explores the social-spatial implications of gated communities by investigating the mobility patterns of the gated community residents on a wider urban scale. It first explores their modes of travel and activity spaces in the cities to reveal whether their activity spaces are more privatised and separated from other social groups. In particular, it compares the mobility patterns of affluent residents in gated communities and relatively poor residents in adjacent ordinary neighbourhoods to further understand the underlying dynamic segregation patterns. It finally investigates the actual social interactions of residents of gated communities in public spaces and their perceptions toward public spaces and an open and diverse public life in the city.

Chapter 7 pays attention to the social networks and usage of public/private services of the gated communities' residents, which helps to reveal their detachment and disconnection from broader public realms. It first investigates the social networks, including neighbourhood relationships, friendship and family relationships, of gated

communities' residents to understand the extent of their social detachment. Then it explores their usage of key public services, including schools and hospitals, and whether they apply privatised strategies when using urban amenities and retreat from the public realms of the city.

Chapter 8, the conclusion, presents a summary of the empirical research findings and reiterates the key themes and advances in knowledge generated by the work conducted. It then discusses the key outcomes from this research and develops the Chinese research agenda on gated communities. Finally, it summarises the limitations and further research directions.

Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework

This chapter reviews the literature on the emergence and development of gated communities from different countries, particularly in China, and explores urban transformation in China since the 1980s, focusing on the transition of the housing system and the development of urban communities. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section reviews the global literature on the definition, causes and consequences of gated communities. The second section reviews the literature on gated communities in Chinese contexts in particular, including the emergence, development and social outcomes of these enclosed developments. The third section introduces the transformation of urban contexts in Chinese cities in the past half-century, which helps to deepen our understanding of the research contexts. The final section illustrates the key theories and concepts applied in this research.

2.1 The global research literature on gated communities

Defining gated communities

The globally rapid proliferation of gated communities has attracted scholars' attention all over the world. This has meant that there are different definitions to conceptualise these housing estates based on specific contexts. Thus, it is useful to examine the similarities and differences in these definitions to get a holistic understanding of the features of gated communities.

Research conducted in the US by Blakely and Snyder (1997, p.2) suggests that gated communities are:

“Residential areas with restricted access in which public spaces have been privatised. They are security developments with designated perimeters, usually walls or fences, and controlled entrances that are intended to prevent penetration

by non-residents. [...] They are found from the inner cities to the suburban areas and from the richest neighbourhoods to poorest.”

In this definition, the physical boundary and the privatisation of public space are stressed. Also, it highlights the services and security functions of gated communities which are protected and restricted by professional guards. As Blakely and Snyder (1997) suggest, boundaries and privatised spaces not only protect the insiders from increasing criminal behaviour in cities but also demarcate a stable, homogeneous community for prestige, images and status. All residents inside gated communities want control over their homes, streets and neighbourhoods, and the essential aspect of the control is the ability to exclude undesirable outsiders and the general public (Blakely and Snyder, 1998). Although Blakely and Snyder also recognised the possibility of finding relatively poor residents in gated communities, most of their discussions are focused on elite communities and the exclusionary ideal of gating. They highlight the core issue of gated communities as not being the enclosed physical form but the reasons many people feel they need them. Based on the residents' desire for gating in the US, Blakely and Snyder (1997) further provide a typology of three forms of gated communities: lifestyle, prestige and security zone. The lifestyle type of community aims to create exclusive and high-end services for the upper-middle class. The prestige gated community aims to exhibit the social status of its residents and maintain the value of private properties. The purpose of the security type is to secure the safety of the residents and exclude potentially harmful groups.

In research based on Brazilian contexts, Caldeira (2000, p14) suggests another definition of gated communities:

“A closed condominium is a development of multiple residences, mostly high-rises, invariably walled and with security-controlled entrances, usually occupying a large area with landscaping, and including all sorts of amenities for collective use. In the last decade, they have become the preferred residence for the rich”.

While highlighting similar characteristics to those listed by Blakely and Snyder, such as walls, controlled entrances and privatised public spaces, Caldeira (2000) stresses the importance of social homogeneity, mainly referring to the affluent residents in gated communities and explains that this social homogeneity is realised by the high price of properties and maintenance fees. In this sense, these socially homogeneous gated communities share many similarities with the newly built gated commodity housing estates in China since the marketisation of housing systems in the 1980s (Wu, 2005). Caldeira further illustrates that the diverse neighbourhood amenities and services provided inside gated communities make these housing estates more like secluded and distant 'self-contained' worlds separated from public life in the city. This perspective is similar to what Graham and Marvin (2002) describe as 'premium network spaces' of affluent residents who separate themselves from public life with security-built spaces and networked urban infrastructure. Although some scholars argue that no spaces in contemporary society can totally withdraw from the surrounding environments (Amin and Graham, 1999), these 'self-contained' worlds of the urban rich deepen our understanding of the disconnection and secession of elite groups from wider society. Discussion of social homogeneity inside gated communities can shed light on the negative implications of social segregation and spatial exclusion (more on this later).

Drawing on the research of gated communities worldwide, Atkinson and Blandy (2005) suggest another definition of gated communities as:

“Walled or fenced housing developments, to which public access is restricted, characterised by legal agreements which tie the residents to a common code of conduct and (usually) collective responsibility for management.”

Compared with the previous two, this definition highlights the central features of the social and legal frameworks that stress the common code of conduct and the responsibility of neighbourhood governance by residents of gated communities. Atkinson and Blandy (2005) suggest that these social and legal frameworks are more formal than the frameworks of informal rules and rights formed in ordinary neighbourhoods through understanding the importance of maintaining a shared and

reciprocated set of values in neighbourhoods (Webster, 2003). Thus, the emergence of gated communities illustrates the rise of private contractual governance reflecting a new relationship and interplay between different stakeholders - homeowners, developers, and the state, in the production and governance of enclosed space (Fauveaud, 2016). For example, homeowner associations - formal organisations supported by lawyers and professional staff - in the US have gradually taken on the primary responsibility for governing gated communities (McKenzie, 1994).

From these definitions of gated communities in different contexts, three common features of gated communities stand out: first, the physical boundaries of housing developments that exclude outsiders; second, the creation of restricted and privatised space and the exclusive nature of the services provided; third, the legal and social code and agreements that regulate the community.

However, other features of gated communities, such as neighbourhood locations, housing types, population density and the social-economic background of residents are highly dependent on the particular urban contexts producing variations beyond these common characteristics of gated communities. Exploring how different researchers define gated communities can help us to better understand their meanings, emergence and consequences in different urban and social contexts.

The emergence of gated communities

The complexity of reasons for the widespread emergence of gated communities has generated significant debate and research into their formation around the world: for example in America (Le Goix, 2005; McKenzie, 2005; Low, 2003; Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Davis, 1996); the United Kingdom (Atkinson and Flint, 2004; Blandy et al., 2003; Webster, 2001b); South Africa (Jürgens and Gnad, 2002; Landman and Schönreich, 2002); the Middle East (Glasze, 2003; Glasze and Alkhayyal, 2002); and Asia (Bray, 2005; Wu, 2005; Huang, 2004; Miao, 2003; Leisch, 2002). In order to provide a systematic analysis of the different drivers of the formation of gated communities, they are classified into supply-side causes and demand-side causes (Low, 2003). The

supply-side causes are structural factors, such as economic globalisation and neoliberal governance, and economic and political benefits of local governments and housing developers (Roitman, 2010). The demand-side causes include fear of crime, aspirations for a better lifestyle, demand for higher status, search for social homogeneity, and access to exclusive services (Pow, 2015).

The first supply-side cause is the worldwide neoliberal transformation of politics and economics over the last 30 or 40 years as evidenced in America (Smith, 1984) and China (Wu, 2002). These neoliberal transformations curb the power of labour, deregulate industry and agriculture, and liberate the power of finance and capital (Harvey, 2005). Economic and political shifts to the right based on the free-market logic and private property ownership further enlarged the economic and social inequality between the rich and the poor and exaggerated the inequalities of neighbourhood services and resources (Low, 2003). Gated communities, as housing with high-end services and exclusive private spaces, are highly favoured by the newly rising professionals and middle-class residents. Thus, many housing developers have retreated from the low and medium-income housing markets and now focus on providing high-end gated communities to fulfil the rising demand by these affluent buyers (Sassen, 2006). This imbalance in housing provision and escalating housing prices further exacerbate the housing inequalities in many countries (Wu and Gaubatz, 2020; Webber and Burrows, 2016). Although some scholars point out that gated communities could be considered an efficient mode of housing development because they create new collective civic goods mediated by the market (Woo and Webster, 2014; Webster, 2001b), these housing choices are only accessible by affluent purchasers and exclude most urban citizens. As Harvey (2005) illustrates, the freedom provided by neoliberalism is mainly for those whose income, leisure and security need no enhancing and is a mere pittance for other poor people really in need of such freedoms. Thus, we can witness increasing numbers of luxury residential housing estates - 'necrotecture' generated for the rich to park their capital but not bodies (Atkinson, 2018), which gradually occupy urban space while large numbers of poor people are still facing severe shortages of housing provision (Atkinson, 2021).

Economic globalisation not only increases foreign investment in building gated communities but also helps the transplantation of 'California-style' luxury gated communities to other countries as the manifestation of a 'modern' lifestyle. Scholars consider the rise of gated communities in developing countries as an imitation of a Western modern elite lifestyle that is commercialised in the process of economic globalisation (Webster, Glasze and Frantz, 2002; Glasze and Alkhayyal, 2002). Housing developers and investors often use advertising strategies to disseminate exclusive Western-style modern housing estates and promote the image of a 'good life' in these high-end gated communities (Pow and Kong, 2007). This is the case in China, as Wu (2004) argues: the rise of gated communities in Beijing is the transplantation of Western-style housing estates as a result of economic globalisation and the emulation of Western 'modern' lifestyles in contrast to the generally low quality of Chinese housing estates.

Since the rise of political neoliberalism in the 1980s, the withdrawal of the state in social service provision and social governance has become evident in many countries (Paddison, 2000), aiming to increase the efficiency of administration and reduce fiscal expenditure. These neoliberal public policies and the reduction and privatisation of government functions are applied in many domains such as housing, education, medical treatment, employment and urban security. The withdrawal of local governments from public management and the provision of public services creates space for the emergence of private governance and organisations such as Common Interest developments, homeowner associations, and privately governed gated communities (McKenzie, 2003). For example, in the Middle East, the development of gated communities is the consequence of weak public sectors in providing neighbourhood services, while gated communities offer small-scale housing developments to affluent populations with comfort, amenities and welfare (Glasze and Alkhayyal, 2002). In China, the proliferation of gated commodity housing estates mainly results from the withdrawal of public housing provision by the state and public institutions and from the introduction of market logic in housing production and consumption in the 1980s (Huang, 2003). In South Africa, Genis (2007) shows that local government fails to provide good quality infrastructure and consistent public

provision and services, while gated communities developed by private housing companies can afford these resources such as clean water, essential services and infrastructure that are not available in the public realm. Under these circumstances, most elite groups choose to withdraw from poor, socially heterogeneous and culturally fragmented city centres into master-planned gated communities. And Jurgens and Gnad (2002) further point out that the rapid spread of gated communities in South Africa are the consequence of insufficient security provided by local governments in high crime rate urban environments. They show that, after the establishment of gated communities and roadblocks by housing developers in Sandton, the crime rates inside the gated neighbourhoods reduced by up to 70%.

From the perspectives of neoliberalism, urban governments have shifted toward deeper forms of market-based policies and increasingly rely on private investment and private governance (Wu, 2002). Thus, many scholars have associated the growth of master-planned gated communities with the private provision of public neighbourhood services and the pro-growth developmental strategies of coalitions between local governments and housing developers. For example, McKenzie (2005) shows that in the US, local government and housing developers both contribute to the proliferation of gated communities. Local government looks for economic growth and increased tax revenues with minimal public expenditures, while the housing developers receive high profits through maintaining high density in gated communities despite the rising land cost (McKenzie, 2005). In this process, pro-growth governments create economic growth and transfer the cost of suburban development such as infrastructure and social facilities to housing developers and homebuyers (Le Goix, 2005). Shen and Wu (2012) also suggest that the rapid development of gated communities in China is a by-product of local government entrepreneurial strategies to promote the economic growth of the cities and create a liveable image for the city. The difference between the situation in China and the US is that Chinese local governments have strong control over land ownership and decisive power in urban development plans. Thus, entrepreneurial local governments are the primary structural impetus in the accelerated development of gated communities in China (Shen and Wu 2012).

Globalisation, political and economic neoliberalism, and the transformation of urban governance all form the supply-side reasons for the rise of gated communities. The following paragraphs now turn to consider demand-side drivers of the rapid increase in the development of gated communities.

Many urban researchers consider the fear of crime as the main driving force for the rise of gated communities. Urban residents feel insecure that governments are failing to provide safe urban environments. Thus, they seek to solve this problem by private means such as retreating into gated communities. For example, according to Blakely and Snyder's (1997) typology, the 'security zone' is one of the three most prominent types of gated community in America, and the most prominent feature of which is high gates and walls to control the entrance of people and vehicles with the aim of reducing crime rate inside the community. A generalised culture of fear forms the basis of this urban insecurity and includes, not only fear of random violence and street rage, but also targeted at poor people and minority ethnic groups (Glassner 2003). Through inflammatory media and news reports about the prevalence of crime and violence, these relatively rare issues and fear of specific social groups are amplified and transmitted, and create the threat of criminal behaviour, which results in public fear. But the reality is that there is no statistical evidence to show an increase in the crime rate in America, and the actual crime rate is relatively low in global comparison (Low, 2006) (though higher than Europe). Thus, the fear of crime, or fear of 'perceived crime', is a psychological effect and cannot not be addressed by just building gates and walls (Low, 2001). Low (2003) further suggests that the gates and walls of gated communities demarcate social boundaries and create social division between the 'good' insiders and 'bad' outsiders. Thus, gates and walls offer a strategy for residents inside gated communities to physically and, more importantly, psychologically separate themselves from undesirable and dangerous outsiders, such as Mexicans, illegal immigrants and 'ethnic others'.

Some critics see gated communities, secured by private guards, police forces, and powerful weapons, as the militarization of urban space to secure private and purified residential places (Davis, 1996). Wu (2005) critically discusses the discourse of fear in

Chinese contexts and suggests that people move to gated communities because of their fear of the poor collective living conditions of the socialist era. The loss of community surveillance by local governments which have retreated from state-organised collective housing production and management further add to residents' urban insecurity. As suggested by Atkinson and Blandy (2018), "fear of crime particularly operates for those affluent residents who are least at risk of crime and whose social prestige speaks of such anxiety in the form of gates and boundaries". Playing on this fear of crime, security and housing corporates profit from the sale of security systems, while governments expand their criminal justice mandates and political power (Atkinson and Blandy, 2018), ignoring the inflammation of crime stories and the construction of the culture of fear by media coverage (Glassner, 2003). It can be argued that fear of crime is an important, complex and highly context-sensitive reason for the rise of gated communities. Thus, in this research, the question of whether the fear of crime drives people to move into gated communities in contemporary Chinese cities is examined as an important research objective.

The search for high social status and prestige is also an important demand-side driver. The high price of luxury gated communities can easily exclude underprivileged residents from buying into these housing estates. Thus, some residents move to gated communities not simply for the high-end services, but primarily for the exclusive social prestige and the representation of their high social status. For instance, Blakely and Snyder (1997) show that in America, the prestigious style of gated communities provides affluent residents with a 'cachet of exclusive living' - exclusive residential space only for social celebrities and extremely wealthy people. Low (2003) vividly depicts how residents in gated communities became quite anxious when their real estate broker told them that the price of their housing estates was lower than their ability to pay. The desires for maintaining or enhancing an upper-middle-class lifestyle and social-economic status are embedded in gated living. Maintaining the 'nice' environment - keeping everything clean, orderly, and socially homogeneous - of the gated community signifies maintaining whiteness, which is not only about race but also about the privilege of being a socially 'unmarked' group with higher social status (Low 2003).

In China, although in longer urban history gated communities are considered as the physical demarcation of collective residential living and tight political control by the state (Huang, 2006), the newly-built gated commodity housing estates are recognised by many scholars as the representation of elite residential space and modern lifestyle. For instance, Giroir (2006) shows that gated communities of 400 luxury villas in Beijing, are provided only for rich residents and thus, represent 'elite residential space' in the post-reform urban China. Pow (2009; 2007) examines how affluent residents in Shanghai inscribe their moral logic into gated communities to demarcate exclusive residential territoriality, and consequently, living in gated communities displays the high social status of the middle-class in contemporary Chinese cities. Breitung (2012) investigates residents' viewpoints in Chinese cities and indicates that some residents living outside even admire gated communities and describe them as a foreign 'fancy world'.

The desire for exclusive and up-market community services also contributes to the development of gated communities. Gated communities, thanks to their private property characteristics, are able to provide exclusive and costly community services for their affluent residents only, and can exclude the wider public as 'free-riders', benefitting from public resources, in this case community services as club goods, whilst not paying for them (Cséfalvay, 2011b). Real estate developers worldwide use packaged community services as an important marketing strategy to attract potential home buyers. These community services normally include security, cleaning, landscaping, children's nurseries and recreational facilities. The kinds of social services usually seen in ordinary neighbourhoods such as poverty relief and unemployment support (Wu, 2005) are less associated with gated communities because expensive housing prices exclude those in need of these services. For example, in more developed regions like the US, the 'lifestyle' type of gated community (Blakely and Snyder, 1997) provides affluent residents with private and exclusive services like golf courses, racecourses, wineries and luxury manors, to fulfil their personal interests and retirement activities. In contrast, in poor districts of South Africa, some residents favour gated communities because they provide basic neighbourhood

services, such as clean water and electricity, which are not available in ordinary neighbourhoods (Geniş, 2007). Based on the research in Chinese commodity housing estates, Zhu (2015) shows that residents of gated communities have formed strong neighbourhood attachments that are not based on neighbourhood interaction but on the exclusive and high-end neighbourhood services and environments, which shows the importance of community services in pursuing gated communities.

The search for privacy and privatised lifestyles is another crucial reason for the spread of gated communities. In current Western literature, private-public distinctions can be summarised under the following distinctions: between the private market economy and public state administration; between private individuals and public political community and the exercise of civic rights and obligations; between individualised secluded space and public spaces of fluid and polymorphous sociability and interaction (Weintraub, 1995). The different perspectives in global research into gated communities and public / private relations often depend different assessment of the above three distinctions (Pow, 2007b). In this sense, the development of gated communities is a manifestation not only of the privatisation process of housing estates, but also of the privatisation of urban governance, urban space, social services, social life, and even civic identity. Thus, moving into gated communities could first be understood as pursuing private and exclusive properties and services, but these motives for gated living could also be interpreted as the search for a privatised lifestyle in which political and social elites retreat from the public realm and social life into their own housing enclaves (Lasch, 1995; Sennett, 1987). For example, based on the investigation of gated communities in England, Atkinson and Flint (2004) suggest that residents not only separate themselves from the public realm in their residential space, but also perform dynamic patterns of spatial segregation at the wider urban scale to avoid unwanted contacts with other social groups.

In the Chinese context, Pow (2007b) examines the changing notions of private and public life, mainly from the perspective of the civic right to privacy, in gated communities in Shanghai. He suggests that one attractive feature of gated communities was seen by residents as the transformation of collective domestic and social life in communal-

based work-unit compounds into the private lifestyle of gated communities, from which they gain more private autonomy from the political control of state and local governments. For McKenzie (2005), the search for privatism in American gated communities also demonstrates affluent residents' desires for private neighbourhood governance by Homeowner Associations through which they form their localised identity and spatially, economically and institutionally separate themselves from underprivileged social groups. The above cases indicate that different meanings of privacy and privatism in different social contexts may lead to various causes and outcomes of gated communities, which should be borne in mind when investigating the privatised lifestyle of residents during the research process.

The above discussions illustrate the reasons for the fast increase of gated communities in different countries from both the supply-side and the demand-side. The following section turns to discuss the implications of these gated housing estates on our cities and society.

The implications of gated communities

The rapid rise of gated communities as an important global urban residential form has driven much academic discussion about the implications and consequences of these developments. In order to analyse these consequences, this section discusses the implications of gated communities from various perspectives, including economic, political, social and spatial outcomes.

In terms of economic implications, some commentators argue that gated communities can be understood as 'club goods' of consumption that provide efficient collectively-consumed community services to their residents (Sabatini and Salcedo, 2007; Webster, 2001a). These services are considered 'club goods' because they are neither public goods nor private commodities but are collectively owned and consumed by homeowners at the same time as excluding outsiders as 'free riders' who do not pay for these services. The provision and quality of these housing estates and community services are dependent on price in the housing market, and thus they are recognised

with efficiency. Webster (2002) further suggests that the clearly defined property rights in gated communities not only help to reduce the risk of congestion by free riders outside but also create co-ownership responsibility inside gated communities. Thus, residents of gated communities are willing to pay for the increased quantity and quality of community amenities, and in this regard, gated communities can be seen as efficient 'club' institutions. In this sense, some commentators suggest that gated communities are efficient providers of housing club goods, delivering and organising neighbourhood services that cannot be delivered by government (Woo and Webster, 2014; Cséfalvay, 2011a; Lee and Webster, 2006). However, these perspectives on the economic efficiency provided by gated communities are criticised by other scholars from the perspective of civic rights and social justice. Atkinson and Blandy (2005) indicate that the security and club goods provided by gated communities are new forms of medieval city-states in which subjects paid dues and were protected by the lords. The growth of these mini states threatens to erode the vital civic entitlements such as security, welfare and public services that are collectively mediated and distributed by the central governments. While the club goods of housing, community services and security (Hope and Hope, 2000) provide affluent residents with free choice through the housing market, other groups with fewer resources are excluded from these key civic entitlements.

Gated communities also influence the local economy through the taxation system. For example, in the 'tax-payer revolt' campaign in the US in 1978 (Le Goix, 2005), some residents refused to pay property tax to the government. In this situation, the public tax limitations trigger the government to attract new residential developments and wealthy homebuyers to solve their fiscal shortage. Thus, the development of master-planned gated communities has become an important source of property tax revenue for the local governments in the US. These gated communities are considered perfect 'cash cows' (McKenzie, 1994) for local government to solve their financial deficit. On the other hand, the negative impact on the taxation system is that some residents of gated communities refuse to pay local taxes because they consider that they do not consume many types of public goods and services provided outside gated communities (Cséfalvay, 2011a; McKenzie, 1994).

Nevertheless, in some circumstance, gated communities can bring positive economic externalities to the surrounding poor communities (Salcedo and Torres, 2004). For example, in Chile, the arrival of gated communities brought low-skilled job opportunities for poor residents, including working as maids, gardeners, and cleaners (Sabatini and Salcedo, 2007). These jobs did not exist before and have improved the living conditions of marginal residents. Salcedo and Salcedo (2007) further suggest that the development of gated communities in poor areas is in tandem with the arrival of modernity and improvement of physical infrastructures such as public transport, lighting, police patrol and other urban amenities.

With regard to the political implications, some scholars indicate that the rapid growth of gated communities contributes to the growing role of 'contractual governance' in modern society, resulting from new relationships between state, market and civic society and aiming to maintain stable social order (Crawford, 2003). Crawford (2003) suggests that these modes of governance imitate and deploy 'contracts' and 'agreements' in the regulation of deviant and disorderly behaviours, and the absence of the state and government representing new forms of 'private governance' in which the public interest has been reconfigured at a parochial level. In this sense, these zones of contractual governance are similar to the collective club goods described by Webster (2001a). For some researchers (Woo and Webster, 2014; Cséfalvay, 2011a; Lee and Webster, 2006), the emergence of private governance in commodity gated communities has positive consequences because it creates efficient ways of organising and providing public services through invisible market logic. However, poorer residents who cannot get access to the club goods of gated communities as club goods are also excluded from some key aspects of citizenship such as security and public welfare services.

Based on their research in the US, Land and Danielsen (1997) indicate that gated communities make positive contributions to civic engagement because their residents are more willing to participate in political activities and there is voter solidarity inside gated communities. However, civic interests within gated communities reduce the need to participate in engagement with larger communities (Lang and Danielsen, 1997). For

instance, McKenzie (1994, 2003, 2005) critiques these private governments. First, he shows that, in the US, private governance organisations like homeowners associations, have a great deal of punitive power over residents' violations of community covenants and restrictions, ranging from having 'incorrectly' coloured curtains to being married to a spouse younger than the minimum age allowed in the contract (McKenzie, 2005). Homeowner associations run by untrained governing boards act as prosecutors and judges inside gated communities in controlling the behaviours of the non-conforming residents. McKenzie (2005) further indicates that through these legal and social covenants, from the start of construction, the look and feel of gated communities are shaped and controlled by private developers. The terms and conditions of life inside gated communities are not in keeping with the norms and expectations of liberal democracy in America (McKenzie, 1994). Lastly, he criticises this private mode of governance for creating a private world - 'privatopia' - in which affluent homebuyers are gradually separated, spatially and institutionally, from the rest of society and, in particular, underprivileged groups (McKenzie, 2005).

The social implications of gated communities are of most concern in global academic discussions. Although some scholars suggest that gated communities contribute to a sense of community and social integration, most researchers stress the negative impacts of gated communities such as the social exclusion of the unwanted public, social segregation, fragmented urban space and erosion of public life. In this discussion, the positive social implications of gated communities are considered first. Some scholars argue that gated communities contribute to the social integration of residents. For example, Manzi and Smith-Bowers (2005) suggest that although gated communities may contribute to segregation between different income classes, they can simultaneously create a good model of housing development that offers opportunities for social mixing and development of social links between rich and poor residents. In their investigation of two gated communities in London, they found that the gates and other security apparatus contribute to convincing the rich buyers to move into areas occupied by multi-deprived households with high crime rates. Thus, these gated communities help reduce the social segregation at the neighbourhood level, but the actual social integration of insiders and outsiders is limited (Manzi and Smith-Bowers,

2005). Webster (2001b) also raise a similar opinion that in traditional forms of social segregation in the UK, most of the wealthy live in suburban areas and the poor are totally ignored by the wealthy. But the developments of gated communities in the city centre transform the urban built environments so that the poor and the rich are at least geographical neighbours, and thus there are possibilities for fiscal, environmental and urban services spill-over benefits between them. Based on an investigation in China, Lu et al. (2018) show that gated communities provide their residents with high-quality community services and new modes of participation in neighbourhood governance, which help them develop neighbourhood attachments to the gated communities socially, symbolically and functionally. But this research did not investigate the attachments of neighbourhoods by other groups outsider gated communities. In another case, Sabatini and Salcedo (2007) show that since the arrival of gated communities in poor neighbourhoods in Chile, lower-class residents felt that they were less likely to be considered as poor and dangerous people by wealthy groups even outside their municipality.

After reviewing some of the positive social implications of gated communities, the discussion now considers the negative effects, which are the dominant concerns of the global urban literature. First and foremost, social segregation and urban fragmentation are key criticisms of gated communities. Social segregation is said to occur when different social groups occupy different spaces within the same city or region as a result of income inequalities or discriminatory filters (Massey and Denton, 1993). And persistent social segregation is considered a severe social problem in which generates social conflict, social exclusion and social disintegration (van Kempen, 1994; Massey and Denton, 1993). Gated communities are considered to be extreme forms of residential segregation because they create physical and symbolic barriers between residents inside and outside the developments, which further exacerbates existing social segregation (Massey and Massey, 2005).

The physical boundaries of gated communities like gates and walls, not only create barriers that prevent social interaction and contact, but also draw an implicit symbolic line that demarcates social difference in terms of class, race, ethnicity and culture

between insiders and outsiders (Marcuse, 1997; Lang and Danielsen, 1997; Davis, 1996). For example, Blakely and Snyder (1997) suggest that gated communities have created housing opportunities for some people to fulfil their own interests but limit the social contacts between different groups, and this control over gated communities may eventually make 'outsiders' of fellow citizens. Low (2003) suggest that the gates and walls of gated communities are employed by middle-class residents inside them as an instrument for social splitting that separates them as 'good' people from dangerous outsiders as 'bad' people. The psychological effects of gates and walls further reduce residents' willingness to interact with others in the area because they are seen as potential dangers. Le Goix's (2005) investigation of GIS data in Los Angeles indicates that gated communities are homogeneous territories with high socio-economic status compared with their neighbours, showing the underlying segregation patterns based on social class. He further suggests that these segregation patterns are made both by the private production of urban space (the developer) and the involvement of public policies to attract taxpayers (government) (Le Goix, 2005). Pow's (2007) investigation in China illustrates how middle-class residents in gated communities mobilise the discourse of moral order (good and bad) between urbanites and rural migrants and the cultural logic of a modern civilised lifestyle to inscribe and justify their middle-class territoriality. Thus, gated communities, as sites of privileged housing consumption, are used by Chinese middle-class residents to demonstrate their social status and exclude 'undesirable' rural residents and migrant workers. By investigating the production, consumption and cultural meanings of gated communities in Kunming, Zhang (2012) suggests that, through buying housing properties and congregating in gated communities, affluent individuals display their 'propertied' middle-class status by spatial exclusion, cultural differentiation and modern lifestyle practices. In this sense, housing consumption in gated communities is crucial to the process of forming and spatialising class and distinction in Chinese society.

Research on social segregation between residents living inside and outside gated communities focuses not only on the residential spaces but also on residents' mobility and use of space at a wider urban scale. Graham and Marvin (2002) argue that the 'unbundling' of urban infrastructure and the development of technological mobilities

have together fragmented the social and physical fabric of cities, creating 'splintering urbanism'. 'Unbundled' infrastructure here means that the universal and (usually) public monopoly of urban infrastructure laid down between the 1930s and 1960s has been gradually replaced by the uneven overlaying and retrofitting of new and high-performance urban infrastructures in parallel with the trend towards privatisation and neo-liberalisation (Graham and Marvin, 2002). The unevenly distributed new transportation, telecommunications, power and water infrastructures are customised and provided for the more economically and socially powerful users and spaces, bypassing the other less powerful users (Graham, 2000), creating 'premium networked spaces'. The perspective of 'splintering urbanism' is a useful lens through which to understand the rise of gated communities and other 'premium spaces' as connected secessionary spaces linked by networked infrastructure and technological mobilities to provide premium spaces for the unfettered movement of the affluent in the city. As suggested by Atkinson (2008), gated communities have created important residential nodes that form part of a broader premium network of protected nodes - private streets, hotels and shopping malls - and corridors - private roads, cars, first-class train and air travel - interpreted as 'flowing enclaves' beyond the static residential neighbourhoods of the city. All these premium spaces, infrastructures, mobility technologies and institutions help to isolate affluent residents living inside gated communities from 'outsiders' considered dangerous and undesirable. These dynamic patterns of social segregation based on extended movement across time-space beyond gated communities are described as 'time-space trajectories of segregation' (Atkinson and Flint, 2004). This shift of research focus from studies of the static spaces of gated communities to the mobility patterns and use of spaces in wider urban realms provides a more dynamic and broader understanding of the social segregation of gated community residents, which is an important research objective of this research.

2.2 The Chinese literature of gated communities

While Western research and literature on gated communities originate from the early 1990s, gated communities in China became the focus of interest of scholars somewhat later at the beginning of the 21st century and has gradually received more attention since the 2010s (Douglass, Wissink, and van Kempen, 2012). This section first

illustrates the historical developments of gated communities in China and then introduces influential research on gated communities in Chinese contexts to unfold the research basis for this thesis.

The historical development of gated communities in China

Gates and walls have been part of the urban landscape in China for over 2000 years (Xu and Yang, 2009). The 'Jiefang' system of enclosed courtyard housing had been widely implemented in Chinese cities from the Shang Dynasty (1700-1027 BC) to the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911 AD) (Zhang, 2002). The 'Jiefang' system generally consists of two parts: 'Jie' means the lanes, streets and roads in the city, and 'Fang' means the residential areas separated by gates and walls. Each residential area ('Fang') is divided into several enclosed units of courtyard housing based on family/clan ties (Huang, 2006). While the physical walls and gates divided and fragmented urban spaces, in these residential systems, they helped to define the residential space of a family based on occupation and clan-based collectives, and establish a collective identity and foster extremely close ties among members (Huang and Low, 2008a). In these enclosed residential areas, high expectations existed for members inside the compound to interact with other members, help each other, and fulfil family/clan obligations (Huang, 2006).

Before the industrialisation of China in the 1920s, the major forms of housing in Chinese cities were craft workshops mixed with residences, similar to housing in rural areas. In the early days of industrialisation in the 1920s, Chinese coastal cities like Shanghai, Tianjin and Guangzhou were under Western influence and occupation and foreign settlements or concession areas were built in these cities (Wu, 2005). Although concession housing developments revealed European design elements, the features of gates and walls were essential in residential areas. At the same time, early workers' housing surrounding the factories was built as terraced housing or 'lane houses' (Lu, 1999). In the industrial cities, the separation between production and residential space began to create different types of urban communities, and social areas based on socio-economic status were constructed (Wu, 2005). For example, craftsman, landlords and

businesspeople lived in the downtown area; the industrial workers lived in dormitories near the factories; and the bourgeoisie moved to foreign concession areas. Although influenced by Western architectural design, most of the urban housing in this period was enclosed and gated. For example, between 1840-1940 large areas of terraced housing were built in Shanghai, accounting for 72% of the total housing stock, and most of these buildings were surrounded by walls and stone-framed entrances (Lu, 1999).

In the socialist period since the founding of the people's Republic of China in (1949 – 1987), unlike the former Soviet Union, China did not see large-scale restructuring after the establishment of state socialism, and the tracts of inner-city housing were left untouched except for a few model redevelopments areas (Wu, 2005). The inner housing areas were organised as a special type of urban community, in which housing was managed by the municipal housing bureau, with some 'residual' private housing with restricted rights to sell (Wang, 1992). The residents living in these houses mainly worked in small and collectively owned enterprises which could not provide living quarters for their employees (Wu, 2005). With intensive daily interactions and proximity, households in the same and nearby communities often developed a strong sense of connection with each other and pseudo-family/clan relationships despite the lack of privacy (Huang and Low, 2008b).

During the same period (1949-1987), two types of gated residential developments were widely built in both urban and suburban areas with different degrees of access restriction: the work-unit compound built for a single work-unit; and enlarged versions of work-unit compounds built for several work-units called 'planned residential districts' (Bray, 2005; Grava, 1993). These work-unit compounds soon developed into self-sufficient micro-societies marked by high levels of functional integration with schools, shops, clinics, transport systems, and other essential services (Douglass, Wissink, and van Kempen, 2012). These work-unit compounds were surrounded by walls and gates, secured by guards employed by the workplaces, and the residents are affiliated to the workplace. These types of gated housing fitted well with the social circumstances of socialist China that emphasised production over consumption, as they not only saved

the costs of information and monitoring a section of the population, but also met the basic needs of housing and services provision for all the factory workers (Wu, 2005).

People living in these work-unit compounds were not only colleagues experiencing intensive interaction in their workplace but also close neighbours with everyday contact in their residential places (Huang, 2004). There are many resemblances between these work-unit compounds and traditional Confucian families, such as the responsibility to care for group members (Bray, 2005). Households living in these work-unit compounds are like members of a big family and share strong community attachment (Huang, 2006), called 'big compound culture' (*dayuan wenhua*). This form of gating was not created for security or social exclusion but to reinforce 'political control and collective consumption arranged by the government' (Wu, 2005, p.235), and to create enclosed socio-spaces based on occupation and industry.

The economic reforms of 1978 and the following liberal policies that permitted the involvement of private ownership and foreign capital in the housing market initiated a tremendous transformation of urban housing in Chinese cities (Huang, 2004). In 1988, China launched a nationwide housing reform policy to entirely privatise the welfare-oriented housing system (Huang and Low, 2008b), declaring the end of the dominant work-unit-based public housing system. The gated work-unit housing was sold to the residents at very low prices, thus creating a special type of gated commodity housing which is still current. Some of this housing is in relatively privileged locations, with good housing quality and access to services because they mostly belong to government organisations and state enterprises with significant political power (Douglass, Wissink, and van Kempen, 2012). While existing work-unit housing was sold with heavy subsidies, but extensive private gated housing estates have been developed, especially in the suburbs in the form of '*xiaoqu*'. These '*xiaoqu*' are small districts or residential estates where private housing is provided with communal facilities, many of them equipped with security and monitoring systems - surveillance cameras, infrared alarm systems, and card activated entrances (Bray, 2005). This type of 'gated residential estate' (*fengbi xiaoqu*) are sanctioned by national planning codes and have become the basic unit in planning and developing residential construction (Miao, 2003).

In this way, gated commodity housing estates have replaced the role of gated work-unit compounds and have become the main housing developments in contemporary Chinese cities. The gated communities described in this research mostly refer to this type of private commodity housing estate.

According to housing statistics (Miao, 2003) 83 per cent of all housing estates in Shanghai underwent some form of physical separation, such as gates and walls, in the 1990s, and by the year 2000, there were over 54,000 newly-built gated commodity housing estates in Guangdong province. The construction of gated commodity housing estates has become the government's top priority, and the provision of community services has been fully commodified in response to the demise of the work-unit and the weakening of the state's 'hierarchical' political control. Thus, in contemporary Chinese cities, the majority of urban communities are walled and gated, and the primary forms of gated communities are private commodity housing estates. The main function of gating of gated communities in Chinese cities is to demarcate emerging consumer clubs in response to the retreat of the state from public housing provision and neighbourhood governance (Wu, 2005)

According to Breitung (2012) there are currently three types of gated residential spaces: first is the traditional work-unit compounds, which have been sold to the former work-unit staff with large subsidies; the second is the commodity gated housing estates built after 1980s, which resembles Western gated communities, privately governed and owned by those upper and middle class residents; the third are urban villages, which were formerly rural villages now surrounded by urban expansion. Of these three, the subject of this research is gated commodity housing estates. But within this category, communities vary considerably in their services and facilities, from California-style theme parks in commodity housing to few services and living spaces in urban villages (Webster, Wu, and Zhao, 2005). Urban residential housing estates in most contemporary Chinese cities are a mixture of wealthy 'gated communities', dilapidated work-unit compounds, and 'migrant enclaves' in urban villages, existing side by side in the city (Huang, 2004).

Academic debates about gated communities in China

This section introduces research literature on gated communities in Chinese contexts. It begins with some of the most influential research on gated communities in China in detail, and then introduces other studies by themes and topics.

'Deserted Street in a Jammed Town' (Miao, 2003) is the first study that presented a preliminary investigation into the rapid development of gated communities in China in the post-reform era, and illustrated the socio-spatial implications of gated communities. This research first shows some examples of the rapid expansion of gated communities: between 1991 and 2000, 83% of the residential developments built in Shanghai were gated, and in the same period, 54000 gated communities were built in Guangdong Province, covering more than 80% of the population (Miao, 2003). These statistics shows the rapid development of gated communities in China and indicated that gated commodity housing estates was becoming the main form of housing estates in contemporary Chinese cities.

Miao then examined the differences between gated communities in China and the USA and showed that although they shared some similarities, the scale of land and population density in Chinese gated communities was much larger than that in the USA. She further indicated that the main force contributing to the rapid spread of gating in China was political pressure from government. During the transition from a planned economy to a more market-directed economy, privatised housing provision and neighbourhood governance have loosened the control of the residential population by government and created more fragmented social space with increasing crime rates. Thus, during the transition to a form of market economy, the government sought to use gates as an effective measure to control crime rates and maintain social stability. Finally, Miao outlines a number of negative social consequences of gated communities, including reducing residents' physical access to public spaces; psychological fear creating social 'othering' of those outside the gates; diminishing natural pedestrian surveillance and observation; and creating barriers for transportation systems (Miao, 2003). Although these critiques of gated communities are more like those in the

Western literature, and are not supported by evidence from Chinese contexts, Miao's research opened the door to academic studies of gated communities and created links between Chinese and Western research in the field.

Another early influential study was conducted by Wu (2005), which compared in detail gated work-unit compounds in the state socialism period with gated commodity housing estates in the post-reform era. This work explored the nuanced and varied meanings of gating in different social and economic contexts and illustrated to what extent the discourse of fear and 'club good theory' can explain the growth of gated communities in Chinese cities. First, Wu suggests that work-unit compounds are the product of 'economising urbanisation' under the state's growth strategy of forced industrialisation. work-unit compounds were self-contained 'corporate-governed' units under the socialist public housing system. Through removing intermediate agents such as housing developers, service providers and their profit motivations, the total housing and service needs of residents in work-unit compounds are provided and constrained by the work-unit at the standard of necessity, which allows the efficient satisfaction of housing needs without generating homelessness (Webster, 2002). Thus, work-unit compounds with integrated functions, such as schools, hospitals, and stores, were the basic organisation of Chinese socialist period. They were areas of 'neighbourhood watch' by government and residents, with their resident-members being dependent on organised collective consumption. Gates and walls in this period served to reinforce political control and collective consumption organised and implemented by the state rather than to prevent criminal behaviours (Wu, 2005).

During the market-reform period since 1978, the state gradually withdrew from public housing and service provision and private gated commodity housing estates became the main forms in housing markets, presenting many similarities with Western gated communities: spatial enclosures with gates and walls, security staff, and legal contracts with management companies (Wu, 2005). Like Western forms, these private housing estates provided housing 'club goods' for affluent residents searching for better housing, community services and a 'modern lifestyle'. Wu suggested that gates and

walls served to demarcate the emerging consumer clubs of housing estates in response to the retreat of the state from public housing and service provision.

The meaning of gating has entirely changed with the transformation of political and economic contexts in China. The discourse of fear in the Chinese context takes a different form from the US (Wu 2005). One of the primary fears experienced by urban residents, especially *nouveaux riches*, is a fear of the return of the collective consumption lifestyles of the socialist period. But with increasing social inequality and resource marketisation and the destruction of work-unit compounds, the loss of community surveillance added a sense of insecurity to their neighbourhood life and property management. Thus, these affluent residents wanted gates and walls to increase their personal and property safety (Wu, 2005). In this research, Wu (2005) critically engaged with Western literature on gated communities while paying attention to the underlying Chinese contexts to reveal the meanings of gating in different periods of urban development. This is an excellent example of the gated communities research in non-Western contexts.

In a series of book chapters and journal papers, Choon-Piew Pow (2009) has given an extensive and comprehensive analysis of the gated communities in modern Shanghai. His contributions to research on gated communities are tripartite. First is the marketing of housing in gated communities as the Chinese dream home pursued by middle-class residents (Pow and Kong, 2007). The real estate developers utilise advertisements and rhetoric to package gated communities as desirable, secure, healthy and homogeneous residential spaces - the 'Chinese dream home' (Pow, 2007) - to capture the increasing spending power of the Chinese middle-class. Real estate marketing also makes use of both Chinese and Western symbolic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1987) of the famous architects and well-known cultural icons like '*Shanshui*' (natural haven), Buckingham Palace, and the River Thames, to demonstrate the good cultural taste of the inhabitants of gated developments. The elaborate walls and gates signify the underlying meaning of landscape exclusivity and the distinction of high social status by emerging middle-class residents. These underlying social and cultural meanings of

gated communities appeal to the housing aspirations of middle-class residents to show off their high social status and exclude lower social groups from their residential space.

The second aspect of Pow's work is the transformation of public and private spaces by gated communities in modern China. Pow (2007b) suggests that in the socialist period when state and governmental control in work-unit compounds was rigorous, the overcrowded neighbourhood life in Shanghai public housing developments was severely lacking in personal space and privacy. The emergence of gated communities provides autonomous private domestic spaces and inner community spaces. In their own homes and private neighbourhoods, more household autonomy and personal freedom such as watching prohibited TV channels can be realised away from the control and interference of state and government. This could be understood as the positive consequences of gated communities that allow residents to lead a relatively autonomous and private lives free from the state's direct control. Pow's (2009) research, rather than investigating the encroachment on public spaces by private gated communities, reveals the potentially positive implications of gated communities, pointing to the achievement of individual private autonomy and civic rights.

The third element of Pow's (2007a) approach is the establishment of moral geographies of exclusion in gated communities. The popularity of gated communities helped establish middle-class status positions in post-reform Shanghai, and in addition, provided residents with a modern civilised territoriality, a wholesome environment, safety, order and hygiene. During this process, citizens outside gated communities, such as rural residents and migrant workers, came to be considered dirty, uncivilised, and dangerous people (similar to Low's (2003) ideas of 'social splitting'). Pow (2007a) further indicates that the negative representations of migrant workers in Shanghai are deeply embedded in historical Chinese negative attitudes to peasants and the 'floating' population. By inscribing their understanding of 'civilised modernity' onto their residential spaces, gated communities are motivated to actively demarcate middle-class territoriality and exclude migrant workers and lower-class residents who are considered potentially dangerous threats to middle class space and status. Acquiring and (re)producing the 'good life' and 'civilised space' in Chinese gated communities,

has helped to shape middle-class identity and create social distinction/exclusion in contemporary Chinese cities (Pow, 2009). Having introduced some of the most influential works about gated communities in China, the following paragraphs will briefly introduce some popular themes emerging in the Chinese research and discussion.

The first theme is the social inequality created by gated communities. In order to promote production in the socialist era, the Chinese urban form resembled a cellular structure, organised and administered through work-unit compounds which restricted the daily consumption of residents and were built in relation to the kinds of lifelong employment offered by local governments (Tomba, 2010). In this context, housing and income distributions were relatively egalitarian. However, the economic reform of 1978 promoted a more market-oriented economy and weakened the centrally planned economy, simultaneously contributing to income inequality (Wu, 2007). In this economic context, new forms of social inequality are now manifest in the residential typology of Chinese urban built-environments, from the poor living in the urban villages to the affluent in Californian-style gated communities and the middle-income in the gated neighbourhood (Webster, Wu and Zhao, 2005). But the rise of luxury residential spaces was evident even when the country was still officially communist, as Giroir's (2006) study of the 'Purple Jade' gated communities in Beijing shows. In this case, the luxury lifestyle of the rich in gated communities distinctly contrasted with the egalitarian ideology of communist China, indicating that underlying housing inequality was carried into post-reform China. Wu and Webber (2004) further show that increasing foreign capital investment in China after 1978, combined with the marketisation of Chinese housing system, promoted the growth of 'foreign gated communities' in Beijing and set the base for the subsequent social-spatial differentiation.

The second theme of research into Chinese gated communities is urban segregation as the consequence of gated communities. As discussed above, Pow (2007a) firstly indicates that gated communities, as the cultural representation of affluent residential spaces, help create the geographical exclusion between rich and poor residents in Shanghai. The research conducted by Song and Wu (2010) investigated the

gentrification and redevelopment process in Nanjing, researching 1,075 gated residential communities. The outcome shows that, by the displacement of original populations and the upgrading of urban space, gentrification in Nanjing rapidly increases the value of land in the central urban districts. In the urban centre, previous industrial factories and derelict public housing are redeveloped into land uses with much higher profits, such as business, finance, retail and superior gated communities (Song and Wu, 2010). Poor urban residents are forced to move out of the city centre to live in more marginalised areas. In addition, Wang et al. (2012) introduced spatial analysis into research on gated communities in Beijing. By examining the activity spaces of residents from various neighbourhoods, their research reveals significant differences in the use of time and space between residents inside and outside privileged gated communities. Privileged residents make greater use of 'premium workspace' such as the CBD and the high-tech zone in north-western Beijing and tend not to visit the downtown area where they perceive disorder and urban problems. In a more recent study, Deng (2017) employs a retrospective survey to explore homeowners' lives before and after moving into gated communities, to study the effect of gated community living on their behaviour. The results show that contact with other residents and participation in local public activities decreased significantly: in this way, gated living aggravates urban residential segregation. In addition, the rise of car ownership, means that residents in gated communities now travel further for work and recreation, which reduces their links with their local neighbours. Although the statistics in this study are limited, it shows the behavioural changes and social relationships between gated residents and others.

Urban governance and state control in gated communities in the transition period of Chinese cities is a recently popular topic for research. As discussed above, Huang (2006) indicates that gating serves an important role in realising state control in the grassroots governance in the more liberal contemporary Chinese society. In the pre-reform era, the main structure of urban governance was characterised by state 'hierarchy' through a work-units system in which control was exercised down from central government through municipality, district government, street office, and residents' committees (Wu 2005). In the post-reform era, homeowner associations in

commodity gated communities become more important than the residents' committees because the members of homeowner associations are often businessmen and political elites with more power than the volunteer workers in residents' committees. Thus, homeowner associations compete with residents' committees and management companies for their own rights. In a recent study, Lu (2018) conducted a more detailed investigation and compared the role of the state in different neighbourhoods in Wenzhou. The results show that, both in affordable housing estates and in resettlement housing, the state regulates the standard and price of services and plays an important role in community management. However, in gated commodity estates, the real estate developer and management company are crucial in property management. State control is still visible, but the homeowners' self-governance of is relatively limited. It can be seen that the actual mode of urban governance varies in different cities and their respective economic and political contexts.

Further related topics have been included in the discussion of gated communities since 2015. For example, Zhao and Zhang (2018) have researched the development of informal gated communities in the suburban area of Beijing. In this case, the village-owned enterprises cooperated with local government to construct informal gated communities, which attract large numbers of migrant workers as buyers of these housing developments. However, it is a challenge for the central state to control this type of informal land development. Wang and Pojani (2019) interviewed key planning experts in Shanghai to reveal the challenges of opening existing gated communities. They argue that the majority of 'propertied middle-class' residents are strongly opposed to the policy of opening gated communities for two main reasons: firstly, they have paid for the services in gated communities, and opening the gates legally infringes on their property rights; and second, they cite security, noise and pollution concerns with opening gated communities. However, if the government purchases private roads and services inside gated communities, it will create a substantial financial burden on local government and cannot be realised on a large scale in times of economic difficulty. Liao et al. (2018) interviewed urban planners in China to understand their role in the production of gated communities. The authors argue that as most of the urban planners are residents of gated communities, they are more likely

to be in favour of the gating of communities and to support exclusionary regulations and practices.

2.3 Political-economic reform and urban transformation of modern China

The emergence and development of gated communities in China are closely related to its specific economic, political, and social context, especially the series of tremendous political-economic reforms that included the demise of the socialist planned economy in the Maoist period (1949-1979), the 'reform and opening up' policy initiated by Deng Xiaoping (since 1978), and commodification of housing provision (since the 1980s). This section briefly illustrates these significant political-economic changes in China in the past half-century and the transformations in the urban built environment to show the background to this research.

Economic and political development

The first significant period in modern China is the state-socialism period, also called the 'Maoist' period, from 1949 to 1979, characterised by national development and industrialisation. There are three main characteristics of this time: first, restraining the development of large cities and encouraging the development of medium and small cities; second, promoting industrial and urban centres away from coastal areas; and third, employing administrative measures by states and governments to control the growth and distribution of cities (Wu and Gaubatz, 2013). These governmental policies aimed to limit urban development in the developed eastern coastal parts of China and promote urban development in the underdeveloped middle and western parts. The foremost reason for constraining the growth of big cities in the eastern coastal parts of China was that Chairman Mao considered cities to be symbols of unfettered consumption which undermined the proletarian spirit.

When the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, it was confronted with a series of economic and social problems: eight years of wartime wastage, economic

backwardness, massive unemployment and international isolation (Li, 2009). The entire national economy and urban system faced great challenges and urgently needed upgrading. Following the suggestion of Soviet advisors, the Chinese government decided to change cities from centres of consumption to become centres of production with a development strategy centred on heavy industrial development (Wu and Gaubatz, 2013). In order to balance development between coastal and inland cities, the majority urban industrial development was in inland cities such as Wuhan and Xian (Fan, 1995). During this period (1949-1958), the total number of cities grew from 120 in 1949 to 176 in 1958, and the urban share of the population rose from 11% in 1949 to approximately 20% of the total population of China in 1958 (Kamal-Chaoui, Leeman and Rufei, 2009).

This period of industrial development was followed by the 'Great Leap Forward' period (1958-1960) when Chairman Mao became dissatisfied with the pace of national development over the previous ten years and proposed a much more ambitious agricultural and industrial development plan. The core idea of this plan was to increase the self-sufficiency of regions and localities by distributing small-scale industries widely, such as rice and steel production (Wu and Gaubatz, 2013). However, during this period, local governments and corporations blindly pursued rapid industrial and agricultural production without considering the real productivity at that period, which eventually led to a waste of human and material resources and consequently economic failure (Li, 2009). In the meantime, in order to control rural-to-urban migration, the central government introduced the household registration system in 1958, which restricts most people to a specific residential status (either rural or urban) assigned at birth (Kamal-Chaoui, Leeman and Rufei, 2009). This household registration system has had a long and far-reaching impact on the Chinese residents up to the present. To be more specific, although the rural migrant workers can find jobs in the cities, they do not enjoy equal rights with urban residents in terms of medical treatment, housing, education and social insurance due to their rural household status (Chan and Zhang, 1999).

What followed the Great Leap Forward was the famous cultural revolution (1966-1976). The central government announced that 'class struggle' was the main task, aiming to

preserve Chinese communism by wiping out capitalist and traditional elements and re-establishing the central and entire leadership of the Communist Party of China with Chairman Mao as the paramount leader (Li, 2009). Influenced by the ideas of the cultural revolution, in order to eradicate the urban-rural and manual-mental working divide, approximately 17 million youth in the cities were forced by government to abandon studying in schools and were sent to the countryside for agricultural production (Wu and Gaubatz, 2013). In this period, China's economy was hit hard by the transformation of government's focus from industrial development to political struggle, and consequently, the urban share of China's population was reduced by 18% in 1976 (Fan, 1995; Chan and Zhang, 1999).

With the death of Chairman Mao and the demise of Maoism in the 1970s, a new economic order was established by the Chinese Communist Party led by Chairman Xiaoping Deng at the Third Plenum in December 1978 through the implementation of the New Open Door Policy (Yeung, Yun-wing and Sung, 1996). The main goals of the post-1978 economic reform policies were: first, to restructure the Chinese economy away from collective forms of ownership and production and towards the growth of individual and private ownership; second, to increase the allocation of surplus according to market efficiency and towards an increasing role for the market in the circulation of goods, services, capital and labour (Pow, 2009a). In the 1980s, the Chinese government demarcated 18 coastal cities as 'open' cities with Special Economic Zones to link up with the global economy and attract foreign economic activities and foreign investment in production and services. In 1992, Chairman Xiaoping Deng, the prime leader of China in the reform era, made a 'Southern Tour' to visit the Special Economic Zones in coastal cities and affirmed the contribution of the market economy to national development: this was perceived as a 'green light' for the emerging market economy in China (Wu and Gaubatz, 2020). This series of economic reform policies, called the Reform and Opening-up policies, marked China's economic transition from a planned economy to a more market-oriented economy (He, Lu and Qian, 2019). Since the 1990s, private enterprises have rapidly developed and surpassed the state- and collectively- owned enterprises as the main driver of the Chinese economy (He, Lu and Qian, 2019). In large cities and coastal cities, local

governments were encouraged by the state to adopt entrepreneurial strategies to attract both foreign and domestic investment aiming to increase city competitiveness. These economic transformations and urban development strategies have led to economic booms and large-scale urbanisation in China. Statistics show that since the 1990s, the Chinese economy has had an average growth rate of 10% until 2010, and the urban population share rose from 23.71% in 1985 to 43.90% in 2006 (Li, 2009). These economic and political transitions in China from the 1970s to the 1990s, discussed above, paved the way for the rapid growth of gated communities from the 1990s.

Land and housing reform

As well as the transition of the Chinese economy toward a more market-oriented economy, two important reforms in the political-economic realms are also crucial in understanding the development of gated communities: fiscal land reform and housing reform. For the fiscal land reform, between 1988 and 1994, the central government gradually decentralised their fiscal control and allowed local governments to lease land in their own regions for housing development and local urban development, which helped to retain most of the profits from these land-leasing activities as local revenue (Wu and Gaubatz, 2020), and since then, these profits have become an important source of local fiscal revenue. In today's Chinese land market, there is co-existence of two systems: the leasehold system operating through the market mechanism, and the administrative allocation system giving land to state-owned enterprises (Wu, et al., 2006). Through this land-allocating system, local government can control urban growth by manipulating the acquisition and usage of land. Moreover, the Chinese government has separated land-use rights from land ownership (Wu and Gaubatz, 2020). Private sector and capital can only buy and trade user-rights in land, while land ownership is firmly in the hands of the state and local government. Thus, in this sense, land reform and the privatisation of housing provision in China do not mean the complete withdrawal of state and government control of the housing system. There is still a high level of state and local government control over housing markets through land-leasing systems and jurisdiction over housing markets. Nonetheless, the privatisation of land-

user rights laid the foundation for the private provision of housing estates and expansion of real estate development since the 1990s.

The second key change is the housing reform that began in the 1980s. The previous housing provision in China was the welfare allocation system of the Maoist period (1949-1978) like other socialist countries. In this period, state-owned enterprises (work-units) were responsible for public housing provision for most urban residents in China. However, until the economic reform in 1978, the state was confronted by a severe housing shortage, and its housing construction was restricted by limited national government revenue (Wu, 1996). Under these circumstances, after the 1978 reform, the state and local government began to withdraw from public housing provision and introduce market configuration into the housing supply system. Since the 1980s, the Chinese government initially sold the existing state-owned public housing to existing tenants – mostly state-owned work-unit staff - at heavily-subsidised prices, and gradually experimented with legalising private homeownership in some cities (Davis, 2003). In this period, highly subsidized housing was sold to the work-unit staff based on their years of services and occupational levels, with the aim of accelerating the process of privatisation of homeownership (Huang, 2003). In 1998, at the direction of former Premier Zhu Rongji, the Chinese government finally declared that work units were forbidden to provide housing for their staff, and this meant the public-provision based housing system eventually gave way to a fully-fledged private housing market (Bray, 2005). Since then, homebuyers of private estate housing have owned the 'full bundle' of property rights, including occupancy, use, transfer and alienation, and value appreciation (Pow, 2009a). This change from public housing provision to a private housing market and the development of housing property rights eventually helped set the scene for the proliferation of commercially developed private housing.

The privatisation of the housing system has, to some extent, overcome the issues of housing shortages and poor-quality construction. The statistics show that Chinese householders now enjoy much better housing quality and larger living space than in the socialist period, with per capita residential floor space increasing from 4 m² in 1970 to 31 m² in 2010 (Huang and Li, 2014). China has also become a country with a high

proportion of homeowners, with 75% of the urban households owning their houses in 2010 compared to only 20% in 1980 (Huang, Yi and Clark, 2020). The rate of homeownership in China is even higher than in some developed countries. However, these statistics mask the fact that housing inequality is still an important issue in Chinese cities, with millions of poor urban residents living in shanty towns and urban villages (Wu, 2004; Wang *et al.*, 2020). People from rural areas, poor urban residents, and migrant workers in the cities continue to be disadvantaged in the reformed market-oriented housing allocation system (Huang, 2003). People still living in poor-quality housing with limited space are called 'ant tribes' in today's Chinese society and owning a decent house in the cities are far beyond their reach. With the increasing development of the privatised housing market, former cadres (senior government officials), current affluent managers, and professionals are the ultimate beneficiaries of the many state subsidies in the housing reform process and have made significant economic gains from the booming housing market (Davis, 2003; Pow, 2009). While poor residents and migrant workers cannot find a shelter in the private housing market, most of these affluent residents are now living in upscale 'California-style' gated communities (Webster, Wu and Zhao, 2005) and owning multiple houses in different estates (Huang, Yi and Clark, 2020), and have become even richer through the speculative privatised housing market.

Urban socio-spatial transformation

Before the economic reform from 1978, the development of cities in China was highly influenced by socialist egalitarian ideology, and a rigid state control-and-command economic system (Yeh and Wu, 1995). In this period, urban planning mainly served the national economic development plan, and the state controlled the location of investment and the population through the state-owned enterprises – work-units -in a project-specific development approach (Yeh and Wu, 1996). Because of the under-developed tertiary sectors, most of these work units were industrial developments. The 'industrial and residential land uses are mixed' because most work units build their workers' housing adjacent to their workplace and are commonly known as work-unit compounds in China (Wu *et al.*, 2006). Most of these work-unit compounds are located at the peripheries of cities because the urban governments, and state-owned

enterprises could not pay for the high cost of relocating residents to the populated city centres (Wu and Yeh, 1997). In this period, the expansion of Chinese cities was mostly led by the construction of work-unit compounds, which accounted for more than 70% of the total employment in urban areas (Yeh and Wu, 1995). In addition to work-unit staff, other urban residents continued to live in old housing stock and neighbourhoods inherited from the pre-1949 period, ranging from garden houses in former concession areas to shack dwellings in densely-built old city centres (Wu and Gaubatz, 2020). Thus, the most prominent feature of Chinese cities in the Maoist period (1949-1978) was this 'cellular multifunctional work-unit structure', in which self-sufficient work-unit compounds, including their own schools, hospitals, stores, and other services, were the most common urban developments (Douglass, Wissink and van Kempen, 2012). Based on this strong tie between residence and work, Chinese cities in this period were mostly organised around different land uses rather than social groups: for instance, factory workers lived near industrial areas and teachers lived in university districts (Wu, Xu and Yeh, 2006; Wu and Gaubatz, 2013).

Economic reform since 1978, especially the housing and land system reform discussed above, has brought significant changes to the urban built environment. Because of the introduction of land and housing markets, state-led industrial land developments, which had been the primary type of urban development in the pre-reform era, were giving way to the development of commercial land uses and residential housing projects (Wu and Yeh, 1997). Under these circumstances, urban land development after 1979 gradually converted the central derelict residential areas and old industrial areas into new commercial districts. In this redevelopment process of the city centre, governments, businesspeople, and real-estate developers interacted with each other to transform old city centres into more commercially oriented areas (Wu and Gaubatz, 2013). Urban redevelopment projects in the pre-reform era were hard to initiate because the government could not afford the high cost of relocating dense residential populations. But land reform provided opportunities for private investors, aiming to build commercial districts and upscale housing estates, to redevelop the city centre and pay for relocating residents living in the old city centre (Wu, Xu and Yeh, 2006). Thus, many cities began to plan 'Central Business District' projects and upscale gated

commodity housing projects in the city centres to attract private investors and stimulate urban economic growth. In the meantime, many large-scale private commodity housing projects were also developed in the inner suburban areas, mainly near the new suburban centres because of the availability of larger areas of land and cheaper land prices (Wu and Yeh, 1997). Some scholars have indicated that, in addition to land price, another crucial driving force of these suburban housing developments was the local government's entrepreneurial strategies, which aimed to stimulate the local economic growth, lease land to increase the fiscal revenue (Zhang, 2000), and construct a liveable image for their cities (Shen and Wu, 2012). The rapid expansion of development in suburban areas resulted in population decentralisation, transforming the former compact urban form into dispersed and more polycentric forms (Wu and Gaubatz, 2013). However, many scholars also suggest that the redevelopment and suburbanisation process in China quite different from western countries, especially the United States. The first reason is that the city centres in China are not in danger of decline and dilapidation. They are being redeveloped because of the increasing demand for high-quality housing estates and commercial activities (Wu and Gaubatz, 2013). The second reason is that the suburbanisation process in China was not driven by the residents' preference for desirable suburban living but caused by local governments' intentions to stimulate economic growth (Zhang, 2000; Wu, Xu and Yeh, 2006).

The above illustrations and discussions show that the rapid growth of and the meaning of gated communities should be understood within the specific Chinese economic, political and urban contexts. Although gated living has existed in China for long periods, the newly built commodity gated communities in contemporary Chinese cities signify the privatisation of housing estates and emerging consumer clubs for the new rich with a resulting tremendous spatial transformation and social segregation. Following the introduction of Chinese contexts, the following section turns to introduce those key themes, concepts and theories that form the theoretical framework of this study.

2.4 Theoretical framework

After a systematic review of the literature on gated communities worldwide, this section focuses on important concepts and theories mainly employed in this research. While looking at some essential theories which have been used in previous studies of gated communities such as social segregation, fear of crime, public/private discourse, and representation of class identity, it also illustrates some important theories that have not been fully used and developed in research into gated communities, such as social group relations, mobility, partial exit, and networked urbanism. The critical theories guiding this thesis are established/outside, mobilities paradigm and networked urbanism, while other related theories and concepts are also discussed in this section. The further objective of this section is to develop a broader and more comprehensive theoretical framework to support and inform this research (Maxwell, 2012).

Rise of new middle-class and their dream home

Since the foundation of the People's Republic of China, the term 'middle class' has seldom been discussed or used by residents or governments because of its political sensitivity in a socialist country. However, following the 1978 economic reform, the rapid increase in both personal wealth and income inequality have led to social class differentiation in Chinese cities. During this period, the Chinese government, led by Chairman Deng, vigorously disseminated their policies which allowed some Chinese people to 'get rich first' (*xianfu*) and then lead those being rich the latter (*houfu*). Since then, the term 'middle-class' has gradually become popular in China and has been mostly intertwined with other popular terms such as 'rich people' (*youqianren*), 'new stratum' (*xinjiecheng*) and 'successful people' (*chenggong renshi*). More recently, at the National People's Congress in March 2013, the new Chairman of China, Xi Jinping, announced that 'We are in the primary stage of socialism, and we should work hard to build up a comfortable and well-off society through expanding the middle-class spectrum' (Goodman, 2014). These significant political-economic slogans and policies marked the recognition of social class by the Chinese government and the role of the middle class in stimulating economic growth and build up a well-off society (*xiaokang shehui*). Thus, the emerging middle-class with conspicuous spending power

is encouraged by government to increase their consumption behaviours such as buying private cars and housing in gated communities to drive economic development. And another, more profound, rationale for expanding the middle class may be the dominant idea among the political elites that the existence of a large middle class would improve the social stability of China and the political stability of the ruling class (Pow, 2009).

The identification/definition of a 'middle-class' is a persistent issue in both political and academic realms (Goodman, 2013). For Li (2010), there are essentially three different ways of defining the middle class in Chinese contexts. In the first definition, the government seeks to define the middle class as inclusively as possible: the middle-class is to be fostered in order to increase people's living standards and provide social stability. In the second, social scientists focus more on the occupation and employment status of middle class people; and in the third, the public perception of the middle class pays more attention to the consumption behaviours and lifestyle of the rich and famous (Goodman, 2013). For example, Lu (2012) defines the wealthy class in China as state and social administrators, managers, and private entrepreneurs and defines the middle class as being made up of individual business owners (*getihu*), professional and technical personnel, and office workers. In terms of the income threshold of the middle class in China, academic research and social media frequently use the statistics published by the National Bureau of Statistics China that define the income level of the middle class as between 60,000 and 500,000 yuan (around £6,800 to £56,000 GBP) per household (of three people) per year. Li (2010) indicates that according to this standard, in 2009 only the top 16% of the population in China reached the income status of middle class. A more recent statistic published by the World Bank in 2017 indicated that the income level of the middle class is between 100,000 and 900,000 yuan (around £11,000 to £102,000 GBP) per household (of four people) per year; and the top 22% of the total population in China reached this threshold, around 300 million people. From the definition of the middle class by the income level, it is clear that even after 30 years' rapid economic growth, the population proportion of the middle-class spectrum in China society is relatively small, which reveals the underlying social inequality and unfulfilled political goals of expanding the middle-class spectrum.

The other social scientists define the middle class in China in terms of lifestyle and consumption behaviours. For example, Pow (2009) describes the middle class in Shanghai as privileged groups possessing the (economic) ability to buy into private gated communities and modern 'civilised' lifestyles. Thus, he uses the term 'propertied middle-class' to define the middle-class residents in Shanghai. He further indicates that although the social composition of gated communities is rather complex and includes people from different classes, residents of gated communities share many similarities such as high educational background, highly paid jobs and well-defined consumer identities. In gated communities, the defensive physical boundaries (gates and walls), surveillance systems, private guards, and private governance organisations (homeowner organisations) together demarcate the spatial markers of middle-class territoriality and restrict access by outsiders (Pow, 2009). Based on the investigation of gated communities in Kunming, Zhang (2012) indicates that middle-class residents try to become eligible members of the group by competing with their neighbours through conspicuous consumption behaviours befitting their class status. Consumption include private car ownership, foreign food and wine, and expensive leisure activities such as beauty, sauna, and facial treatments (Zhang, 2012a). Thus, in this sense, gated communities are not only to be understood as containers of social class but significant sites for learning and cultivating middle-class identity in contemporary Chinese cities (Pow, 2009).

Through exclusive housing consumption, conspicuous modes of goods consumption, and exclusive lifestyles, exclusive gated commodity housing estates become the prime sites for middle-class residents to learn and shape their social status and collective identity (Tomba, 2004; Pow and Kong, 2007). Owning a proper house in the city has become the Chinese dream for many urban residents (Huang and Li, 2014), and upscale gated communities consequently become the 'Chinese dream home' for most residents. Behind this dream lies their aspirations for owning a residential space; entitlement to schooling for their children; rights to be recognised as civilised urban residents and the respectable middle class; enjoying exclusive and high-end services; and living in more homogeneous neighbourhoods separate from chaotic urban spaces

and unruly outsiders. By investigating the aspirations for, and consumption of, the 'Chinese dream home' embodied in gated communities, we can more deeply understand the sharp transformation of Chinese society in less than three decades which has changed social networks, increased social inequalities and created nascent class identities.

The public/private discourse

Gated communities are privately-owned housing estates with private modes of governance and privatised residential spaces. The global rise of gated communities is described by many scholars and researchers as 'privatised urbanism' (Glasze, Webster and Frantz, 2004; Pow, 2015) and discussions of gated communities are closely related to discourses about the relations between the public and the private. However, different aspects of the private characteristics of gated communities can have quite different meanings. Thus, it is vital to have a clear understanding of the underlying meaning of the private/public discourse related to gated communities. As discussed above, in current Western literature, the private-public distinctions are often discussed in relation to the differences between: the private market economy and public state administration; private individuals, public political community and the exercise of civic rights and obligations; separated, isolated individual space and public spaces for fluid and polymorphous sociability and interaction (Weintraub, 1995).

Weintraub (1995) further indicates that there are two fundamental distinctions between the concepts of private and public: first, what is hidden or withdrawn versus what is open or revealed; and second, what is individual (a part) versus what is collective (the whole). Weintraub and Kumar (1997) suggest that the rich experiences of public life in the society of the old Mediterranean regimes, such as Greece and Rome, has decayed in modern society because of the separation of the private realm (*Gemeinschaft* - family and intimate relationship) from public space (*Gesellschaft* - market and formal organisations) (Tonnie and Loomis, 2002). More specifically, the personal and intimate domains of friendship, family, and primary groups have become largely disconnected from the impersonal, severely instrumental public domains of the market

and bureaucratically administered formal organisations (Weintraub, 1995). Historically these two domains emerged together, but the divisions between them are one of the defining characteristics of modern society. The private sphere has provided secure, intimate and controllable space to protect urban residents from the discontents and issues brought of the modern world (Weintraub and Kumar, 1997).

Sennett (1977) similarly indicates that the people in contemporary society are self-absorbed and narcissistic and need to seek personal intimacy, which is in tandem with the loss of desire to act socially and has meant reduced participation in public life. These are psychological statements, but Sennett (1977) sees the actual cause of these social secessions as not psychological but due to the organisation of space in cities. He is critical of the fact that, after the full development of capitalism and privatism, modern urban design and planning perceive public spaces as only transitory space for movement, not as space for diverse social interaction among strangers and overlapping of people and events for narrative and complex stories (Sennett, 1977). Public spaces in contemporary cities are viewed by the bourgeoisie as spaces of immorality and disorder, which has led to the middle-class retreat into private domains of domesticity. For Sennett (1992), a meaningful public life should facilitate empathy and cosmopolitan moments with strangers without the compulsion to know them as persons, and should serve as the focus of social interactions and experience of human possibilities. In this sense, the focus of public space/life is not on collective decision-making by a political community but on apolitical coexistence and sociability. The charms of the public space for sociability lie in the diversity, openness, the tolerable coexistence of different social groups that mingle without joining, distinct from (politically) active citizenship (Weintraub, 1995). As Sennett (1970) suggests, for those individuals and communities without experience of disorder and, more importantly, which are intolerant of disorder, the eruption of social tensions will be accompanied by ultimate methods of aggression, such as violent force and reprisal. Thus, the coexistence of different social groups and the increasing urban experience of difference can improve our understanding and appreciation of unfamiliar people and uncertain situations.

Jacobs (1961), as a writer on urban life in America, has shown the importance of openness and diversity in cities. She indicated that pedestrian movement through streets - the 'street ballet' - played an essential role in maintaining the cities' security, social cohesion, and economic development. There are mainly four preconditions for the creation of 'street ballet': a multifunctional neighbourhood with people on the street all day long; short building blocks and intricate street structure; variations in the age and functions of residential buildings; and a high degree of concentration of people supporting a varied supply of different services and facilities (Jacobs, 1961). All these preconditions can support and generate diversity of people, jobs and facilities, thus creating multiple opportunities for social interaction and co-existence of different social groups. Consequently, with enough 'eyes on the street', neighbourhood security is maintained, and the collective sense of safety increases. Furthermore, with enough social interaction on the street and in the neighbourhood, a sense of belonging, social cohesion, and mutual trust is developed. In this sense, openness, diversity, and co-presence of strangers are essential to lived public spaces, which bring a sense of security, social cohesion, mutual trust, social capital, and even economic development.

Anderson (2004) used the term 'cosmopolitan canopy' to describe lived and meaningful public spaces. For him, the 'cosmopolitan canopy' is a public space which 'offers a respite and opportunity for diverse people to come together, engage with each other, do the 'folk ethnography', test or substantiate stereotype and prejudice, and acknowledge something new about others' (Anderson, 2004). By investigating micro-level interpersonal interaction in urban public space, Anderson (2012) showed that even in racially and ethnically segregated American cities, vital public spaces, like Reading Terminal, Philadelphia, a popular destination for shopping and dining, can offer places for diverse people to share common spaces and seek out each other's presence. He further argues that everyday interactions in public spaces across racial, ethnic and class boundaries may create trust, mutuality, a sense of security, civility and a more cosmopolitan appreciation of unknown and different others. When people are repeatedly exposed to unknown others in public spaces, they have more opportunities to mentally and socially engage with people from different backgrounds and increase their knowledge and experience of diverse people. And, when they return to their own

neighbourhoods, they are more likely to engage with other strangers than those without these knowledge and experiences (Anderson, 2012). These experiences and knowledge of people with diverse backgrounds serve as a cognitive and cultural base on which people construct their behaviours in public space and form the base for growing social sophistication that allows diverse urban people to get along (Anderson, 2004). These can be profound positive implications of lived and meaningful public spaces as spaces for sociability. As cities become more diverse, the significance of cosmopolitan public spaces becomes more vital.

From the discussions of the meanings and potential implications of public spaces, it is clear that cosmopolitan, lived, and meaningful public spaces are crucial to the vitality and development of cities. However, recent research indicates that contemporary global urban transformations, in many respects, run counter to this. Especially in the US, the distribution of incomes have been more unequal, the numbers of poor and rich groups have grown simultaneously, middle-class residents have competed with poor people for residential space, and black people have been distanced and discriminated against by white people (Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991). There are rapidly increasing residential enclaves of various forms, such as black ghettos and high-income *Citadels*, voluntarily or involuntarily occupied by people from different ethnic, racial and class backgrounds (Marcuse, 1997). New enclaves with inventive governance forms, such as special economic zones, shopping malls, theme parks and business streets, are interwoven into the original urban built environment and have largely transformed urban organisations (Douglass, Wissink and van Kempen, 2012). These new enclaves are further connected by networked infrastructure and advanced mobility technologies, which provide unprecedented and unfettered access for those without social-economic limitations (Graham and Marvin, 2002). Contemporary urban spaces and enclaves are becoming increasingly homogeneous, security-conscious, and controllable (Minton, 2012), where segregation, race, ethnic and class differences are clearly expressed in socio-spatial transformation. In extreme cases, these urban enclaves are equipped with gates, walls, surveillance systems, and even armed private security forces (Davis, 1996). Under these tremendous urban spatial transformations and enclave urbanism (Douglass, Wissink and van Kempen, 2012), the diversity, openness, social contact

and coexistence of different social groups encouraged by public (cosmopolitan) spaces are deeply eroded (Atkinson, 2016). Among these urban changes, the rapid increase of gated communities worldwide has been one of the key transformations in the urban built environment and has far-reaching implications for the encroachment on lived public spaces and destruction of meaningful public life (Caldeira, 2000; Low, 2003; Atkinson, 2016). This is one of the key themes throughout this research.

The current research into gated communities often draws on different or combined meanings of the above characteristics of and concepts in public/private discourse. For example, Webster (2001) defines gated communities as 'club goods' because they are neither public goods nor private property but are collectively owned and consumed by homeowners while excluding outsiders as 'free-riders' who do not pay for these services. These views that see gated communities as innovative and efficient ways to organise neighbourhood services provision (Cséfalvay, 2011; Woo and Webster, 2014) do so from the perspective of the private market economy.

In contrast and drawing on an investigation in Shanghai, China, Pow (2007) suggests that gated communities provide autonomous private domestic and inner community spaces for homeowners, which help them create household autonomy and personal privacy outside the hegemonic control of local governments. In this case, the meanings of private realms are from the perspective of civic rights of individuals that allow individuals to be left alone (Pow, 2007a) free from control by public authorities such as local governments (Roessler, 2005).

For Caldeira (2000), gated communities and the urban segregation they create severely deteriorate the virtue of public life and the primacy and openness of the street, the free circulation of people, the encounters between strangers, the unplanned public congregation in the squares, and the co-presence and interactions of people from different social backgrounds. These criticisms of gated communities as encroachment on public space are based on seeing public space as a realm of fluid and polymorphous

sociability, allowing the co-presence of people from diverse groups and free congregation and social interaction.

In considering the research into gated communities, clearly defined meanings of concepts of private/public can explicitly mark out the research subject and better inform and support the research process. Thus, in this research, the discourse of public/private aspects of gated communities primarily focuses on seeing public space as forming sociability, trust, and intergroup appreciation, rather than by investigating resident spaces as nurturing political community and collective decision-making.

Group relationships, the 'established/outside' configuration and stigmatisation

The previous discussion shows that the rapid development of gated communities is bound up with the emergence of a newly rich group of middle-class residents in contemporary Chinese cities. Thus, to fully understand the social relationship of residents in gated communities, it is helpful to explore these relationships through group-level perspectives. The following paragraphs introduce Norbert Elias's sociological approach about the group-level social relationship.

For Norbert Elias (1978), to understand and study sociology, one has to explore the interdependence between human beings. He critically argues that when attempting to understand contemporary society, many modern concepts and idioms in sociology tend to see other human beings merely as 'objects' separated from the researcher. This understanding of human beings as '*homo clausus*' (*closed person*) separated from other human beings has appeared self-evident and incontestable (Elias, 1978) in modern sociology studies. This way of thinking views other human beings as stationary 'objects' in relation to oneself without bearing in mind that other individuals form part of an individual's environment. For example, when discussing children and their families, this relationship is often seen in terms of individual and society, subject and object, and oneself and environment. But these so-called society and environment,

such as family, are not integral without children. Therefore, societies and environments should not be considered in contraposition to individuals. What Elias suggested is to study society from the group levels of human relations. For instance, racial discrimination occurs not because of personal conflicts between individuals but is due to different perspectives, social relations and power resources between different races and ethnicities. Exploring society from group-level perspectives can further our understanding in investigating social problems and issues.

As suggested by Elias (1978), concepts like 'family', 'school', 'neighbourhood', 'industry', and 'state' are groupings of interdependent human beings, referring to specific 'figurations' that people form with each other. 'Figuration' is an important concept in Elias's work. He describes 'figuration' as webs of interdependencies between people that bind them together, constrains their social behaviours and shapes their social norms and beliefs. To illustrate, in different complex 'figurations', people are in need of, and bonded with each other as a result of the division of labour, occupational specialisations, integration into neighbourhoods or states, their sense of identity, and hatred of, and hostility towards other groups (Elias, 1978). Thus, to understand sociology, one needs to explore the complex and overlapping social networks of individuals among other human beings in villages, towns, cities, universities, classes, status groups, and states. Only investigating these complex, pluralistic, multi-layered and dynamic human interdependencies and figurations can capture the essence and substance of society.

The concept of 'figuration' could be applied to different scales of societies and environments, for example, at small scales like doctors and patients, employers and employees, students and teachers, and at large scales like residents in neighbourhoods, cities and even states. As explained by Elias, the figurations become more complex, changeable and not easily understood when the scales become larger, and analysing these complex systems as sub-groups of interdependencies could further our perception. He put more emphasis on group-level behaviours and see individuals and other human beings as integral entities. A radically relational and processual character is deeply seated in his sociological perspectives (Dunning and

Hughes, 2012). For Elias, the processual and changeable characteristics of figuration are inevitable when change at the macro-level (states, classes, religions) and micro-level (individuals, families, neighbourhoods) can happen in days, years or even centuries, based on the interdependencies between human beings (Elias, 1978).

With these key concepts discussed above - 'figurations', 'human interdependencies', 'group-level relationships' and 'relational and processual sociology' - Elias presented a community study with his student John Scotson, *The Established and the Outsiders*, which created a theoretical framework for understanding and analysing community social relationships as 'human interdependence that link people together' (Elias and Scotson, 1994). This research was conducted in the community of Winston Parva (a pseudonym) in the suburban area of Leicester, England, where there are three distinct zones based on the ages of the housing stock. The authors surprisingly found that the social division between different groups in this community was not based on their nationality, race, or income level, but their length of residence. Although other researchers had reported similar findings that 'prestige' was associated with long-established groups (Crow and Laidlaw, 2019), here Elias gives a new and rounded explanation for this social division. Newcomers lack local social connections in the village and have not absorbed the 'unifying norms' (Elias and Scotson, 1994). Thus they were stigmatised by the local establishment, less by what they were than by what they were not (Crow and Laidlaw, 2019). In this case, the local networks and established social cohesion become the essential power of the long-term residents, and social exclusion and stigmatisation are used as 'weapons' to attack the newcomers as 'outsiders'. Power resources and configurations are clearly manifested in imbalanced community group relations.

Based on the group relations of the 'established' and the 'outsiders' in their community study, Elias and Scotson (1994, p8) propose that 'established' residents model themselves on the 'minority of the best' while modelling the 'outsiders' on the 'minority of the worst'. Thus the 'established' idealise themselves and punish the 'outsiders' based on negative 'fantasy-laden explanations' (Elias and Scotson, 1994), which further increase the social division between two groups and even result in conflicts.

This idea and model of stigmatisation is crucial to understanding the social process and relations in community studies. The common tools to stigmatise and punish 'outsiders' are informal gossip - blame gossip' to slander the reputation of the 'outsiders'. This stigmatisation process may lead to internal group humiliation of 'outsiders', and the weaker groups may tolerate, and even accept, this inferior status and reputation without striking back (Loyal, 2011). This process is most notable when both groups internalise beliefs about the 'established' groups being naturally 'superior' (Crow and Laidlaw, 2019). For insiders of the 'established' groups, common ways to maintain their superior status and reinforce their internal 'emotional bonds' are promoting and implementing a 'civilised' code of conduct which demands a high level of self-restraint (Elias and Scotson, 1994). However, even if the outsiders practice self-restraint and conform to the social norms and codes of conduct of the 'established' groups, they may not be considered and recognised as insiders because of their different backgrounds (Crow and Laidlaw, 2019).

For de Swaan (1997), the process of stigmatisation is in close relation to identification/disidentification. de Swaan argues that identification is the cognitive and emotional process of experiencing similar others similar. Members of a group idealise themselves based on positive characteristics while imposing negative characteristics on members of other groups who are different from themselves, in a process of identification and disidentification. People identify themselves based on changing standards and concepts, including kinship and residential proximity in the early ages of human development (de Swaan, 1997), class and cultural capital (Hogenstijn, van Middelkoop and Terlouw, 2008) and length of residence (Elias and Scotson, 1994). This identification/disidentification process is similar to Elias's 'hypothetical model' that divides different groups of people through fantasies and assumptions (Dunning and Hughes, 2012). De Swaan (1997) argues that the process of stigmatisation is a pre-condition of disidentification because people normally impose negative characteristics on other groups to distinguish other groups from themselves. The disidentification process not only helps the 'established' to build social order and control but also performs their desire and interest (Parker and Aggleton, 2003), which results in both social (Elias and Scotson, 1994) and spatial (Powell, 2008) exclusion.

The establish-outsider theoretical framework was developed by Elias and Scotson (1994) from empirical research in the mid-20th century. With increasing geographical mobility (Urry, 2012) and enlarged social networks beyond residential neighbourhoods (Forrest and Kearns, 2001) in the 21st century, one may question whether the figuration of establish-outsider based on length of residence is still fit for contemporary urban settings and communities. Recent academic works emphasise the changing and novel social and power relations between local residents and newcomers, especially when these newcomers are from middle and upper-middle class groups (Butler, 2003; Savage et al., 2005; Atkinson, 2006; Blokland and Savage, 2008). This research aims to apply the establish-outsider theoretical framework to analyse social relations and exclusionary processes in contemporary Chinese gated communities between middle-class residents and other social groups, where the social-economic backgrounds and urban environmental structures are quite different from the UK. This could deepen our understanding of the group-level relations in Chinese gated communities and the application of Elias' theory in contemporary cities.

Gating, fortresses, and discourses of fear of crime

Fear of crime is one of the most prominent reasons for gated living documented by many researchers (Low, 2003; Atkinson and Blandy, 2005b; Davis, 2006). For example, Mike Davis explores the postmodern urban condition in Los Angeles and describes it as an 'ecology of fear' (Davis, 1998). He suggests that, with inadequate public investment in dealing with social inequalities and conflicts, urban residents, especially the rich, actively separate themselves from the urban poor with personal security measures such as gates, walls, security systems and private security forces (Davis, 1998). Thus, he shows that the widespread construction of gated communities in America is part of the creation of 'Fortress LA' with increasing private security, defensible space, and 'social control districts' to control and eliminate 'criminal' behaviours, such as graffiti, homeless, drug abuse, prostitution, and gunfight (Davis, 1996). Davis (2006) calls this process the 'militarisation' of Los Angeles which aims to expel, control and patrol the urban poor, who are mainly ethnic minorities such as Black

and Latino people. The loss of freedom, and even lives, of the poor are considered necessary sacrifices for the security of affluent residents (Atkinson and Millington, 2018). Dear (2000) similarly indicates that Los Angeles is a 'carceral' city demarcated into fortified and secure citadels of wealthy residents and 'terror space' of excluded poor residents, where the police fight with ethnic minority and underprivileged groups. These views put the development of gated communities into a larger urban context in which fragmented social space, privatised and controllable districts, fortified citadels for the security of the rich, and amusement theme parks together form the postmodern urban ecology. In this, gated communities can be considered one prominent form of urban development signifying the retreat of the urban wealthy into private neighbourhoods from separated from these supposedly dangerous fragmented urban spaces.

From the perspective of psychology and culture, Glassner (2003) suggests that the prevalent media and news reports about crime and violence in American cities have created a 'culture of fear'. Through inflammatory media reports about the prevalence of crime in the cities, those relatively rare issues are amplified and disseminated to become the 'perceived' trend of criminal behaviours, creating general fear in the urban public. For example, although over 800,000 children were reported missing every single year by the media and over 70% of parents in America had concerns about kidnapping, the reality was that only 200 to 300 children a year were actually abducted by non-family members (Glassner, 2003). He indicates that the politicians, journalists, advocacy groups and businesspeople exaggerate the prevalence of crime and violence to gain votes, ratings, donations and economic advantage (Glassner, 2003). However, taxpayers finally pay for the outcomes of this 'culture of fear'. Glassner (2003) further argues that many of the fear-creating items, such as child abduction and unwed teenage mothers, are relatively easily addressed, but the difficult to deal with issues are the underlying problems of the enlarging gap between the rich and poor. Here the culture of fear is an important factor in widening the gap between rich and poor by defaming poor people as dangerous and threatening. As described by Flusty (1997), contemporary cities are characterised by the unrestrained search for personal security and property safety while the underlying social and economic inequalities that drive

crime have been largely ignored. Thus, these defensive behaviours and boundaries, such as spray prints, gates, walls and security systems, exert territorial dominance but add little to the sense of security (Flusty, 1997).

Bauman (2007) argues that living in a society with uncertainty and ruled by fear means that fears of crimes and disorder become self-reinforcing and self-perpetuating. The reason is that security measures and behaviours, such as hiring guards and carrying handguns, reaffirm and create the sense of fear that society is insecure and that individuals undoubtedly need to defend themselves. From this perspective, the construction of gated communities is a process of creating perceived dangerous urban conditions and insecurity in the world outside the gates. As Bauman further argues (2013a, p101), 'We are the most technologically equipped generation in human history, and the generation most haunted by feelings of insecurity and helplessness.' Likewise, Low (2003) psychologically investigates residents of gated communities living in suburban areas of San Antonio and argues that the fear of crime is of 'perceived crime' because the actual crime rates in suburban areas are far less than in the city centre. She explains that the fear expressed by these residents is mainly based on their fear of unfamiliar social groups, such as Mexicans and illegal immigrants, outside their gates (Low, 2003). In addition, gated living for children may create a more profound fear of outsiders and unknown social groups in their later lives.

The above discussion shows that the worldwide rise of gated communities is closely related to post-modern urban conditions with fragmented social space and an increase in real and perceived social insecurity and urban disorder. The large-scale construction of novel types of gated housing developments critically indicates that urban residents' responses to urban crime is related to the new scale of private homes and neighbourhoods, which supplement or substitute for the normal form of social control and policing provided by state for all citizens (Atkinson and Millington, 2018). In this sense, private neighbourhoods have become the unit primarily responsible for dealing with crime and violence, and the residents have taken on more of the burden of assuring their own security as a result of insufficient assurance by the state (Simon, 2007). Despite these efforts to separate and protect themselves from the wider public,

residents of private developments are still disconcerted by crime and violence influenced by media reports of attacks and homicides even inside gated communities (Atkinson and Smith, 2012). Thus, gates and walls cannot address this ontological insecurity, and may sometimes lead to the ignorance of intimate crime and violence by residents within gated communities (Atkinson and Smith, 2012).

The retreat of wealthy residents into gated communities in response to the fear of crime is further linked to issues of social inequality and segregation. While social segregation has often been understood as the lack of integration of low-income and ethnic minority groups into wider society, gated communities have created new concerns about the voluntary spatial retreat of wealthy groups into safety zones in response to the fear of crime and disorder (Atkinson and Millington, 2018). The large-scale development of gated communities in many countries has become the sign of increasing social division and spatial segregation, even in low-crime areas like Europe (Glasze, Webster and Frantz, 2004). The withdrawal of wealthy residents into security-seeking private gated communities reveals underlying social and economic inequalities in housing markets, in which only those with resources can pay for this club-form security. Although the retreat into private gated communities as 'consumer sovereignty' in response to urban crime is justified by some observers as the individual freedom and liberty of wealthy residents (McKenzie, 2005), these behaviours have more profound negative impacts of displacing crime from the hardened targets of gated communities toward soft-target housing areas without security controls (Atkinson and Blandy, 2005). To a large extent, these behaviours also challenge the public functions of urban policy to ensure security for all citizens and they undermine the protection of civil rights by the state as a common good for all urban residents. But research by Atkinson and Blandy (2016) indicates that even gated communities cannot offer completely safe, desirable, and controllable residential space for affluent residents. They suggest that the fortification of the individual home and domestic space has become the new front-line where affluent residents react to make themselves their private property secure, implying the endgame of individualism in the creation of inequality, a market logic of security control and the triumph of neoliberal urban policies (Atkinson and Blandy, 2016).

Based on an investigation of gated commodity housing estates in China, Wu (2005) critically discusses the discourse of fear in Western literature and its complexities in Chinese urban contexts. He suggests that Chinese urban residents, especially the nouveaux riches, are afraid of the collective consumption lifestyle during the socialist period, and thus gated communities become the ideal place for them to improve their living and housing conditions and fulfil their 'Chinese dream' separated from poor residents. Moreover, with the destruction of work-unit compounds, the loss of community surveillance added a sense of insecurity in neighbourhood life and property management, and these affluent residents wanted gates, walls, and private security systems to increase their personal and property safety (Wu, 2005). Thus, Wu argues that fear of crime in Chinese contexts is different from that in Western countries.

According to the above discussions about fear of crime and gated communities, this research seeks to further investigate the relationship between fear of crime and motivations for gated living in Chinese cities. As suggested by Tulumello (2015), instead of uncritically accepting the 'space of fear', we should be more sensitive to the nuanced and complex local particularities and discursive dimensions in researching gated communities when applying the theories of fear.

Understanding social segregation through mobilities paradigm

Gated communities are usually considered the spatial congregation of wealthy urban groups in privately governed residential neighbourhoods and associated with extreme forms of social segregation between the rich and poor (Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Glasze, Webster and Frantz, 2004; Atkinson and Blandy, 2005a). Here, social segregation refers to income inequalities and discriminatory filters which lead to uneven concentrations of residents in the urban built environments (van Kempen, 1994), through which social disaffiliation, social disintegration and conflict have been created (Fainstein and Harloe, 1992; Massey and Denton, 1993; Atkinson, 2006). Previous urban research on social segregation has mainly focused on the concentration of poor and marginal social groups in deprived areas, in which the internal problems of deprived neighbourhoods cause detrimental effects on residents

(Musterd, 2006). However, it is hard to capture the full sense of social segregation without considering the concentration, exit routes and private strategies of wealthy urban groups with more 'freedom', options, and decision-making power (Atkinson and Ho, 2020). Thus, gated communities, as the spatial retreat and congregation of wealthy groups (Massey, 1996), provide us with a new lens to understand social segregation in contemporary cities through the motives, housing strategies and social practice of these wealthy residents.

As discussed above, gated communities are generally understood as both the obvious manifestation, and significant causes, of social segregation (Caldeira, 2000; Jürgens and Gnad, 2002; Le Goix, 2005). Most research on segregation caused by gated communities focuses on the residential patterns of different social groups (Van Kempen and Murie, 2009). Although residential segregation is a significant aspect of social segregation, urban researchers began to pay attention to a more dynamic pattern of segregation of affluent citizens through their mobility patterns and networked urban spaces at the broader urban scale (Graham and Marvin, 2002; Atkinson and Flint, 2004). For example, Graham and Marvin (2002) use the concept 'splintering urbanism' to describe fragmented urban spaces, infrastructure and mobility technologies that separate the highly mobile rich from other social groups. These affluent citizens with privileged social status and economic resources gather in upscale neighbourhoods and are able to move freely through 'premium networked spaces' between urban spaces, cities, and nations (Graham and Marvin, 2002). These networked spaces include fortified nodal sites such as home and workplace and 'unbundled' networked infrastructure such as exclusive private highways and private transportation (Graham, 2000). In this sense, gated communities can be understood as one of the crucial nodes which form segregated and fragmented urban spaces. Atkinson and Flint (2004) further suggest that the segregation of gated communities should be understood not only in residential spaces but also through dynamic 'time-space trajectories' in the cities. They suggest that three elements are essential in understanding these 'time-space trajectories': territories, objectives, and corridors (Atkinson and Flint, 2004). Here, 'territories' means the residential neighbourhoods with defended dwellings, physical boundaries and security systems such as CCTV and

private guards. These places are secure and safe because they are shielded and can provide security for residents. 'Objectives' refers to non-residential locations and spaces to which people travel daily through repeated patterns of movements. These objectives include workplaces, leisure places and social network destinations for friends and family relationships, which may also be fortified and secluded. 'Corridors' means those modes of travel used by wealthy residents, such as private cars, SUVs, aircraft, first-class trains and even anonymous modes of dress code that mark their distinction or make them invisible. They are called corridors because they not only provide users with greater mobility and a sense of security, but also separate users from other undesirable social groups and environments. Through these 'time-space trajectories' (Atkinson and Flint, 2004), elite social groups precisely orchestrate residential neighbourhoods, workplaces, entertainment spaces, mobility technologies, security devices, private mobile technologies, and networked urban infrastructures to achieve unfettered movement in their private worlds, and carefully avoid unwanted social contacts with low-income groups and potential dangers in the city..

Another related concept describing individual use of urban space is 'activity space' - the time-space contexts of people's daily activities (Wong and Shaw, 2011). This idea is common in human geography research as a behavioural and people-based approach to understanding socio-spatial segregation at a broader urban scale (Wang, Li and Chai, 2012). As described by Wong and Shaw (2011), the importance of residential patterns in researching social segregation are well established but other social-geographical spaces have been ignored and underestimated. 'Activity space' can be understood as 'the subset of all urban locations with which the individual has direct contact as the result of day-to-day activities' (Horton and Reynolds, 1971), including the spatial structure of origins, destinations, and the purpose, timing, intensity and experience of activities in more expansive urban spaces. Thus, the gated community can be viewed as an essential component of activity spaces because it is the starting point of residents' daily activities, and many individual activities take place in home and neighbourhood. An investigation in China show that the activity space of individuals with limited mobility is a narrow zone of contiguous areas while that of wealthy groups with more mobile capacity operate with a dispersed patchwork of

separated destinations connected by safe and high-speed corridors (Wang, Li and Chai, 2012). As depicted by Bauman (1998), there are two social groups affected by access to mobility: the 'vagabonds' who cannot and do not cross borders in their whole lives; and 'global tourists' who are able to cross borders to pursue their self-interests easily. Moreover, the movement of people in different activity spaces is closely linked to their sense of the spaces and constructions of emotional geographies (Sheller and Urry, 2006). This implies that the means of travel not only decreases the time of travel but also provides different experiences for the traveller. Through travel in various ways and types of vehicles, individuals build perceptions and emotions of various places and spaces, namely emotional geographies. Through investigating emotional geographies, a better understanding of valuations and perceptions of different public or private spaces in cities can be gained, and residents' perceptions of their interactions and contacts with other citizens in the urban environment can be considered.

Sociologists like Sheller and Urry (2006), have similarly proposed the new mobility paradigm in social science research, which suggests that most traditional research in social science has largely ignored the importance of systematic movements of people in their lives and failed to consider the enormous impact of the automobile in transforming the time-space patterns of the modern urban dweller. Thus, based on the increasing movement of population, information, and images, they suggest transcending the dichotomy between social science research and transport research and call for a 'mobility turn' in social science (Urry, 2012). Urry (2016) further argues that movement has become increasingly significant in the contemporary world, and the freedom and potential of movement are the ideology and utopia of the twenty-first century. One significant consequence of this is the variety of people's social networks and how they relate to others who are 'at-a-distance' (Urry, 2016). These others, including family members, friends, colleagues, are themselves networked. Through these individual time-space patterns and networks, the wealthy can cover more ground, consume abundantly and live more types of 'coordinated' lives worldwide. These scenarios resonate with the idea of portable lifestyles in 'flowing enclaves' (Atkinson 2008), showing that networked and advanced technologies and infrastructures with high price barriers confer on the affluent living in gated communities the ability to 'flow'

around the city, separated from other undesirable social groups and yet embedded in the city in selective ways. Bauman (1998) introduces the lively metaphors of 'vagabond' and 'tourist' to represent time-rich but spatially constrained poor people and time-limited but spatially unfettered rich people, based on their differentiated ability to be mobile which he sees as the main stratifying factor in globalising world and liquid modernity (Bauman, 2013b). Thus, these mobile elite classes, with more potential for mobility and greater ease of movement (Sheller, 2018), are able to retreat from undesirable urban spaces and avoid contact with less mobile classes (Sennett, 1992). From this it can be understood that the mobility patterns of elite classes are closely linked to their participation, interaction, and integration with other citizens like themselves. As described by Kotef (2015), the freedom of movement of highly mobile people limits, hides and even denies the existence of other less mobile social groups.

In developing these ideas, this research aims to explore the social-spatial implications of gated communities by investigating residents' mobility patterns and activity spaces in the wider urban context. It particularly seeks to understand the social segregation between different groups, especially rich and poor, by comparing the mobility of residents living in gated communities with the residents living in adjacent poor and derelict neighbourhoods.

Networked urbanism and the exclusiveness of social capital

The concept of social capital has a popular term in social science research since the 1990s. It was first used by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu who was interested in how society was produced and how dominant classes maintained their social positions. In his study *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1987) investigates how people employed the trappings of middle-class taste and cultivation to identify themselves with those above them on the social ladder and distance themselves from those below. He shows how the cultural artefacts and knowledge used to display and maintain social status and relationships are as important as economic capital (Bourdieu, 1987). He further defines a third type, social capital, as "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that belong to an individual or a group by possessing a durable network of more or less

institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p119). Bourdieu regards social capital as an asset and resource of elite social groups. Putnam’s (2000) book, *Bowling Alone*, further popularised the concept of social capital, arguing that declining electoral turnout, falling organisational membership and decreasing interpersonal trust, together with increasing public cynicism was due to the rapid decline of social capital. He gave social capital a broader definition as the ‘features of social organisation such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit’ (Putnam, 1996). He particularly stressed the importance of voluntary associations as the stock of social capital and how people learn to relate to each other to create mutual benefits (Putnam, 2000). In this sense, the broader meaning of social capital is similar to ideas of social cohesion, social integration, and sustainable community stressed by sociologists such as Weber and Durkheim (Blokland and Savage, 2008).

Urban policymakers also sought to pursue and highlight the benefits to be gained from the creation of social capital (Knox, et al., 2006). Urban neighbourhoods which are poor, derelict and not performing well need more ‘social capital’, and immigrants unable to become upwardly social mobile need ‘social capital’ to get on. These ideas take social capital as a ‘magic bullet’ abstracted from lived urban relations and as an urban policy ‘fix’ to all types of social issues, ignoring the fact that the city has always been the site of both contestation and dispute as well as solidarity and cohesion (Blokland and Savage, 2008). Blokland and Savage (2008) suggest a more profound understanding of social capital which recognises the power relations, inequality and exclusiveness along with social capital and how actual social capital is organised and produced socially and, more importantly, spatially.

Social capital does not only secure social ties and maintain social connections (Putnam, 2000) but also distinguishes cliques and factions (Scott, 1988). A social network approach to analysing social capital assume that certain types of social capital are good for everyone, independent of class, race and ethnicity (Blokland and Savage, 2008). However, to fully understand the potentials for social capital to make cities better, we need to know how exactly these types of social capital come about in their contexts

(Blokland and Savage, 2008). For example, the term 'misanthropy of networked affluence' (Atkinson 2008) illustrates how the development of gated communities, security and mobility technologies and urban infrastructure together create a broad social network that allows the urban rich to live and socialise within their own social circuit without contact with socially different or 'dangerous' people. These exclusive forms of social capital act as resources for the wealthy while expressing social disconnection from, and hostility towards, underprivileged groups. Thus, whether social capital can resolve social issues and create mutual benefits should be fully explored and understood through examining the processes and contexts of its formation which may be related to different levels of social inequalities of class, gender, race and ethnicity.

The creation and changing forms of social capital should be considered in the current urban context of 'network urbanism' (Blokland and Savage, 2008). As described by Blokland and Rae (2008), urban development in the 'urbanist' decade (1910-1917) of the beginning of the twentieth century consisted of central manufacturing, mixed neighbourhoods use, thick layers of locally- embedded social network and organisations, and unity between economic, social and political citizenship when elites had economic interests in cities but also contributed to civic society through residence within the city borders. This type of urban context is more like what Jacobs (1961) called the multifunctional neighbourhood and mixed-use of urban land that could cultivate the 'street ballet'. However, changes in cities, such as deindustrialisation, the development of automobiles, and suburbanisation, have largely decentralised people, neighbourhoods, stores and other activities towards more peripheral locations. These changes do not mean that people stop using cities but indicate that their daily interaction cannot create the type of public familiarity and social connectedness brought about in the old 'urbanist' decade when most people lived the routines of their daily lives quite locally. These changes are described by Rae (2008) as the 'end of urbanism' because the core organising role of the central urban public space has been eclipsed. The early twentieth century's dense and centred urban contexts that create opportunities for communications and social interaction in much more self-evident and less deliberately chosen settings are lost (Blokland and Rae, 2008). Thus, the social

networks in contemporary cities are less diverse, open and multiple. The locally based social networks, voluntary organisations and interactions and transactions in the city (Putnam, 2000) that may create mutual trust and benefits have changed mainly. And following this is the emergence of 'networked urbanism' (Blokland and Savage, 2008), where decentred people, neighbourhoods and zones of activity, loosely and multiply connected to each other through roads, highways, information communications (Castells, 1998), new mobility technologies, unbundled urban infrastructures (Graham and Marvin, 2002) and organisational social circuits. These new urban constellations may provide social capital for some, but in more exclusive ways, thereby confirming rather than challenging existing inequalities within cities (Blokland and Rae, 2008). These could be further understood from various types of urban enclaves commonly found in the cities, ranging from gated communities and gentrified neighbourhoods to black ghettos and poor and ethnic enclaves. As described by Atkinson (2021), the current mobile and connected world of current cities is built for the rich while erasing the unwritten constitution of cities as space for encounter with diversity which generates the knowledge of, and empathy with, other citizens.

Social capital should also be understood within a specific spatial context. Many researchers and policymakers view space as a container of social capital. For example, early writer Wellman (1979) used the term 'community lost' to describe a neighbourhood without vibrant face to face interaction. Some researchers also view social capital in a similar way: if within a spatially bounded area, people are deprived and lack interaction with, and mutual support for, each other, the neighbourhood seems to lack social capital. However, as Blokland and Savage (2008) suggest, to get the full sense of the forming and changing processes of social capital in contemporary cities, it is necessary to understand the broader spatial contexts and where and how different agents of social capital engage in social relations.. We need to avoid seeing space as a containers filled with different levels of social capital and understand that social relationships are sometimes extended over space meaning that physical boundaries, such as urban and national boundaries, are not necessarily of overriding cultural or social importance (Blokland and Savage, 2008). For example, as described by Atkinson (2008), middle-class residents of gated communities form their networks

beyond their immediate residential spaces to include wider privileged nodes and destinations, such as workplaces, entertainment spaces and social network destinations with their friends and relatives, at the same time avoiding unwanted social contact with other people from lower classes. Thus, capsular modes of transport, defensive architecture of homes and workplaces, and controlled and security-sensitive shopping centres and theme parks all form the contexts of sanitised and domesticated social lives and planned social networks in the broader spatial context of the cities. In this sense, social capital can be portable and travel across neighbourhood borders, cities, nations, and even continents through geographically dispersed social networks.

In the book *New Barbarian Manifesto*, Angell (2000, p 12) suggests the term 'barbarians' to describe those who 'take advantage of collective goods and services in the cities but avoid investing any long-term resources and seek private services as far as possible'. Young professionals in London and New York share some of these characteristics with international social networks from Los Angeles to Tokyo, which shows how affluent people shape their social capital and earn from it (Angell, 2000). The increasing mobility of people, information and materials is gradually destroying traditional sociological categories of social structure, nation-states, and locality, which is described as new sociology beyond societies (Urry, 2012). However, Andreotti (2015) argues that it may be premature to announce the rise of new global urban bourgeoisies and the demise of traditional social structures such as cities and nations. He suggests two reasons: first, national social structures and their institutions still contain massive resources that most social actors rely on; and second, the more mobility there is, the more choice social actors have, and the more potential there is to locate and organize their own lives from one territory to another or mixing them (Andreotti, Le Galès and Moreno-Fuentes, 2015). For example, a study of 'elective belonging' in the north of England (Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst, 2005) shows that there are different scales of social interactions and networks for individuals' lives beyond their local neighbourhoods and nations, but most of the interviewees, even elites working in global corporations with family and friendships abroad, show that their cultural tastes are parochial and 'national' and their place attachment and emotional investment are embedded in the north of England. These research experiences imply that more

attention needs to be paid to local complexities when discussing issues of increasing mobility and trans-regional formations of social capital. Based on this background, Andreotti (2013) suggests the innovative term 'partial exit' to describe the degree to which urban elites choose to move out of the public realms of their national society and away from their cities of residence. These 'exit strategies' at the national perspective, for example, imply these elites are no longer invested in issues of national policy; are disengagement from social organizations and political parties; send their children to international schools and build international social relationships at the expense of local connections (Andreotti, Le Galès and Moreno-Fuentes, 2015). At the local level, these strategies include choosing to live in exclusive gated communities, segregating themselves from other social groups and not using urban public services. Examining 'exit strategies' studies the extent to which urban elites choose to retreat from the public sphere in relation to two important aspects: their social networks; and the use of public services. The term 'partial exist' stresses that wealthy residents can choose to withdraw from certain public services, such as local schools for their children (Andreotti, Le Galès and Moreno-Fuentes, 2015), and reduce their social interaction in local public spaces without withdrawing entirely from all services. As gated communities are normally considered the retreat of wealthy residents from public residential space, in this research the 'partial exit' perspective can deepen understanding of the extent to which residents in gated communities choose to separate themselves from the wider public realm in terms of their social networks and use of services. It can also enlighten us about how gated communities, as exclusive residential spaces, serve to promote and define a specific form of social capital.

2.5 Conclusion

The first section of this chapter reviewed the worldwide literature on gated communities, showing that different authors have highlighted different characteristics of gated communities based on their own knowledge, background and research settings. However, most researchers have highlighted three common characteristics: first, the physical boundaries of housing developments that exclude outsiders; second, the restricted and privatised space and the exclusive nature of the services provided; and third, the legal and social code and agreements inside the community. It is important

to note that although the social composition of gated communities is complex and even some poor neighbourhoods are constructed with gates and walls, most researchers see gated communities as the exclusive housing estates provided for the wealthy groups or middle-class residents. This is especially important in research into gated communities in China because most urban neighbourhoods are already gated, such as urban villages, traditional work-unit compounds and economically affordable housing. But most of the research into gated communities in China focuses on high-end gated commodity housing estates with exclusive neighbourhood services and large-scale landscape and greenery. This importantly informs the choice of study cases in this research.

The emergence of gated communities is due to both supply and demand side causes. The supply-side causes include economic and cultural globalisation, political and economic neoliberalism, and the reduction and withdrawal of public provision such as housing by state; while demand-side causes include the fear of crime, the pursuit of high-end and exclusive neighbourhood space and services, and the search for privacy and high social status. Most of these causes are behind the major phenomenon occurring in many countries worldwide, and this is the reason why gated communities have attracted so much academic attention. For example, although the political and economic contexts of China and America are quite different, what is strikingly similar is the neoliberal shift in economic systems and more market-oriented urban governance. However, particular attention needs to be paid to the subtle differences in the urban contexts and the complexities of local history and culture in order to give a more nuanced analysis of gated communities (Pow, 2009a).

There are both positive and negative implications of gated communities. From the economic perspective, some researchers indicate that gated communities provide a new and efficient 'club goods' mode of service to deliver housing estates and community services and increase housing and environmental qualities. In addition, some scholars argue that gated communities contribute to civic engagement in political participation and increase the integration of insider residents. However, most researchers hold the pessimistic view that gated communities bring about social

tensions, social inequalities, social segregation, privatisation of public space and undermine ideas of democracy and citizenship. These perspectives reveal the complexities of urban development and provide fertile ground to view, investigate, and reflect on the implications of these emerging housing estates.

The second section of this chapter investigated the developments of gated communities in Chinese contexts and academic discussions of them. It reveals that gating and gated residential developments have existed in China for over two thousand years. Thus, people in Chinese cities are quite familiar with urban housing estates and may not question the emergence of gates and walls in contemporary cities. In the past, gates were used to demarcate the residential space of family/clans and work-units and did not aim to forge social segregation of different income groups. However, it is crucial to recognise that the underlying functions and meanings of gates and walls in today's commodity housing estates in China have been transformed. They now represent the spatial sorting of people with different incomes and signal the emergence of new urban rich who are eager to pursue and protect their safety, privacy, social homogeneity, modern lifestyle and class status.

The review of Chinese literature on gated communities shows that early research mainly focused on the causes and development of gated communities and paid attention to the economic transformation of China and the role of state in promoting the development of gated communities (Huang, 2006). Until recently, more research has stressed the implications of gated communities in terms of lack of accessibility, social relations, social inequality, social segregation, urban governance and public participation. Although gated communities have developed in China for around three decades, the research on gated communities in China is in its initial stages and relatively less developed than in Western countries. This thesis seeks to contribute to the Chinese literature on gated communities in three ways. First, it aims to understand the social integration and exclusiveness of gated communities on the broader neighbourhood scale through a group-level perspective. Second, it explores the motivations and aspirations for gated living by residents in contemporary Chinese cities, focusing on the discourses of fear of crime and the search for social homogeneity.

Third, it seeks to understand the social-spatial implications of gated communities by investigating the mobility patterns of gated community residents and their social networks on a broader urban scale.

The third section of the chapter explores contemporary urban contexts in China. The emergence and development of gated communities needs to be understood and considered within the changing urban contexts of Chinese economic reform, political decentralisation and urban development. The demise of the central planning system of the Maoist period and the economic reform initiated by Chairman Deng have restructured the Chinese economy from collective forms of ownership and production towards the growth of individual and private ownership and introduced market logic to the allocation and circulation of goods, services, capital and labour (Wu, Xu and Yeh, 2006). The decentralisation of the political system in Chinese cities has liberalised local governments with more fiscal revenue and governance power over land development, which increases their use of pro-growth and entrepreneurial strategies (Wu, 2002). These strategies include the regeneration of old and derelict housing areas in the city centre with CBD and high-end housing estates, and the development of master-planned upscale housing estates in the suburban areas. Housing reform policies since the 1980s have announced the retreat of public housing provision by the Chinese government. The neoliberal shift in the Chinese economic system has brought about rapidly increasing income inequalities over the past 30 years. All these tremendous transformations of economic, political, urban and social contexts in Chinese cities have paved the way for the rapid development of private commodity housing estates, many of which are in the form of gated communities.

The last section discussed the key concepts and theories that inform and support this research into gated communities and their social-spatial implications. These concepts and theories are synthesised into six themes: the middle-class; public/private discourse; group relationships; fear of crime; mobility and social capital. Some of these themes are commonly discussed by current scholars, and some are from other disciplines without being fully discussed in the literature of gated communities. These diverse themes and concepts are brought together to serve the main aims of this

research: What is the social life and relationships of the emerging urban rich (middle class) living in gated communities, both within and outside gated communities? What are the social-spatial implications of gated communities at the wider urban scale regarding residents' mobility patterns and activity space? These themes and concepts form important analytical and theoretical significance and contribute to understanding the integration/exclusion and connection/disconnection between affluent residents living inside gated communities and other social groups in the wider public realms. As most of these theories are developed in the Western context, when applying them in non-Western countries, it is important to carefully consider their meanings and applications and pay particular attention to the local contexts and particularities of specific Chinese cities (Pow, 2015). After illustrating the theoretical framework, the next chapter will focus on the research design and methodology of this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology and research design

This chapter introduces the design of this research and how detailed research methods were employed to collect and analyse the data. The first section indicates the theoretical perspectives of this research and the rationale for adopting a qualitative approach and case study. The second part illustrates the reasons for the selections of specific cases and the sampling strategy, and briefly introduces the selected cases. The third section reviews the methods used in data collection and how these methods were used to address the research questions. Section 4 discusses the methods employed in the data analysis process and how the data collected in the fieldwork are transformed into research findings. The final section discusses ethical issues emerging from the research design the data collection.

3.1 Theoretical perspectives, methodology and researcher's identity

Ritchie et al. (2013) suggest that research topics are created by researchers, often based on their individual experience and initial ideas about topics. This description is quite similar to my experience. My interest in the topic of 'gated communities' did not directly come from my learning experience in urban planning and related academic works, but more from my own lived experience. Here I briefly introduce how I began to think about this topic and come up with my research interest.

Although Chinese citizens are accustomed to the phenomenon of 'gating' in cities because gates have existed as normal architectural forms in China for more than 2000 years, they are not familiar with the recent term 'gated community'. As described in Chapter 1, in February 2016, a government document called "Instructions of the State Council on Strengthening the Administration of Urban Planning and Construction" was published by the State Council of China, which indicated that new residential developments should promote an open aspect and that existing gated communities should be gradually opened up. This government policy has brought the term 'gated community' into public discussion, and many urban residents have participated in

these discussions. The term 'gated community' in China primarily refers to those privately developed commodity housing estates (*fengbi xiaoqu*) which emerged in the 1990s after the withdrawal of public provision of housing by state-owned work units. Thus, gated communities are usually called 'gated commodity housing estates' in Chinese literature. The outcome of the governmental policy was surprising: most of the urban residents who lived in gate communities refused to accept the government policy of 'opening up' and justified gated communities in terms of the provision of safe neighbourhood environments and the protection of private property. The release of this housing policy and the fierce resistance by urban residents prompted my interest in understanding how these housing estates have dominated the Chinese built environment over two decades; why the government sought to knock down the gates and walls; and why people are obsessed with protecting gated communities and refuse to implement this housing policy.

My residential experience also forms an essential part of my research interest. The end of the provision of housing by the public work units and the rapid development of private gated commodity housing estates both happened in the 1990s. I had lived in a traditional work-unit compound until I was ten years old and then my family moved to a private gated community. I was deeply involved in this housing transformation and have experienced how moving into a gated community changed my neighbourhood life and neighbourhood relationships. In the traditional work-unit compound, my parents and I had close contact with our neighbours and were part of an integrated neighbourhood. For example, I often played basketball and football with other children in the playground and was invited to have dinner with my neighbours. Although some researchers indicate that these solid social bonds in traditional work-unit compounds are based on the public familiarity and social affiliations in their workplace (Bray, 2005; Wu, 2005), I remember that we also had close relationships with families who were not from the same work-unit as us. The social composition of a traditional work-unit is rather mixed, from senior officials in the government to ordinary blue-collar workers and manual labourers. But after we moved to the gated community, my family and I had only weak contact with our neighbours, and I seldom participated in neighbourhood activities. I only knew some of the households in my building and didn't

know other residents at all. Many homeowners sold or rented their houses to other residents and did not have attachments to their neighbourhoods. It felt like the traditional cohesive and robust neighbourhood relationships and colourful neighbourhood life had disappeared entirely from my life. I also remember that in the traditional work-unit compound, a thief came to steal a motorcycle, but he was found by a resident and many other residents voluntarily ran out of their homes to stop and catch the thief. After this incident, I was grateful to these brave neighbours and felt safe living in this neighbourhood. This is similar to what Jacobs (1961) called 'eyes on the street' in densely connected social environments which together create a 'sense of security' in the urban neighbourhood.

In contrast, gated communities with more advanced security apparatus and security guards have never created this kind of sense of security for me. According to my own experience, moving to a gated community largely transformed my neighbourhood life in terms of neighbourhood relationships, neighbourhood participation, the sense of security and belonging. I felt that some of these transformations were negative and undesirable, and some are positive (the improvement in housing space and quality), and I was also amazed these gated housing estates can bring major changes to neighbourhood life. This also triggered my interest to form a deeper understanding of why most residents are fond of gated communities and how gated communities shape/reshape neighbourhood relationships and social life.

My personal experience and knowledge formed the basis of my research interest in gated communities in China. Although what researchers bring to their research from their own experiences and identities have been conventionally considered by social researchers to be bias, Maxwell (2005, p. 45) suggests that 'separating your research from other aspects of your life cuts you off from major resources of insights, hypotheses and validity checks'. Strauss (1987) also indicates that individual experiential data should not be ignored because there is potential valuable information inside. Thus, I have tended to deploy a range of personal experiences and opinions about gated communities as part of the basis of my understanding of the issues covered in my research and as potential sources of understanding, insights and hypotheses, such as

my perspectives on the transformation of neighbourhood relationships and ideas from other residents in the Internet forums.

The above paragraphs discuss how I arrived at the research topic of gated communities. The next step was to set up the 'intellectual puzzle' about this research interest and the wider topic. For Mason (2017), intellectual puzzles are those questions about the social world that you are curious about and need careful and detailed explorations and explanations. She further suggests that one's 'intellectual puzzle' should help a researcher to situate the intellectual and contribution of their work and should be positioned in the active and investigative engagement between social researchers and the world they seek to understand (Mason, 2017). These descriptions of the intellectual puzzle highlight two fundamental characteristics. First, an intellectual puzzle should not be those questions that can be easily found evidence for and readily answered. Instead, researchers should combine their own ontological and epistemological perspectives into their research questions and form an intellectual puzzle that needs to be carefully investigated and examined to generate the answers to it. Second, the intellectual puzzle is born in the process of social researchers trying to understand the social world, and thus it is shaped and influenced by the research context and other researchers' opinions and research. This is why researchers need to carry out a literature review before designing and conducting their research. These two characteristics show the difference between intellectual puzzles or research questions, and normal questions. The exploration of existing literature and forming of research questions have been presented and discussed in the first two chapters of this thesis. Hence, the following sections begin to discuss the theoretical perspectives and methodology of this research.

Theoretical perspectives and methodology

This research seeks to understand the motives of residents of gated communities for choosing gated living; their changing neighbourhood lives and relationships in gated communities; and their disengagement/disaffiliation from other social groups in terms of their mobility patterns and social networks. The ontological properties of these

research questions are people's motivations, perspectives, accounts, opinions, narratives, social practice, interactions, social relationships and activity space. Thus, from the epistemological perspective, it is helpful to adopt an interpretivist approach which suggests that 'knowledge is produced by exploring the social world of the people being studied, focusing on their meanings and interpretations' within a particular historical and social context (Blaikie, 2007). In the meantime, researching and understanding people's 'lived experiences' is crucial to unfolding the connection between social, cultural, and historical aspects of people's lives in order to see the circumstances under which particular actions occur (Ritchie *et al.*, 2013). In this research, understanding individuals' and households' motivations, desires and opinions in relation to gated communities could help us better unfold the demand-side cause of the popularity of gated communities in contemporary Chinese cities. Unpacking residents' social lives and relationships within and outside gated communities also provides us with a lens through which to better understand how the prevalence of gated communities have transformed people's neighbourhood relationships and social networks in Chinese society. Through investigating residents' mobility patterns and social networks, a more comprehensive understanding can be gained of the extent to which middle-class residents in gated communities not only separate themselves from other social groups in their residential space but also actively pursue orchestrated strategies in their mobility and use of public services to distance themselves from the wider public.

Based on these theoretical perspectives, the research questions focused on the 'lived experience' of residents, including both in gated communities and on a broader urban scale; their social lives and relationships; their interpretation of motives for gated living; and their understanding of social interaction and public space. To this end, I have mainly adopted qualitative research methods because qualitative research is often seen as being a more 'naturalistic, interpretive approach, concerned with exploring phenomena from the interior and taking the perspectives and accounts of research participants as a starting point' (Ritchie *et al.*, 2013, p.3). In this research, the advantages of the qualitative approach help create a more in-depth understanding of people's motivations, experiences, perceptions and social practices related to gated

communities, and to unfold the underlying transforming social relations, urban change and social-spatial implications of gated communities. Compared with quantitative research techniques and approaches, qualitative research is more associated with data involving accounts, words, texts, and images rather than numbers, and the volume and richness of qualitative data are highlighted through the use of distinctive research methods and approaches (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). To take advantage of qualitative research approaches, this study employed different types of qualitative research methods that involve interviews, participant and non-participant observation, and document analysis to get a more profound understanding of residents' motivations, opinions, perspectives, social relationships and social practices. The choice and use of these methods is further discussed in the third section of this chapter.

A case study approach was applied in this study to explore and understand the richness and diversity of housing aspirations, social life, social relationships and social practice of residents living in gated communities in China. As suggested by Denscombe (2014, p. 24), 'case studies focus on one (or just a few) instances of a particular phenomenon with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance'. Yin (2009, p.4) also indicates that intensive case studies allow in-depth analysis of different agents' motivations, strategies, interpretations and interactions and deepen our understanding of complex social phenomena by retaining the 'holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events'. The characteristics and advantages of case studies are: the forming in-depth accounts of events, relationships and experiences; suitability for small-scale intensive qualitative research; prescribing the phenomenon in a specific context; and allowing for the use of multiple data-collection methods. Thus, the case studies approach fits well with this project in the following aspects. First, this research seeks to understand the motivations of residents of gated communities, their social relationships and social practices. These are complex issues and highly subjective, so in-depth analysis provides a more comprehensive understanding. Secondly, according to the literature review, the motives for living in gated communities and how these developments shape people's lives and social practices are highly context sensitive. Therefore, case studies are used to situate this project in the social and urban

background of Chinese cities to create a context-based analysis of this urban phenomenon in China. Thirdly, case studies are convenient for using multiple data-collection methods to get a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the chosen cases. Thus, multiple qualitative methods were employed in this research, such as interviews, observations and document analysis, to create a full-scale understanding of the chosen gated communities in China. In order to deepen the understanding of gated living in different geographical circumstances, multiple case studies (Hafiz, 2008) were examined in this research, including two high-end commodity gated communities located in different segments of the urban fabric –one in the city centre and the other in more peripheral areas. As described by Ritchie et al. (2013), the comparison between different cases is an important element in qualitative research design, and its value lies in enhancing our understanding rather than measuring differences. In this project, exploring the housing aspirations, social relationships, and social practices in different geographical contexts will deepen our comprehension of the social outcomes shaped by diverse built environments and grasp urban changes in different geographical spaces.

Positionality and identity

Some scholars argue that when conducting qualitative interviews, the positionality and identity of the researcher in relation to the interviewees may largely influence the access to target interviewees and what kind of information you can receive (Cochrane, 1998; McDowell, 1998). During the research process, my identity as a native Chinese citizen born and bred in Zhanjiang city (the research site) has given me a series of identity advantages. First, being conversant in both Mandarin and Cantonese and several local dialects has helped reduce potential obstacles to oral communication. Many residents in Zhanjiang city, as a relatively underdeveloped city with less Mandarin learning, cannot understand Mandarin and often know only a little Cantonese. Thus, I have been able to fully understand their language and local dialect without communication barriers during the interview process which has helped me to better understand their viewpoints and interpretations of their life and experience. Second, I was considered as an ‘insider’ by most of the interviewees, which is associated with both positive and negative effects. The positive effects were that I can quickly build up

relationships and trust with interviewees, so they felt comfortable discussing and sharing their opinions and values with me, including commenting on the less-desirable aspects of their neighbourhood and urban life. The negative point was that when they described their social life and answered the interview questions, they sometimes left out details and basic information because they assumed I would be familiar with these. Moreover, some interviewees were reluctant to present their general ideas and opinions because they had preconceptions that the interviewer was an expert and a local resident who are quite knowledgeable and familiar with the 'true' answer to those questions. Third, I am fortunate to have some friends, relatives and acquaintances who helped me get access to potentially hard-to-reach interviewees such as residents in different exclusive gated communities, government officers in the Street Office and Residential Committee, managers of real estate companies and housing developers.

Based on these positive and negative implications of positionality and identity, it was crucial for me, as the researcher and interviewer, to adopt the strengths of my position and identity and avoid any shortcomings. As a local resident who has experienced living in a gated community for more than eight years and is quite familiar with the local culture, I tried to be neutral in exploring the gated communities in Zhanjiang city and avoid using my own experiences as the potential 'answer' to those questions. This helped to prevent the danger of seeing myself as 'omnipotent' (Pile, 1991) in the research process. The reasons are two-fold. First, to have an in-depth understanding of the social world, the researcher should detach themselves from the objective social environments to see the holistic and real social entity (Elias, 1978). Second, the gated communities I researched have characteristics like those of gated communities described in the global literature than the characteristics of my particular housing estate. For example, the gated communities in this project contain large areas of private space with exclusive and high-end neighbourhood services, artificial landscapes and greenery, and more advanced and multiple security apparatus. Thus, during the research process, I positioned myself as someone who knew very little about the context (McDowell, 1998) when discussing and interviewing residents of these gated communities and sought to capture their original and comprehensive understanding and interpretations.

In the meantime, my positionality changed during my initial stage of interviewing the residents in gated communities. At the beginning, when I was working as a volunteer in the Street Office, I tried to present myself to local government officers as a 'co-operator', seeing to gain the trust of these interviewees. However, I found that in this position, many interviewees were reluctant to discuss negative aspects of their neighbourhood life and social relationships. For example, they refused to talk about uncivilised behaviour in their communities and tensions between themselves and other residents and management companies. Instead, they tended to describe social relations inside the communities as solid, harmonious and reciprocal. Although my self-presentation as a co-operator with local government gained trust from the interviewees, it created an imbalanced power relationship between me and the interviewees (Cochrane, 1998). Thus, to create a good image for the local government, the interviewees deliberately covered up the negative aspects of their experiences, which hindered me from understanding their lived social reality. Therefore, after that I presented myself purely as a PhD student in a foreign University who knew little about local social lives because I had been in foreign countries for several years. This positionality change had many positive outcomes in the interview process. First, the power relationships between me and the interviewees became more balanced. This helped to concede the rights of the interviewees and allow them to fully speak for and present themselves (Pile, 1991). Second, they were more willing to share their opinions and understanding of their social life, social practice and relationships without viewing me as an expert and local resident who knew about everything. Being aware of and carefully dealing with identity and power relationships between researchers and those researched can contribute to advancing the research process and exploring the comprehensive social reality of the research subject.

3.2 Case selection

Selection of cases and research location

As Denscombe (2014) suggests, a case study approach calls for the researcher to choose one example, or just a few examples, from a wide range of instances that are being investigated, and this specific example is deliberately selected for its unique characteristics. By detailed and in-depth analysis of these cases through different lenses, case studies allow the researcher to have a profound understanding of individuals, communities or phenomena within their specific context, using a variety of data sources (Hafiz, 2008). Thus, the selection of cases should be precise, rigorous and careful. When choosing the cases in this project, the most important criterion was that these communities should meet the definition of gated communities in the mainstream academic literature. This is particularly important in China because most of the neighbourhoods in contemporary Chinese cities are gated and walled. As described by Webster et al. (2005), walled and gated developments in Chinese cities are adapted to all income levels – from the poor still living in gated urban villages and courtyard housing to middle-income condo dwellers, to the rich in Californian-style residential theme parks, Pow (2009, p. 12) critically indicates that ‘gating is a necessary though not sufficient condition for defining gated communities in China’. Thus, Chinese researchers tend to use the term ‘gated commodity housing estates’ to describe the types of gated communities that are similar to those described in Western literature (Douglass, Wissink and van Kempen, 2012; He, 2013). Drawing from the definitions of gated communities in the Western literature (Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Atkinson and Blandy, 2005) surveyed in this research, I define gated communities as commodity housing estates with gates and walls: exclusive and high-end neighbourhood services; privatised landscapes and greenery; and social-legal frameworks for self-governance; and where lifestyle, prestige and security control are prominent in the design, construction, advertising and sales processes. These types of gated communities are distinct forms of territorialities in which the gates, walls, security apparatus and private safeguards together demarcate both the boundaries the community and keep outsiders from entering their private neighbourhood spaces. Most of these types of gated communities are designed as self-contained neighbourhoods and managed by professional management companies overseeing the operation of the community

services such as stores, fitness centres and basketball courts, which aims to reduce the social contact with the outside world (Pow, 2009).

As this project seeks to explore the neighbourhood relationships inside gated communities and the adjacent neighbourhood areas, the selected gated communities had been built for a certain period to form a stable community relationship. For example, in the preparation stage, when I consulted some high-end gated communities built in the past two years, only a few residents who bought the properties have just moved into these estates and it would have been hard to investigate the neighbourhood relationships in these neighbourhoods. The selected gated communities were also chosen for being located near other types of communities in order to understand the social relations, values and interactions between different social groups.

Another important criterion for choosing the two research cases in central city and suburban area separately was the selection of different types of urban built environment. The literature review shows that built environments have considerable impacts in shaping neighbourhood relationships and people's social practices and values. For example, Manzi and Smith-Bowers (2005) have illustrated how, in some deprived areas of London, gated communities enable the wealthy to feel safely separated from the surrounding areas, but at the same time, can also create the foundation for certain levels of social integration between a gated community and the original residents. Blandy (2008) also suggests that in order to understand the impact of gated communities on social relationships, the size of the developments and the built and social environment of the surrounding neighbourhoods are crucial factors. Based on an investigation of gated communities in England, Blandy (2008) indicates that the 'insertion' of a gated community into an affluent neighbourhood may create less disruption, but in mixed neighbourhoods that pride themselves on being open and diverse areas, the development of a gated community may cause resentment and social secession. Bauman (2001, p. 115) similarly argues that the value of living with similar people is enhanced if the surrounding community is seen as hostile and the feeling of belonging and security is based on the exclusion of other residents in adjacent communities. From these studies and research, it could be understood that

the surrounding built environment has a significant influence on the forming of social relationships and values in gated communities. Therefore, the two cases selected in this study are in different urban areas with contrasting built environments. The first is located in the city centre where most affluent people live, and the second is located in the suburban area where poor people congregate. Through investigating these two gated communities, we can have a more profound understanding of how different built and social environments influence the urban life of those affluent residents inside.

In selecting suitable cases for this study of Chinese gated communities, I created a list of necessary criteria:

- The types of gated communities should be high-end commodity housing estates rather than public housing such as work-unit compounds or urban villages with gates.
- The gated communities must be gated and walled and have been built for long enough that social relationships and networks had developed.
- The gated communities should be located close to other types of communities to explore social interactions and relations between different social groups.
- The gated communities should be large enough to have formed dense and complex neighbourhood relationships, and also to provide a large enough number of residents to interview.
- One community was selected in a city centre location, and the other was selected in a suburban area.

After establishing the criteria for selecting gated communities, the location of this project needed to be confirmed. This project aims to investigate and understand gated communities in China through case study, so a specific city and province in China needed to be chosen as the research site. Guangdong Province was chosen as the research location as it has been at the frontier of economic, political and housing reform over the past 30 years. For example, in the initial stage of economic reform in China, 14 cities were designated as 'open cities' to set up special economic zones and attract

foreign investment, and five cities of these were in Guangdong Province. After the housing reform of the 1980s, most of the newly-built commodity housing estates were constructed in economically-developed regions such as Guangdong Province and Shanghai (Miao, 2003). Thus, a wide range of gated commodity housing estates could be identified in Guangdong province, including many high-end gated communities. Moreover, Guangdong province contains the largest private-sector proportions of all the provinces in China, reaching 52.6% in 2018 (Guangdong Yearbook, 2019). Therefore, it is an ideal site for understanding the privatisation of urban facilities and services and how urban residents make use of these emerging private services in contemporary Chinese cities.

The next step was to choose a specific city as the research location. In the beginning, Guangzhou was chosen as the research location because large numbers of high-end gated communities could be identified there, and in addition, the educational institutions and resources in Guangzhou would be available to assist my research. However, during the review of current literature of gated communities in China, it was found that most research in China has been conducted in megacities and big cities in China such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Guilin and Wenzhou. This is understandable because these cities are well-developed with large numbers of academic institutions and political and human resources to support academic research. Nevertheless, these developed megacities and big cities cannot fully represent urban life and social reality in all the 663 cities of China. The urban built environments; the development of gated communities; the ownership of private cars; the public transportation systems; the development of homeowner associations; and public policy regarding housing and community are quite different between these big cities and other mid-tier and low-tier cities. These differences may largely influence the construction and distribution of gated communities, their urban built environments and how they shape people's social practices and understanding. Therefore, it is necessary to fully explore and understand the meanings and social implications of gated communities in diverse urban contexts without solely focusing on experience in big cities. As suggested by Robinson (2006), in recent decades the field of urban studies has been divided into the 'first world' and 'third world', with theorisation concerning cities of the

Western world driven by idealised Western constructions of global cities while those cities in the poor and developing world are understood through developmental frameworks. To be more specific, traditional urban studies tend to divide cities into modern cities, (the sites of the production of urban theory), and developmental cities (the objects of developmental intervention) (Robinson, 2006). What she suggests is a more comparative urbanism which highlights not only knowledge derived from metropolitan areas that may influence the urban research of other cities, but also those analyses from 'third world' cities that may reshape our theories of Chicago or Paris (Robinson, 2006). Several examples of research into gated communities have already used these broader comparative strategies in their analyses (see, for example, Glasze, Webster and Frantz, 2004; Atkinson and Blandy, 2005; Bagaeen and Uduku, 2010). Following these ideas of comparative urbanism and viewing all cities as 'ordinary', this study seeks to explore and understand the phenomenon of the spread of gated communities in a relatively underdeveloped and small city in the Chinese context. It aims to contribute to the literature on gated communities in China emphasising the complexity and diversity of urban experiences and cases.

This consideration of research locations and case selection led to Zhanjiang being finally chosen as the city for the research program because it fulfils all the criteria for case selection. First, in the past 20 years, a considerable number of high-end private gated communities have been built in Zhanjiang city centre, which include prominent characteristics of their Western counterparts such as prestige, luxury lifestyle, security apparatus, and exclusive services (Blakely and Snyder, 1997). In recent years, several real estate magnates in China, such as Hengda and Wanke, began to develop housing projects in suburban and central urban areas in Zhanjiang because of the lower land price than in large cities, and this has promoted urban sprawl of the suburban areas. Thus, the impact of the development of gated communities in the city centre and suburban areas could be investigated and compared, and the influence of these different built environments could be further explored. Second, as urban development in Zhanjiang is relatively slow compared to megacities in China, it is easier to find large numbers of urban villages, traditional open-style communities and work-unit compounds in the same areas as the gated communities. This type of mixed

neighbourhood environment enables us to further understand how gated communities influence the social relations between and people's opinions of different social groups and whether social exclusion and segregation exists between these various social groups.



Figure 1: cityscape and open spaces of Zhanjiang (source: Baidu Image)

Finally, two high-end gated communities were chosen as the cases for this research according to the criteria discussed above. In the two months before the fieldwork, I did some desk work to identify a number of gated communities as possible research sites, such as Nanguo, Meilin, Yujing, and Dexing. However, when I arrived in Zhanjiang and began investigating these communities, none of them seemed suitable. There are several reasons for this. For example, 'Nanguo' community was built in what was a suburban area of Zhanjiang, but now the area is well-developed and will be included in the urban area of Zhanjiang in the next Master Plan. Thus, it did not meet the criterion as a suburban gated community. 'Yujing' community is a newly-built gated community, but few residents were living in it, so it was hard to find enough interviewees for this study. Eventually, the two gated communities, Wanhao Shijia and Henda Oasis, were chosen as the research cases. First and foremost, these two gated communities fulfil all the five criteria. Second, house prices were among the highest in Zhanjiang, reaching almost 18,000 Yuan (about £2,010 GBP) per square meter in 2016. Thus, they were both considered ideal housing estates only affordable for rich residents with high social status. Third, the housing development companies for both communities are famous and successful enterprises, so the quality of housing and community services are first-rate. Fourth, they are equipped with the most advanced security systems, such as fingerprint scanners, facial recognition, imposing gates and walls,

and private security patrols. These elements of architectural style and built form give outsiders the impression of a fortress and citadel, similar to gated communities in other countries (Caldeira, 2000; Davis, 2006). Lastly, not only emerging middle-class residents but also some famous and ‘successful’ people live in these communities, such as senior government officials, private entrepreneurs, and local celebrities. Thus, they are considered residential spaces for the congregation of ‘successful people’ (Pow and Kong, 2007).

Table 1 shows some key data of these two selected gated communities, including their location, floor area, number of households, and community services. Figure 1 shows some physical characteristics, including grandiose gates with Western architectural style such as the circular Roman arch and Baroque columns, man-made landscape like an artificial lake and fountain, and a luxury entertainment centre with upscale services like the seasonally-heated indoor swimming pool.

Name	Wanhao Shijia	Hengda Oasis
Location	City centre	Suburban area
Area	0.215 km ²	0.35 km ²
Numbers of buildings	22	28
Numbers of households	2876	1873
Community services	Swimming pool, basketball court, kindergarten, leisure centre, supermarket.	Basketball court, kindergarten, store, barbershop, restaurant, entertainment centre.

Table 1 : Key data for the selected case study gated communities

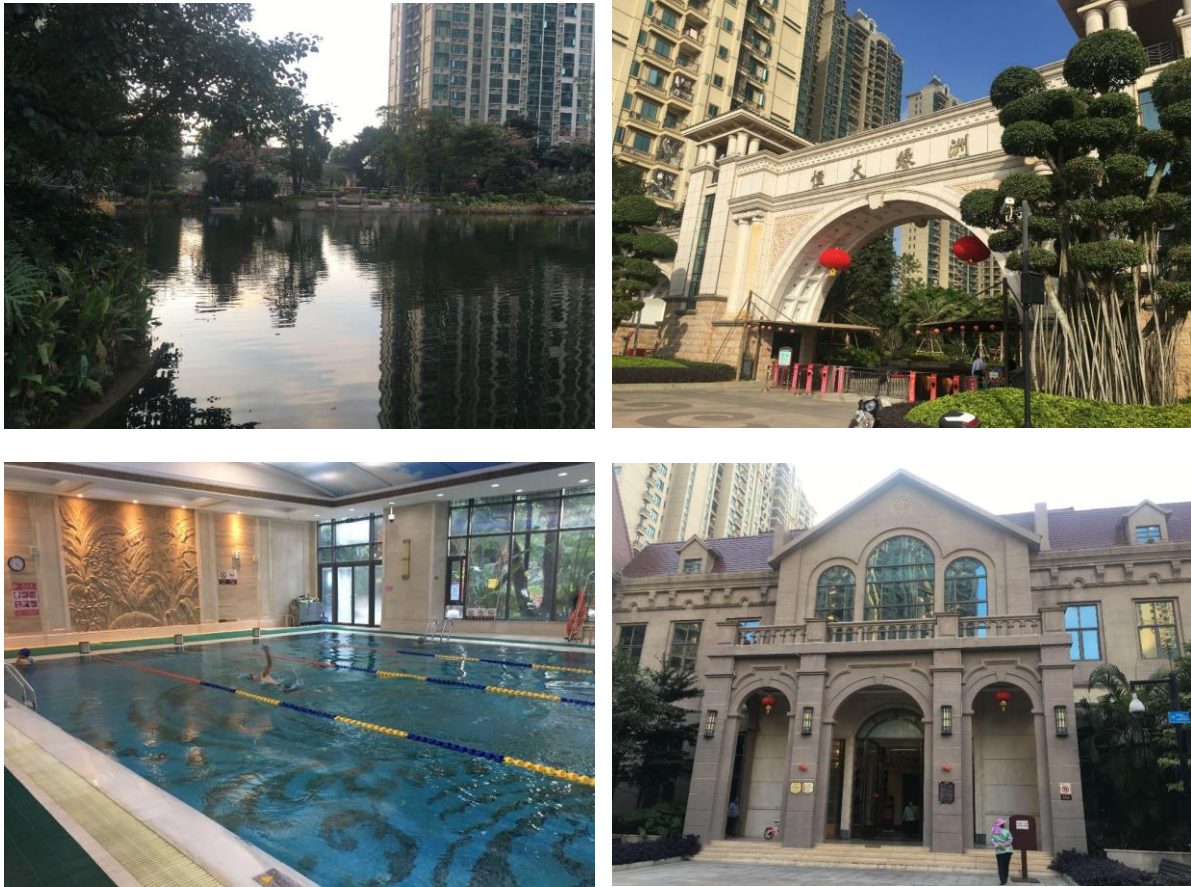


Figure 1: Physical characteristics of the selected gated communities

Here I briefly introduce the geographical contexts of the research case study areas. Guangdong province is located in the southeast of mainland China, and it is the most developed province in China, with its GDP reaching 1.52 trillion dollars in 2019 (China Statistical Yearbook 2019) surpassing the whole GDP of Australia. However, the development of cities in Guangdong Province is very uneven. The Pearl River Delta, including megacities such as Shenzhen and Guangzhou, is the most developed area, and the northern and western parts of Guangdong Province are relatively underdeveloped. Zhanjiang is located in the west part of Guangdong, and its GDP is ranked 13th among the 20 cities in Guangdong (Guangdong Statistical Yearbook 2019). Xiashan District is the city centre of Zhanjiang, concentrating economic

activities such as the port and fishery industry, while Potou District is the suburban area of Zhanjiang which only began to be developed since 2017.

Figure 2 below shows satellite images of the two selected gated communities. It can be seen that the 'Wanhao Shijia' Community, on the left, is located in the city centre with well-developed urban infrastructure and more compact built environments of other residential areas and urban green spaces. It is a very mixed area and the case study community is surrounded by other high-end gated communities, traditional open communities and urban villages. In comparison, the 'Hengda Oasis' community, on the right, is located in a relatively undeveloped suburban area with little urban infrastructure and few services except for a newly-built school and several other newly-built gated communities. It is more like an affluent gated community inserted into the original semi-rural deprived areas with large areas of farmland, derelict land and villages. The striking contrast between the built environments of the cases helps further understanding of how different built environments shape social relations, values and social practices of residents inside and outside gated communities.



Figure 2: Satellite images and locations of the two selected gated communities (Source: Google Earth)

Sampling strategy and selection bias

After the research cases were chosen, a sampling strategy was subsequently developed. As suggested by Ritchie (2013), qualitative research normally uses non-probability methods for choosing the sample for a study, and units are deliberately chosen to reflect the particular features of the sampled population. Moreover, the process of acquiring qualitative data is expensive because interviews are time-consuming and must be transcribed, and texts need more time to be analysed compared with quantitative data (Lewis-Beck, Bryman and Liao, 2003). Therefore, qualitative researchers cannot afford the time and energy to collect large amounts of data that are less relevant to the research questions. Thus, in this research design, non-probability sampling was employed as the sampling strategy.

Snowball sampling is the primary sampling method during the research process. It is a method for finding research subjects in which the initial subject provides the researcher with the name and contact details of another suitable subject who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on (Paul Vogt and Johnson, 2011). Snowball sampling is most advantageous in overcoming issues of identifying concealed populations such as criminals, isolated groups or and social elites (Faugier and Sargeant, 1997). Atkinson and Flint (2004b) further suggest that snowball sampling can be used for two primary reasons: first, it offers practical advantages for contacting hard-to-reach populations, especially for qualitative and explorative research. Second, it can be applied as a more formal methodology for investigating populations which are difficult to identify through 'descending methods' such as household surveys.

Snowball sampling was chosen because it fits well with this project in several ways. First, this project mainly focuses on qualitative research methods and analysis, so snowball sampling helps to identify the suitable interviewees. Second, the research subjects of this project are residents in upscale gated communities. Most of these residents are affluent urbanites, who are few in number and need a certain degree of trust to initiate contact (Atkinson and Flint, 2004b). Therefore, snowball sampling not only helps to identify these social elites but also build up the relationship and trust with interviewees through recommendations from their acquaintances. Third, gated communities have the intrinsic physical characteristics of excluding outsiders from entering the neighbourhood, let alone interviewing residents. Many researchers (Low, 2003; Pow, 2009) have indicated that some residents of gated communities hold hostile attitudes toward unknown outsiders and regard them as criminals and potential threats to their neighbourhoods. Thus, snowball sampling provides an efficient way to 'cross' the gates and walls, create contact with residents, and investigate their social life and experience.

The problem of selection bias is the main drawback to snowball sampling because samples are not randomly selected, which may limit the validity and representativeness of the sample (van Meter, 1990). Snowball samples may also be biased towards including target individuals with inter-relationships while ignoring those who are not

connected to the networks that researchers have access to (Kaplan, Korf and Sterk, 1987; van Meter, 1990). Selection bias can be partly addressed by enlarging the sample size and replicating the results to strengthen the validity and general applicability of the outcomes (Atkinson and Flint, 2004b). To reduce selection bias of snowball sampling, quota sampling was also used in this project to select the residents of gated communities. Quota sampling ensures that 'certain characteristics of a population sample will be represented to the exact extent that the investigator desires' (Acharya *et al.*, 2013). In this project, the main quota criteria were age, gender, occupational status, income level, household types and household registration status. These quota criteria were important factors of possible influence on the motivations for gated living and residents' social relations and practices. For example, during an investigation of gated communities in the US, Low (2003) found that retirees were particularly vulnerable to the fluctuation of the values of home and services because they were living on fixed incomes. Thus, gated communities were attractive to them because they considered that the controlled environments and co-managed exclusive neighbourhood services would retain the value of their home. And, as older people, they also recognised that gates and walls could provide protection for their personal safety (Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Low, 2003). In the interview selection for the case studies in Zhanjiang, household registration status was taken into account because it has a significant effect on social values and social interrelationship in Chinese urban contexts (Chan and Zhang, 1999; Pow, 2007; Tomba, 2010). Many urbanites consider migrant workers with rural household status to be uncivilised and dangerous social groups. Many of them cannot get access to private housing resources due to their rural status (Chan and Zhang, 1999; Wang, Zhang and Wu, 2016; Wang *et al.*, 2020). Thus, different quotas were established to complement the snowball sampling during the case selection process, which helped to ensure the reflection of diversity in the researched population and avoided the repetitive and excessive investigation of one particular type of population (Ritchie *et al.*, 2013).

Besides selection bias, 'gatekeeper bias' is also an issue in snowball sampling. As described by Groger *et al.* (1999) when they tried to take nursing home staff as gatekeepers to access caregivers in their research, the gatekeepers sometimes

refused to provide information about those they were caring for. Thus, what the researcher can gain access to and what types of information and knowledge can be collected depends on the opinions and positionality of the gatekeepers. Similar issues also happened in the initial stage of this project when a manager working in the gated community management company was enthusiastic about recommending lots of interviewees to me. However, when interviewing these residents, I found that most of them were older people and retirees who had good and close relationships with the management company. Thus, the answers and information they provided had a high degree of similarity and presented rather limited perspectives on the issues at hand. Therefore, I began to stop relying on one specific referral chain (Atkinson and Flint, 2004b) and developed several discrete referral chains with fewer links, in order to increase the validity and representativeness of the sample cases. I have done this by seeking and relying on different gatekeepers, such as staff in the Residential Committee, members of the Homeowner Associations and residents whom I met randomly in the gated communities. This not only helped to address gatekeeper bias but also partly reduced selection bias by identifying interviewees through different social networks (van Meter, 1990).

Sampling process during fieldwork

In the beginning, identifying potential interviewees in the gated communities was not easy because, as discussed above, the housing estates denied entry to outsiders. And residents living in gated communities are quite concerned about their privacy, thus many were not willing to be interviewed by someone they knew little about. Therefore, in the initial stages, I asked for help from my relatives and friends to make contact and build trust with five residents in the two gated communities. At the same time, I worked as a volunteer in the local government sector, where I established relationships with several senior government officers. They helped me to gain entry to the gated communities and set up further relationships with managers and staff of the management companies of the two gated communities. These officers and staff working in authority organisations (Grogger et al., 1999) related to gated communities, namely government and management company, helped me make my first and crucial relationships and build trust with potential interviewees.

After each interview, I asked the interviewees to leave their contact information and asked them if they could introduce other residents to join the research program. At the same time, while carrying out observation work in the two communities, I sought to initiate random conversations with other residents and to ask them whether they would be willing to participate in the research. In the suburban gated community, 'Hengda Oasis', resident representatives of Homeowner Association asked me to join their activities to share some of my educational experiences in good universities in both Chinese and Western countries with those parents. Through knowing and communicating with these residents, I built up close relationships, and fortunately, most of them were willing to provide contacts for other residents I could invite to join my research project. These residents with whom I developed close relationships and trust were also able to assist with the quota sampling requirements and recommend other residents with specific characteristics, such as single people, migrants from other provinces, and people from rural areas. Thanks to these enthusiastic and hospitable people, my later research tasks proceeded smoothly and successfully.

It is also worth noting that a few of the interviewees were from adjacent neighbourhoods, traditional work-unit compounds and urban villages. These interviewees were mostly identified through snowball sampling, but some were approached in their neighbourhood and asked if they would be willing to be interviewed.

3.3 Methods of data collection

This section firstly gives an overview of the methods used to answer each specific research question and their anticipated information (Table 2 below). Then the section briefly introduces the three main research methods: semi-structured interviews; participant and non-participant observation; and document analysis. Finally, it discusses why these research methods were selected for this project and how they were applied in detail.

Research questions	Data sources and methods	Anticipated Information
<p>1. Why do people choose to live in gated communities?</p>	<p>Residents of gated communities: Interviews.</p> <p>Housing advertisements and promotional materials: Document analysis.</p>	<p>Information about their motivations and aspirations toward gated living.</p> <p>Data on the attractions and willingness toward gated living from the supply side;</p>
<p>2. How does residential life play out in gated communities in terms of their social networks and neighbourhood governance?</p>	<p>Residents both inside and outside gated communities: Interviews.</p> <p>Staff in management company: Interviews.</p> <p>Residents' social interaction and activities: Non-participant observation.</p>	<p>Information on the experiences of residents inside and outside gated communities, their accounts and opinions of social life and relationships in gated communities, and their perspectives on each other.</p> <p>Data on how gated communities are managed and governed by formal organisations.</p> <p>Information about social life and activities from the researcher's perspective.</p>
<p>3. What are the mobility patterns and activity spaces of residents of gated communities in the wider urban settings, and what are their attitudes toward other citizens and public spaces in the city?</p>	<p>Residents both inside and outside gated communities: interviews and 'time-space' diary.</p> <p>Taxi driver and online car service drivers: Interviews.</p>	<p>Data on their mobility patterns, use of transport, and use of urban space.</p> <p>'Time-space' diary details on actual use of space, activities, emotional geographies and how different spaces in the city are valued.</p>

4. Are the social networks and urban lives of residents of gated communities disengaged from the local neighbourhood and other social groups in the city?	Residents inside gated communities: Interviews.	Information on different types of social networks and accounts of how living in a gated community influences their social networks and urban lives.
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Table 2: Research questions and corresponding research methods

Interviews

An interview is a research method of data collection that uses people’s answers to the researcher’s questions as the source of data (Denscombe, 2014). The advantages of interviews are that they can generate detailed and in-depth data and produce data based on the perceptions, ideas and interpretations of research informants (Mason, 2017). Interviews are an essential method in this research in order to understand why people: choose to live in gated communities; how they develop their relationships with others inside and outside gated communities; explore their experiences of community life; and their mobility patterns and social practices at the broader city scale. In previous research into gated communities, both qualitative and quantitative research methods have commonly been used to explore and analyse complex issues about social relationships, segregation, social practices and attitudes in gated communities. Methods include ethnography (Low, 2003; Pow, 2009), qualitative interviews (Atkinson and Flint, 2004a; Breitung, 2012), quantitative survey (Hazelzet and Wissink, 2012; Deng, 2017) and GIS statistics analysis (Le Goix, 2005; Wang, Li and Chai, 2012). While quantitative research methods are more efficient in representing data for a wide range of populations and can be generalised to large populations, qualitative research methods like interviews, allow the researcher to explore research questions in more depth and detail and explore the richness and complexity of the data (Mason, 2017). Thus, in this study, qualitative interviews put more focus on detailed analysis of residents’ accounts of, and motivations for, living in gated communities; interpretation of their values and opinions about community life and social interaction with others;

and their relations with public space and their construction of emotional geographies of urban spaces. For example, in investigating the mobility patterns of residents, some research projects used travel survey data (Wang and Li, 2016), GPS tracking data (Zenk *et al.*, 2011) and mobile phone usage data (Järv *et al.*, 2015) to analyse the mobility patterns and activity spaces of residents. These quantitative research methods are more efficient in representing and comparing mobility data of a wide range of populations. But in this research, qualitative interviews and 'time-space' diaries not only reveal the mobility patterns of residents of gated communities, but also explore why they chose specific modes of transport, their lived experience during their movement in cities and how they construct their emotional geographies of the wider urban spaces.

During the fieldwork, I conducted a total of 53 interviews spread across ten categories of the population (see below). Semi-structured interviews were the primary form of the interview process. As suggested by Ritchie *et al.* (2013), semi-structured interviews are a type of interview in which the researcher obtains data from individuals or groups by asking only a few predetermined questions while the remaining questions are open-ended, the answers to which need to be explored by the researcher. In a semi-structured interview, the interviewees have more freedom to give their own opinions and reflect on their experiences, rather than being led by the researcher. In this project, semi-structured interviews helped to gather data on socio-demographic characteristics of the interviewees, such as age, income level and household type, which helped establish the quota sampling process and ensure a diversity of research participants. In addition, the openness of semi-structured interviews was used to enhance flexibility and interaction between the researcher and interviewees. As this study mainly focuses on the demand-side of gated communities, those potential interviewees of provide-side such as planners and built environment professionals are not included in this project.

The 53 interviewees in this study are categorised into the following 9 categories:

1. Residents of gated communities: the 30 residents from the two chosen gated communities (15 in each community) are the main respondents in this research.
2. Residents outside gated communities: the 10 residents living in the surrounding neighbourhood area provided a comparison case to the residents inside.
3. The staff of the housing development company: the staff of the two housing development companies from the two gated communities mainly talked about management issues and the social environment inside the communities.
4. Police: the police officer from the Street Office provided information about public security in Zhanjiang and the management of criminal cases in different communities.
5. Private guards: the 2 private guards of two gated communities discussed their opinions on entrance control, the security of gated communities and their working experience.
6. The Residential Committee: the 2 staff of the Residential Committee gave information about their management, social interaction and control of different types of communities.
7. Representatives of the homeowners' organisation: the 2 representatives from two gated communities discussed their working experience in a homeowners' association, the tension with the housing management company and their fight for their own right with the real estate's companies.
8. Taxi and online car-hailing drivers: the 4 drivers talked about their daily driving experiences, the mobility patterns and destinations of contemporary urbanites.
9. Services providers: one is an owner of the private cinema, and the other is a teacher in after-school tutoring services: they discussed their business ideas and working experiences in providing private services to affluent urbanites.

Table 3 shows the basic information of all the interviewees and how they were contacted by the researcher.

Categories of interviewees	Number of interviewees	Means or contact with interviewees
Residents (insiders)	30 (15 for each GC case)	Gatekeeper, snowball sampling and quota sampling
Residents (outsiders)	10 (5 for each GC case)	The staff of the residential committee
The staff of the housing development company	2	Contact through my relatives
Police	1	Contact through my relatives
Private guards	2 (1 for each case)	The staff of the residential committee
Staff of the Residential Committee	2 (1 for each case)	Gatekeeper sampling
Representatives of homeowner organisation	2 (1 for each case)	Gatekeeper sampling
Taxi drivers	2	A random sample
Online-service car drivers	2	Contact through a middle school classmate
Services providers in the city	2	Website and phone contact
Total number of interviewees	53	

Table 3: Basic information about the interviewees for this study

Participant and non-participant observation

Observation is a research method in which the researcher systematically watches, listens and records a social phenomenon (Ritchie *et al.*, 2013) to investigate the lifestyle, culture and beliefs of particular social groups (Denscombe, 2014). In this research, observation not only enhances the understanding of lifestyle, social relations and social practices in gated communities and wider urban spaces, but also serves as a complementary method to verify information from qualitative interviews. Within addition to qualitative interviews that reveal residents' ideas and opinions, observations have given me a more direct and objective understanding of what people actually do in their social lives. For example, observing people's activities in the gated communities helped deepen my understanding of what happens in the communities and how residents interact with each other, which might not be directly demonstrated through their narratives in interviews. Both systematic non-participant observation and participant observation were used in this study.

For the systematic non-participant observation, I spent 10 periods (four hours) of observation (five for each) in the two gated communities: four on weekdays and six on weekends. During observation, the residents' interactions, actions and behaviours in the community and in the surrounding neighbourhood environment were examined (Mason, 2017). This provided evidence of how the residents behaved and related to each other in key public spaces like open space in the gated communities, streets in the surrounding areas and stores and other commercial services both inside and immediately outside the communities. These non-participant observations gave me a better understanding of social relations and neighbourhood lives. Non-participant observation also improved my knowledge of the overall social and environmental contexts of the surrounding areas and how residents from gated communities behave and interact with others outside their neighbourhood.

When doing these non-participant observations, I recorded behaviours and issues related to my study through photographs and diaries, such as what residents usually discussed with their neighbours in their neighbourhood, how they interacted with other

residents in public spaces, and whether and how they used the public spaces in adjacent poor neighbourhoods. Some interesting events took place during my observations in the gated communities. For example, once while sitting on the bench beside the basketball court, an older woman reported me to the security guards as being a suspicious criminal from outside who had sneaked into their community. After I explained to the security guards what I was doing there, they told me that this community was a residential space for rich and 'civilised' people and guards needed to exercise extremely strict control over the entrance of unidentified outsiders to keep the community safe and quiet.

For the participant observation, four weeks of volunteer work in the Street Office and Residential Committee (two weeks for each) were conducted to get a deeper understanding of: the management issues of community organisation; community services delivery; how the staff in the Street Office participated in community activities; and how residents from the two selected gated communities engage with these activities. I also participated in volunteer activities in the two selected gated communities and some non-gated communities, involving organising cultural events, sporting events and free medical services from the local government.



Figure 3: Volunteer work in the Residential Committee

I also held a meeting with some of the parents in the Hengda Oasis Community to discuss the issues of youth education in Zhanjiang and share some of my learning experiences in foreign countries. Participation in these activities not only created links and built trust between me and the residents, but also enhanced my understanding of their social lives and values. During these observations, I made field notes, such as photograph and diaries, to complete my observational data. These field notes include the contexts of activities, the people who participate in the activities and my impressions of these events and the behaviours of those involved.

Document analysis

Documentary analysis uses books, articles, newspapers and images as sources of data, and involves interpreting the documents for hidden meanings (Denscombe, 2014). In the literature on gated communities, many scholars show that housing developers and real estate companies are an important supply-side force driving the rapid development of gated communities (Wu, 2004; Le Goix, 2005; McKenzie, 2005). Therefore, many researchers focus on analysing advertising strategies and promotional materials to understand how housing developers package gated housing developments to attract potential buyers (Fraser, 2000; Grant, 2005; Pow and Kong, 2007). It is an effective way to reflect on the desire for gated communities from a supply-side perspective. Thus, in this research, promotional materials of housing companies and advertising slogans used for different gated communities were collected and analysed as research data. To better understand the motives for gated living, during fieldwork, housing advertisements in real estate brochures, newspapers and promotional materials were collected to identify related themes and rhetoric about privatised lifestyles, privilege, safety and other potential aspects. During the interview with staff of the housing development company, I asked them to provide me with some real estate brochures and promotional materials, and four additional days of fieldwork were set aside for searching the related advertising information in newspapers, Internet, magazines and in the sales offices of the newly-built gated communities.

Time-space diaries and space mapping are two other types of documents collected to address the research question about the mobility of residents in cities. Time-space diaries are effective qualitative research tools in which respondents record what they were doing and where, and how they moved during these periods following their timeline (Sheller and Urry, 2006). For example, Pooley et al. (2006) explore the mobility patterns of people in the 19th century using time-space diaries. In this research, five respondents were asked to keep two-day travel diaries, Sunday and Monday, to provide information about where they went, what they did in which locations, how they interacted with other people and what they felt about different spaces. The diaries recorded their origins and destinations, their modes of travel and their experiences during their travels. The diaries were used to provide more detailed information about residents' activities in, and perceptions of urban spaces in their working day and at the weekend. In addition, space mapping, in which respondents record their activity spaces, was applied to better understand the mobility patterns of residents of gated communities and their activity routes in the city (Lindsay, 2006). During interviews with residents of gated communities, five interviewees agreed to briefly draw lines and circles on the city maps of Zhanjiang to show where they usually went, what their routes were, and how they got to their destinations. These visual representations gave a more direct picture of residents' mobility patterns and activity spaces in the city and revealed more about the routes and range of their urban mobility.

3.4 Data collection during fieldwork and data analysis

Fieldwork schedule

The previous sections have discussed the research methods used in this study and how research data were collected. This section outlines the schedule of the data collection process in the fieldwork period. The fieldwork was conducted from August 2019 to February 2020 (approximately seven months). The fieldwork consisted of the following stages:

- **August 2019:** This was the preliminary fieldwork stage when I began desk work to get familiar with the fieldwork circumstances and made contact with government officials both in the Street Office and Residential Committee to ask for a volunteer working opportunity in these grassroots government agencies for the participant observation. For the first two weeks, I was unsure whether I would get permission to work with them. Then I was the higher-level officials allowed me to work with them in the following week, which shed light on my fieldwork plan. During this time, I visited the communities identified early in my initial research plan, but I found that most of them failed to meet the selection criteria for my cases. Thus, I had to search for research cases again from the beginning. I looked for information about gated communities on the Internet and investigated them personally on site. Finally, I chose Wanhao Shijia and Hengda Oasis as my research cases. During this preparation work, I became more familiar with the physical structures of, historical information about and evaluations made by other citizens of gated communities in Zhanjiang. During my four weeks' volunteer work in the Street Office and Residential Committee, I took part in their working meetings and their practical work in community governance and got the chance to speak to put my research questions directly to the officials. For example, I had discussions with officials in the Street Office who were in charge of security administration in local districts. I consulted them about the crime rates in Zhanjiang, how they applied different strategies to manage and reduce the local crime, and how different types of communities reacted to local crime behaviours.

- **September 2019:** I started carrying out interviews with the residents of gated communities and other key informants. At the beginning of my interview process, as I was recommended by the government agencies to the managers in Wanhao Shijia Community, and the managers were quite enthusiastic about suggesting interviewees to me. They contacted around 10 residents in a short period of time, and I was able to interview these residents. But after I started the interviews, I realised that these residents were mainly older age residents who were had good relationships with the managers of the housing management company. The information they provided was simple and highly repetitive and did not fulfil my research objectives. Because most of them were retired and older residents, the similarity of their age and occupational status generated a lot of repetitive data in response to some of the research questions. Moreover, they were invited by the management company to speak on its behalf, so I felt that they were seeing the interviews as a task, and most of them only talked about positive viewpoints of the community. They refused to discuss any contradictions, disagreements or discriminations between residents, between different types of people such as the service staff, or between themselves and the management company. Therefore, I could not get a sense of the social reality of the gated community. Another problem was that they thought of me as a member of the government who was investigating them for political reasons. Thus, they tended to gloss negative aspects of the community, and the information they provided was to some extent biased. In the end, I had to find eligible interviewees by myself. Through the initial contact with several residents in the two case communities, I finished several interviews and was able to contact other residents. Then I began to use snowball sampling to get access to more potential interviewees. After I contacted a representative of the homeowner association in Hengda Oasis, he invited me to join a community meeting to share my educational experience with parents in Hengda Oasis Community. Through this meeting, more residents knew about my research and felt more at ease about being interviewed by me.
- **October 2019 to December 2019:** In these three months, I mainly focused on the intensive interview work with residents, police officers, government

officials, private guards, and representatives of homeowners' associations. As I contacted more people in government agencies and communities, accessibility issues became easier. However, as I was not entirely familiar with interview skills and tactics, and I wasted some chances in interviews and failed to get the valuable information. Thus, I read texts on interviewing and watched online tutorials about the skills need for asking questions, responding to challenging situations and maintaining the interview focus. As I conducted more interviews, I got accustomed to the rhythm of the interview and let the interviewees discuss the core issues of the research during the interview process. Most interview were conducted on weekends because most of the interviewees were busy during week. On weekdays, I planned observations in both communities and tried to get in contact with more of the residents through random population sampling. Meanwhile, officials in government agencies sometimes invited me to join their volunteer activities in different types of communities, and I was able to get more understanding of community governance, management issues and neighbourhood cultures of different kinds of communities.

- **January 2010 to February 2010:** This was the final stage of my fieldwork. I finished interviewing the residents and turned to interview important informants in my sample frame that I had not yet interviewed. These interviewees included the taxi drivers, online car drivers, service providers and several residents outside gated communities. I also went to the housing companies to collect housing advertisements and ask for promotional materials in the sales offices. I searched for some information about housing in the old newspapers in the city library, but there was little information. I contacted the sales offices for some other gated communities and pretended to be a potential homebuyer wanting to know more about their gated housing estates. Usually, the salespeople would introduce the attractions and advantages of their housing estate and take me on a short tour of around 30 minutes. During the research, I have learned more about the characteristics and contexts of different types of gated communities, in Zhanjiang, from the ordinary to the extremely luxurious.

During fieldwork, mixed qualitative research methods were explored to help address the research objectives and answer the research questions. Most of these methods were conducted successfully and produced meaningful research data due to the robust relationship and trust I built up with residents and several gatekeepers. I did come across a series of issues concerning the accessibility of research targets, the conduct of good interviews, the time schedules, and several practical problems such as losing contact with some interviewees and rejections of the interview recordings by some residents. Thanks to the help of my relatives, friends and many enthusiastic 'research assistants', such as representatives of homeowner associations and officials in the Street Office and Residential Committee, I managed to overcome these difficulties and complete the research fieldwork.

Data analysis

Raw qualitative data need to be systematically and carefully organised before they can be analysed (Denscombe, 2014). First audio recordings of interviews need to be transcribed. In this research, the source language is Chinese, and the target language is English. Transcribing the audio recordings was a time-consuming process, and this became even harder when I initially tried to transcribe the audio recordings directly into English. As Chinese and English are languages with entirely different origins, it was difficult to find English counterparts for some words and phrases in Chinese. And some English translations do not fully represent the original Chinese meanings. For example, the term for 'migrant worker' is '*wailai wugong ren yuan*' in Chinese, which includes a long-lasting and complex historical and context-based prejudice and discrimination by urbanites in Chinese cities toward people with rural household registration status (Keung Wong, Li and Song, 2007; Goodman, 2014).

In addition, as described by Muller (2007), in most traditional research, translation is rendered as a process with objective outcomes in which the researcher is recognised as the neutral information mediator. But Muller (2007) criticises this viewpoint and suggests that translation between different languages can never achieve the outcomes

of equivalent meaning transmission. Thus, no matter how well the translator understands the two languages, the translation can only present a partial meaning of the original language.

In order to reserve most of the original meaning of the source language in interview data and avoid 'information loss' during the translation process (Birbili, 2000), I chose to transcribe the audio recordings into Chinese and to present the analysis and results in English in the final stage of reporting the research outcomes in the thesis. During the translation process, I carefully considered different interpretations between Chinese and English, and provide explanations here for words that contained different meanings based on their specific historical and cultural contexts.

I also noted the body language and emotional expressions of the interviewees, such as laughter and anger, in order to present the fullest and most accurate meanings of the interview data. When I interviewed residents who were in good relationships with me, they sometimes talked about other issues unrelated to the research and in some cases the interview recording was more than 90 minutes long. I filtered out these irrelevant interview recordings and focused more on meaningful information. After transcribing each interview, I listened to them again to ensure that they were accurately transcribed. This process also helped me immerse myself in interview data and become more familiar with them.

After transcribing all audio recordings, I started the preparatory work of analysis. The thematic analysis approach was used to analyse the data in this research, involving discovering, interpreting and reporting patterns and clusters of meaning within the data (Ritchie *et al.*, 2013). NVivo was chosen as a computer-assisted software for its advantages in storing, sorting and analysing large amounts of unstructured raw qualitative data. This research follows Ritchie's (2013) thematic analysis approach, which consists of four phases: familiarisation; initial thematic coding framework including indexing and sorting the data; reviewing and refining the coding framework; and abstraction and interpretation.

The first stage is familiarisation, in which the researcher has an overview of the whole data set and becomes familiar with their materials (Ritchie *et al.*, 2013). As I had transcribed the interviews recordings myself, I was quite familiar with the material. I also highlighted some important topics, themes and quotes that were of interest to me during the transcription and translation process, which helped identify potential themes and ideas. Before doing the coding work, I read through the transcripts to become more familiar with the qualitative data. I also revisited my research objectives and questions to ensure that my coding framework was closely related to my research.

The second stage of thematic analysis is sorting and indexing data, usually called coding. It allows the researcher to develop their analysis through attaching themes and ideas to different interview materials (Strauss, 1987). Every interview transcription was given a code for specific meanings to represent the researcher's ideas and viewpoints. This helps to reorganise the interview data more systematically so that similar data can be grouped together (Ritchie *et al.*, 2013). I read transcripts and categorised comments and answers with similar characteristics with the same codes. In my first time coding the raw data, I created large numbers of codes, such as 'rubbish bin' and 'sliding board' to refer to the use of neighbourhood services, but these were too descriptive and detailed and contributed little to my data sorting. This type of coding proved to be quite time-wasting, and the code list became complex and disorderly, which did little help to further analysis. Thus, I changed my coding style and used simpler and broader descriptive codes such as 'community physical services' to sort my data more clearly.

The third stage of thematic analysis is reviewing and refining the coding framework. In this stage, I tried to create more analytical concepts and nodes, to merge initial codes and also to highlight important themes and codes that were missing from the initial coding framework. For example, when I first tried to create analytical nodes for the interview data, I was influenced by the existing knowledge and themes in the current literature rather than what was in my original raw data. I tried to make the data fit into codes based on the existing themes in the literature, but the codes and node's structure was chaotic, and some critical themes and codes were missing from the initial coding.

Thus, I reorganised my coding framework and tried to create analytical codes directly from the original data and the adjust them to fit with existing theoretical ideas and concepts. In the last version of the coding framework, I created eight major themes: social life inside gated communities; management of gated communities; attitudes toward different social groups; searching for social homogeneity; discourses of fear of crime and of others; mobility patterns and activity space; usage and perception of public spaces; and the social capital and spatiality of social networks.

The last stage of the analysis is abstraction and interpretation, in which the researcher starts to reflect on the coding framework and tease out the crucial findings from their research (Ritchie *et al.*, 2013). In this stage, the researcher seeks to put together all the codes and data, which were cut into different aspects to correspond with separate facets of social reality and produce an overall and coherent picture as the research findings. During the coding process, I became very familiar with the content of my interviews and developed key categories to represent and account for the range and diversity of social realities in the researched gated communities and at a broader urban scale. In this final stage, I took each theme in turn to review all the relevant data; map the range and diversity of people's accounts and opinions; identify important concepts underpinning these ideas; and link similar data together and classify different data in different dimensions.

At the same time, I abstracted and reserved important direct quotations for further interpretation and analysis. These quotations are chosen for a number of reasons, such as their representative characteristics of most cases, or contradictory attitudes to the majority understandings and perceptions. The representative quotes were chosen because the repetition of these opinions and viewpoints showed the robustness and generality of these interpretations. The contradictory quotes are selected because they reflect the interviewee's individual experience and their evocative stories in specific social phenomena. As suggested by Power (2004), people usually discuss issues in different and contradictory ways, and qualitative researchers need to unfold the multiple and contextualised social reality by understanding the interviewees' own accounts of their practices.

Although the data analysis generally followed these four stages, it was not an entirely linear process. After the analytical codes and frameworks were developed and clarified, and even in the writing up stage, I constantly reviewed my raw interview data to look for new viewpoints, clues, and potentially important ideas that had been missed in the coding process. This transition between data, codes, analytical themes and interpretations was constantly performed during the whole process of data analysis and presentation, aiming to produce more comprehensive and profound research findings.

3.5 Ethical issues

Ethics is at the heart of high-quality research practice, and the consideration of ethical issues must be borne in mind throughout the entire research process (Denscombe, 2014). Normally, researchers are required to ensure the confidentiality of research participants' personal information and to ask for their consent before conducting the research (Mason, 2017). I have carefully adhered to the guidelines published by the University of Sheffield during the entire research and fieldwork process. I have also gained ethical approval for this project from the University Ethics Panel.

Before the interview process, all the interviewees were asked for consent and signed the consent forms before the interviews began. As interview respondents in China are not accustomed to signing formal consents, I obtained other types of informal consent, such as email consent and WeChat consent. All participants were clearly informed about why they had been chosen to take part in this research and how the information they provided would be used in the future. They were given information in advance about what types of questions they were going to be asked during the interviews. In interviews, I let the interviewees speak freely about what they wanted, and I did not urge them to answer all the questions I raised. After the interviews, I have asked for participant's' contact information on a voluntary basis and informed them that all the information gathered from interviews would be stored in my personal computers and would be kept confidentially in line with the University's ethics policy. This information

would only be shared with my supervisors and used for academic purposes in the future. Participants were assured that all the information about research respondents would be anonymous and would not be disclosed without permission from respondents.

During the fieldwork, I took responsibility for the care of the relationship with participants. For example, in terms of some sensitive questions related to crime, safety and social status, I was careful with my expressions and words and avoided any psychological harm to the interviewees. In addition, although the experience and attitudes of children living in gated communities are significant (Low, 2003) and would have been an interesting aspect of the research, I strictly followed the University's ethical instructions and avoided including children in the research.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed: the design of the research; theoretical perspectives; underlying methodological issues; the selection of cases; the methods applied for data collection; and how data were collected during the fieldwork stage. The research was designed to explore and investigate gated communities in China in terms of motivations, social lives, relationships, and dynamic segregation, through two case studies in Zhanjiang, one in an urban and one in a suburban area. These two comparative cases were chosen to understand how different built environments influence people's social lives, relations, practices and values related to gated communities. Zhanjiang was selected as the research site to complement the current literature on gated communities in China which mostly explores gated communities in metropolitan areas.

Multiple data collection methods were used in this research: semi-structured interviews; non-participant/participant observation; and documentary analysis, to get in-depth understanding of various aspects of gated communities. Accessing the wealthy residents living in upscale gated communities was not easy, and I finished my fieldwork and collected data for this research with the help of various 'research assistants', such as enthusiastic residents in gated communities, representatives in homeowner

associations and officials in the Street Office and Residential Committee. By exploring the lived experiences, opinions and attitudes of resident in gated communities, I have become friends with some of these residents and still keep in contact with them. Through constant communication and cooperation with them, I gained a deeper understanding of their social practices, social relationships, and the values they placed on living in gated communities.

The data collected during the fieldwork were analysed through 'thematic analysis' with the support of the computer-assisted software, 'NVivo'. These empirical findings are presented and further explained in the following chapters. Each chapter presenting the findings is organised thematically and illustrates the motivations, changing social lives, relationships, mobility patterns and social networks of gated communities' residents in an 'ordinary' city of China

Chapter 4: Motives for living in gated communities

Since the rapid worldwide development of gated communities in the 1990s, scholars have paid particular attention to the drivers of these housing estates (Blakely and Snyder, 1998; Low, 2001; McKenzie, 2003) and have shown that the drivers of spread of gated communities vary largely according to their geographical, historical and social contexts (Atkinson and Blandy, 2005; Glasze et al., 2004). Since the commodification of housing provision in China in the 1990s, commodity gated communities have become the dominant form of new-build housing development (Wu et al., 2006). Although many scholars have stressed the important role of central and local governments on the supply-side of this process (He, 2013; He and Wu, 2005), demand-side factors such as the homebuyers' motives and preferences have not been thoroughly investigated. This chapter examines the buyers' desires and motivations for buying and living in gated communities, which helps to further understand the reasons for the prevalence of gated communities in contemporary Chinese cities, and why so many urban residents want them. This chapter also explores the opinions of housing developers and their promotional strategies in selling gated communities, which help further understand homebuyers' housing aspirations. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section explores the practical usage of gated communities, such as exclusive neighbourhood services and investment values in Zhanjiang. The second section discusses the social representations of gated communities in Zhanjiang and the complex cultural meanings attached to these exclusive residential spaces. The last section explores the importance of fear of crime in motivating people to buy housing in gated communities in Zhanjiang and how various forms of social control reshape their sense of security.

4.1 Investment value and the use of internal services

While the previous research indicates that the search for security and social prestige are essential drivers for the popularity of gated communities, this study finds that the practical utilities are also important factors that persuade urban residents to buy housing gated communities in Zhanjiang. This section illustrates these practical utilities

in three aspects: the neighbourhood services, investment values, and investment strategies for their children's education.

The exclusive neighbourhood environment and services

Most of the residents of the two gated communities in this study stressed the importance of high-end and exclusive neighbourhood services when they bought into a gated housing estate. These neighbourhood services include sports facilities, gyms, playgrounds, green space, laundries, retail stores, banks, medical clinics, and kindergartens. These two gated communities include a diversity of neighbourhood services in their neighbourhoods which can only be used by the residents of the communities. In this sense, these high-end communities can be understood as small 'cities' within the city where only affluent urban residents pay dues and are provided with exclusive services and security within their 'privatopias' (Atkinson and Blandy, 2005; McKenzie, 2011). These exclusionary neighbourhood services are most sought by residents living in gated communities. For example, Ms Wu, a retiree from the central urban gated community, depicted her consideration of neighbourhood services:

I previously lived in an old work-unit compound with my family members. Since the ending of public housing provision, my work-unit no longer manage our neighbourhood, and many neighbours have moved somewhere else and rented their house to migrant workers. Now the old neighbourhood has become more and more derelict. Most residents are not concerned about those essential services like hygiene and building maintenance. Thus, all my family members have moved to this gated community with new and high-end services. The gates are vital because they can provide you with a quiet and orderly environment without disturbance by outsiders. When I want to play badminton, I do not need to worry about competing with others to find a badminton court anymore (Interviewee 22, Ms Wu, retiree, Central GC).

Ms Wu expressed a strong desire to enjoy better and abundant neighbourhood services exclusive to residents inside gated communities. From this perspective, the 'club goods' theory (Webster et al., 2002) is useful to explain the prominent

characteristic of gated communities. Gated communities provide their residents with private and exclusive neighbourhood services and management, which are no longer provided as public welfare by local government. Here, the gates serve as the boundary to protect the private interests of insiders and exclude the wider public who do not pay for these services and area seen as 'free-riders'. Thus, affluent residents can withdraw into their private paradise without the interference from poorer residents who cannot afford these exclusive neighbourhood services. While the search for better services and goods as housing consumers is hard to criticise, this privatisation of neighbourhood services, previously considered as public goods, destroys the ideal of the provision of public goods and welfare by local government for all citizens (Blakely and Snyder, 1998). And the desire for the exclusive use of privileged services and the view of other citizens as competitors for resources reveals the loss of sense of responsibility for the whole society.



Figure 4: Neighbourhood services inside selected gated communities

Compared with major cities where the public services and amenities are well-provided and maintained, the insufficient provision of public services in Zhanjiang further creates a stronger desire for exclusive neighbourhood services. For instance, Ms Li, an elderly retiree, compared her residential experience with that in Guangzhou (the capital of Guangdong Province):

The neighbourhood services are more important here in Zhanjiang than those in Guangzhou. For example, when I previously lived in Guangzhou, there were many large and pleasant public parks such as *Haizhu Lake*,

Daguan Wetland Park and Flower City Square. There are also many other public facilities such as sports centres, gyms and hospitals. And you can easily visit these public services by well-organised underground and bus systems. However, you can see few public services of good quality in the urban area in Zhanjiang. Thus, if you have more good services inside your neighbourhood, your life will be more convenient and high-quality (Interviewee 7, Ms Li, retiree, Central GC).

Many interviewees highlighted the importance of good-quality exclusive services in gated communities. And they also prefer to buy housing in a gated community near the few good public schools and hospitals in Zhanjiang. It is evident here that the urban built environment influences the desires to move into gated communities. Compared with major cities and capital cities such as Guangzhou, Shanghai and Beijing, the local government of Zhanjiang has less financial revenue to provide high-quality public services in the urban areas. Under this circumstance, affluent people are more willing to pay for the club goods of neighbourhood services (Webster, 2002) to improve the physical environment and facilities of their private neighbourhood. The gates of these communities help to demarcate those who are able to pay for these neighbourhood services from other citizens outside who are deemed to be 'free-riders'. This motive for seeking exclusive neighbourhood services is more prominent in Zhanjiang than in major cities like Shanghai (Pow and Kong, 2007) and Beijing (Wu and Webber, 2004).

In addition to traditional neighbourhood services like landscaped environments, sports facilities, restaurants and clinics mentioned above, some residents mentioned other motives for access to exclusive urban infrastructure services through living in upscale gated communities. These services include highways, private bus systems, and high-speed broadband. Mr Li, an owner of a car repair company, illustrated infrastructure services that could only be used in gated communities:

You can enjoy far more advantages in our upscale gated communities apart from the well-constructed services inside. Actually, the highways connecting our neighbourhood with the city centre are sponsored by our housing developer Hengda Company. This is why you can see many highways

surrounding our communities but not so many in other suburban areas. In addition, the Hengda management company has provided an exclusive shuttle bus system for our daily commuting. This is extremely convenient in the suburban area with few bus routes and stations to choose from. ... As most of our residents are affluent and require advanced network facilities for their families, the Guangdong Telecommunication Company has separately provided 100 megabytes of broadband for our neighbourhood. It is fantastic because even some neighbourhoods in the central districts are not equipped with this type of fast network infrastructure (Interviewee 17, Mr Li, owner of car repairment company, Suburban GC).

As Mr Li's description notes, the pursuit of exclusive neighbourhood services are not limited to traditional neighbourhood services inside gated communities but include urban infrastructures outside that are supposed to be provided for all urban residents. As suggested by Graham and Marvin (2002, p.8), urban infrastructure networks, such as water, electricity, waste and communications, usually are "imagined to deliver broadly similar, essential services to (virtually) everyone at similar cost across cities and regions." That is, infrastructure services are supposed to provide essential networks that bind urban spaces together and increase the integration and cohesion of different regions. However, in this case, private developers have provided exclusive infrastructure for affluent residents living in gated communities which not only fulfil their interests in having exclusive services, but also separate gated communities from outside areas by providing wider urban infrastructure. Therefore, the residents of gated communities can enjoy faster and more pleasant infrastructure services while leaving 'immobile and heavy' outsiders (Bauman, 1998) far away behind them (more discussion on this appears in the next chapter).

Investment values in gated communities

Compared with the initial stages of the commodification of housing estates in China in the 1980s when urban residents were more focused on the housing quality and locations of their housing (Pow and Kong, 2007; Wu et al., 2006), now they pay much more attention to the investment values of buying houses in gated communities. Many

residents indicated that they had bought into more than one housing estate in the city, and they were very concerned about the investment values and the return on capital when buying houses in gated communities. As elsewhere, policies on taxation, loan interest rates, public spending, and other economic measurements have great impacts on property prices and consequently make housing more about investment than just a place of shelter (Atkinson and Blandy, 2018). But the motives of buyers into Chinese gated communities for investment values can be better understood based on the specific Chinese social and economic background. Since the commodification of housing provision, homes have become private properties that can be traded on the market (Wang et al., 2020). Homebuyers can rent their houses to other citizens for income, and thus their owner-occupied homes have become their investment property. The rapid growth of housing prices in China in the past ten years has increased the expectation of value appreciation of housing estates. Statistics show that between 2001 and 2017, housing prices in China increased at an average annual rate of about 17%, increasing nearly twice as fast as people's disposable income (Chen and Wen, 2017). At the same time, the average growth rate of the gross domestic product of China is about 10%, which is much lower than the growth rate of housing prices (Chinese statistics Yearbook, 2019). Under this specific economic condition, buying houses, especially in upscale gated communities, has become one of the most effective ways to increase wealth. Mr Yuan, who works in an accounting department, introduced her viewpoints on the investment values of housing estates in gated communities:

In recent years the inflation rate per year in China has been around 3%, according to the official statistics. And the annual interest rate of fixed time deposits in normal banks is about 2%. If you put your money in the bank, your general asset will shrink as time goes on. However, the increasing rate of housing prices in Zhanjiang has been approximately 10% in the past seven years. That's the reason why I have bought three houses in the city centre. I have earned a lot from investment in housing assets. And you can see those with investment ideas are eager to invest in the housing market (Interviewee 3, Ms Yuan, accountant, Central GC).

With the slowing of economic growth of China in (with the increased rate of GDP of about 6% in 2020), the investment environment for substantial economic and entrepreneurial opportunities are not optimistic for Chinese citizens. However, the real estate market still remains positive, especially in first-tier and middle-tier cities (Chen and Wen, 2017). Thus, many urban residents choose to invest in the housing market: they consider buying into gated housing estates an effective way to accumulate personal wealth and offset continuous inflation, and thus maintain their middle-class status. The desire for investment values is more prevalent in professional workers and retirees whose incomes are relatively fixed and who view housing investment as a way to gain more income.

These interviewees gave a number of further reasons why they were more willing to invest in housing in gated communities instead of other types of housing. For example, Ms Chen, a retiree living in the suburban gated communities, illustrated her willingness to invest in gated communities:

When buying into gated communities, you can choose upscale neighbourhoods with well-equipped services managed by an excellent real estate company. This not only means you can enjoy good services without disturbance by outsiders but also ensures that the management company will maintain the physical environments inside your neighbourhood for you. Many housing estates in traditional work-unit compounds have become more derelict because of the lack of a responsible and reputable management company. In addition, in upscale gated communities, you can live with affluent people, which also ensures your housing values (Interviewee 46, Ms Chen, retiree, Suburban GC).

Many interviewees were concerned about both the physical and the social environments of their residential neighbourhoods because these conditions are closely related to housing values in the market (Low, 2003). They suggested that investments in gated communities are more stable and secure because the high-end neighbourhood environments and services and the maintenance of neighbourhoods by excellent management companies ensure the satisfactory physical environments of gated communities. In addition, the gates and walls exclude poor outsiders from

entering and disturbing their neighbourhood, which also improves the social environments of gated communities. Thus, for these residents, the controllable and well-kept physical and social environments ensure the relatively stable market values of housing in gated communities. Consequently, they are more willing to and confident about investing in gated communities than in other types of neighbourhoods.

In addition to the demand-side causes, the advertising and promotion by housing developers of the appreciation of housing values also shape the investment confidence and enthusiasm of homebuyers. In the Chinese economic context, the low mortgage rate and long mortgage terms (30 years in most Chinese cities), combined with the gradually diminishing land resources in the city centre, have led to the rapid growth of housing prices in the past ten years (Chen and Wen, 2017). As a result, the real estate industry has become an important industry in the Chinese national economic system, and buying housing properties is often seen as one of the most stable forms of investment. Thus, the investment value of housing property is used by housing developers as a powerful advertising tool. For example, when I visited the sales office of a newly-built gated community in the city centre, the salesman actively pursued me to buy property for investment purposes:

Even if you do not need a house for living, it is a good choice for you to buy into our housing estates. You know the housing price in Zhanjiang has risen significantly in the past few years. If you purchase an apartment in our community for around 800,000 yuan, you can earn your whole investment back in less than 20 years. I promise you cannot find such a good investment plan elsewhere. As we are cooperating with the local government, we promise that this place will be the next Central Business District in our cities. At least four new bus routes will be constructed around our housing estate in the next three years (Interviewee 29, Mr Li, Salesman in a newly-built gated community).

This salesman also called on another colleague to skilfully calculate the invested capital, expected rent, and the return period of funds for me. And as he suggested, the search for investment values of housing in up-scale gated communities had become more and more common in Zhanjiang. The average housing price per square metre in

Zhanjiang has risen from around 6,600 yuan in 2010 to around 14,300 in 2019 (Zhanjiang Yearbook, 2019), and the price is still rising. The expected return on investment of upscale housing estates, such as gated communities, in Zhanjiang remains high among urban residents. Because of the economic slow-down of National GDP in China, housing investment is becoming more and more popular among affluent residents. For instance, Mrs Yuan, another resident of the Central GC proudly said that he had bought three houses for investment in the city centre of Zhanjiang, and the housing appreciation rate has surpassed his monthly salary (Interviewee 18, Mr Chen, teacher, Central GC). Housing developers have caught this speculative mentality of affluent residents and transformed it into one of their effective advertising strategies. Their advertisement strategies not only attract potential buyers but also shape and influence their desires for buying into gated communities.

Housing investment for their children

Many residents described how they thought that gated communities were important for the growth and cultivation of their children. This is because the gates, walls, surveillance webcams and security personnel in gated communities can provide a safe and purified neighbourhood environment for their children and watch and monitor their children's locations, activities and social interactions. These residents were concerned about the security of the wider urban environment and thus used gated communities as instruments to protect their children from the danger and insecurity outside their neighbourhood. In this sense, the responsibility of providing a safe environment for bringing up children has been transferred from the state to the individual household (Low, 2003). As Ms Liu, a resident of the Central GC, stated:

I bought this house mainly for my 3-year-old child. He can enjoy a better living environment. And he will be safe living inside the gated community. I do not have to worry about his safety issues. The safeguards and camera surveillance do help a lot. And the kindergarten in our community is of good quality with experienced teachers, my child will have a good start for his early education. This is crucial to his future development. ... I want to create a safe and sound neighbourhood environment for my children where they

can play, learn and grow up in this well-organised neighbourhood. I also want my child to interact with other children from families with high social status and good family education (Interviewee 2, Ms Liu, doctor, Central GC)

Since the strict implementation of family planning policy in China in the 1980s (Attané, 2002), most urban households have only one child per couple. This policy has increased the vulnerability of the next generation and thus made parents more concerned about their children's security and growth environment meaning that gated communities have are welcomed by these anxious urban parents. G Gated communities are efficient in providing safe, controlled, and well-designed neighbourhood environments, which are crucial for the cultivation of the next generations. Parents are not confident about the safety of urban environments and, therefore, choose to live in gated communities to create desirable and controllable environments for their precious children. In this situation, upscale gated communities have become perfect choices for Chinese parents because of the good physical environment, strict neighbourhood management and security assurance, especially in the light of the changing institutional systems caused by state withdrawal from providing housing and neighbourhood services. In addition, these parents expressed the advantages of neighbourhoods that provide homogeneous social environments for their children. The gates and walls of gated communities help exclude undesirable poor and dangerous populations (and their children) outside their neighbourhood and create a social homogeneity inside. Therefore, their children are unlikely to interact with underprivileged social groups and consequently are less likely to be harmed and influenced by them (more discussion in the next section). It is ironic that whether children can grow up safely depends on their parents' ability to afford to live in gated communities instead of a safe and justice living environments for all the citizens.



Figure 5: internal neighbourhood services for children

Investment in their children's education is another important factor for buying housing in gated communities. The above case shows that residents pay considerable attention to the quality of the kindergarten in gated communities as part of their exclusive neighbourhood services. Moreover, many parents try to give their children better educational opportunities in primary and secondary schools by buying gated housing in specific 'school districts'. In China, the chance of a child entering public primary school depends on which school district your house is located in. More specifically, if parents want to enrol their child in what might be thought of as a good public primary school, they must own a house in the school district of that particular primary school. In some cities, the government further uses 'zero school choice' policies to strictly define the connection between school district, housing and compulsory education enrolment (Wen, Xiao and Zhang, 2017). This policy indicates that the admission of students to primary and secondary school is entirely in accordance with the school districts, although in some major cities like Beijing, the government began to publish the new policy called 'one district, multiple schools' in 2020 in order to break down the links between housing and schools and increase educational equality.

However, the situation in most ordinary cities like Zhanjiang is still the same as before. Parents' choices of primary and secondary school for the children depend on the location of the family home. People with housing located in school districts with high-quality public primary or secondary schools have access to scarce educational resources for their children in Zhanjiang and buying private gated

housing in good school districts has become one of the top concerns for parents. As explained by Mr Gao, a resident of the Central GC:

I bought the house in our community for the good-quality kindergarten because only the children living inside [the community] have priorities to join this kindergarten. And I am preparing to buy another house near the 12th Primary School of Zhanjiang. So that after my child finishes kindergarten, he can join the best primary school in our city. As parents with affluent wealth, what we can do for our child is to provide the best educational resources for him. And he will win the race with other children at the start line (Interviewee 11, Mr Gao, programmer, from Central GC).

Many parents living in gated communities showed their desire to give their children good educational resources at an early stage, in order to contribute to their children's success both in school and careers in the future. In the Chinese educational system, success in the national college entrance examination is the most important and effective way of upward social mobility for poor citizens with little capital. Good grades in the college entrance examination create the opportunity to join a top-ranking university and means successful career in the future. Therefore, the educational stages of primary and secondary school are crucial for children's futures.

In middle-tier cities like Zhanjiang, where there are few high-quality private schools, the opportunities to enrol in an excellent public primary and secondary school become extremely important. Thus, buying housing in gated communities enables parents to gain better educational resources for their children. Here it is not the gates of gated communities, but the characteristics of private housing properties that play an important role in this process. And many housing sales agents made use of the educational resources to market their gated housing estates. For example, Mr Li, a salesman in a newly-built gated community said:

The 12th Primary School of Zhanjiang is our most significant advantage. Now, most of the land in the school district of the 12th Primary School of Zhanjiang is sold out. The remaining houses in our community are limited. If you want your children to attend the most famous and high-quality primary

school in Zhanjiang, you have to hurry up to buy houses in our housing estate. It is a good deal to buy an educational opportunity with 500,000 yuan for your next generation. It's totally worth it (Interviewee 29, Mr Li, Salesman in a newly-built gated community).

As discussed earlier, parents in China have paid much more attention to their children's education in recent years. A 2020 survey showed that household educational expenditure accounts for over 20% of total household spending (China Business Education Counselling Market Consumption Power Report in 2020). In the context of 'school district housing', many Chinese parents are willing to buy houses in gated housing estates in good school districts to gain superior educational resources for their children. Housing developers in Zhanjiang have captured their demand for scarce educational opportunities for their children and advertised their gated housing estates by highlighting the opportunities for enrolment in high-quality primary or secondary schools. In this way, the spread of private gated communities in Zhanjiang has tended to increase the potential educational inequalities between affluent families and the poor.

4.2 Distinct lifestyle, cultural capital and social status

The previous section focused on the practical usage and value of living in gated communities, such as enjoying exclusive club-realm services and creating investment value. However, people buy houses and live in gated communities not only for these pragmatic purposes but also for the symbolic meanings of the housing and the social representations of their personal status. For example, Caldeira (2000) has shown that buying and living in high-end closed condominiums in Brazil represents middle-class social status, while the urban poor can only build their own houses. Across different social and cultural contexts, homes (and neighbourhoods) crystallise important social representations and symbolic meanings, and residence is an instrument through which people signify themselves (Caldeira 2000). Housing reflects complex and nuanced cultural and symbolic meanings: the analysis of the Berber House by Bourdieu (1970) suggested that Berber housing types, structures and orientations embodied complex

cultural and symbolic meanings of the binary oppositions of the people and animals, the male and female, and the upper and lower (power). This section seeks to investigate the urban residents' motives for living in gated communities from the perspectives of social representations and cultural meanings in contemporary Chinese cities.

Social representations of gated communities

As noted previously, the commodification of housing provision in China in the 1980s brought about transformation of the built environment with the disappearance of cellular multifunctional work-unit compounds and the emerging patchwork of mono-functional and mono-cultural enclaves demarcated by walls and gates (Douglass et al., 2012). The emergence of these gated enclaves and communities is called 'enclave urbanism' by researchers who focus on urban studies in Chinese cities. As explained by Wu (2005), gating itself is not new to Chinese cities, but what makes it relatively novel is the remarkably rapid development of privately-owned commodity gated communities under marketisation in China. The rapid growth of private gated communities has created a highly segregated residential regime demarcated by personal income and wealth. In confirmation of this, interviewees for this study consider living in upscale gated communities to be an effective way of displaying their social status. For example, Ms Zhang, a retiree from the Suburban GC, explained her feelings of living in a gated community:

When we bought this house in our community, we not only cared about the exclusive physical services and landscape inside the community but also showed our ability to afford the high price of housing property in such a luxury community. Others will consequently know your high social status. One of my colleagues still lives in an ordinary commodity housing estate with relatively low housing prices. Our colleagues will naturally think that my income level is much higher than hers, and therefore my social status is relatively higher, let alone those living in the urban village and traditional work-unit. They are generally considered lazy and incapable people with low social status (Interviewee 43, Mr Zhang, Retiree, Suburban GC).

Compared with the welfare housing system in the pre-reform era, the commodification of housing provision has given these residents chances to show their superior social status through purchasing luxury housing in high-end gated communities. For most of the interviewees, housing in different types of neighbourhoods shows highly different social status: the order from low to high is the urban village, the traditional work-unit compound, economically affordable housing, the ordinary commodity gated community (with little communal space and few services), and upscale gated communities. 'Economically affordable housing' here means commodity housing estates with prices subsidised the work units. Even within the range of different commodity gated communities, higher housing prices of particular developments indicate higher social status, and this type of social status linked with living in private gated neighbourhoods is taken seriously by most affluent residents. Low (2003) shows how gated communities in America defend the idea of 'whiteness' related to the imaginary of beauty, higher social class and virtue that dominates the American society. In the cases studied for this research, living in exclusive gated communities presents imaginaries of enjoying high-quality neighbourhood environments, owning conspicuous consuming power, and thus having superior social status as civilised and successful citizens in contemporary Chinese cities.

The housing developers usually stress a positive social representation of gated communities in their promotional materials to attract potential affluent house buyers. For example, the brochure for an upscale gated community called 'Landmark Centre' (Ao Hai Cheng) in Zhanjiang uses the slogan of 'Only a few people are talking with the world' with pictures of local celebrities to indicate that people who own houses here share the high social status of the social celebrities. In other similar types of advertisements, buyers of housing in gated communities are called 'nobility' (*guizu*) and 'king' (*diwang*), which would have been unacceptable in the pre-reform era when egalitarianism was the main ideology (Wu, 2008). In these advertisements, the image of a successful man with great fortune and a high social reputation is inscribed into the consumption behaviour of buying and living in gated communities, which reflects the social reputation of gated communities on the supply side.

This social representation can be understood in the context of economic and ideological change in post-reform China. Since the economic reforms directed by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, the state introduced individual and private ownership into the economic system and allowed market logic into the allocation and circulation of resources, services and capital (Wu et al., 2006). The egalitarian ideology of the Maoist era partly collapsed, and the government encouraged economic activists to start privately-owned enterprises and sectors to promote the economic development of China. As Chairman Deng Xiaoping famously said: “It doesn't matter if a cat is black or white as long as it catches mice. Poverty is not socialism, and to be rich is glorious; We should allow some people and regions to become rich first so that they can bring along the later prosperity” (Vogel, 2011). These words reflect the dominant ideology of the post-reform era of introducing market logic into the Chinese economic system to increase the economic development of China (Naughton, 1993). Middle-class and capitalists who were previously considered ‘class enemies’ have now become the new valorised role model in contemporary Chinese society (Pow, 2009; Vogel, 2011). The emerging affluent people and classes, such as white-collar professionals and private entrepreneurs, have now become seen to be glorious people with superior social status. Compared with “model workers” unselfishly serving the Party and state in the Maoist era, today’s role models are the affluent middle and upper classes who have become successful through increasing personal income and capital accumulation (Rosen, 2004). Living in upscale gated communities becomes an instrument for these ‘successful’ affluent people to realise their housing aspirations and show off their higher social status.

Under these economic, political and ideological circumstances, it is understandable for those living in poor neighbourhoods outside gated communities to recognise and accept this specific space-based social status in Zhanjiang. They do not show much dissatisfaction or resentment towards those living in gated communities, and some even regard buying housing in gated communities as an important life pursuit for them too. For example, Ms Chen, a retiree living in a work-unit compound outside the Central GC, explained her ideas:

Of course, they [people who live in upscale gated communities] are richer than us, and they can afford the high housing prices inside. Their high social positions derive from their ability and endeavour in earning money. They deserve to live in such a good neighbourhood. My family and I are still trying to make more money to afford the housing in an estate. I believe we will also live there in the future. Then we can enjoy better living conditions as well as higher status. ... I do not even visit their neighbourhood because the outsiders are not allowed to go inside. Also, we have quite different social and economic backgrounds, they may not be willing to interact with us (Interviewee 9, Ms Chen, Retiree, from a work-unit compound outside the Central GC).

Influenced by the ideology of the earlier rich leading the way for other groups to follow, these residents from lower classes similarly desire to live in high-end gated communities and enjoy higher social status when they earn enough money to afford the expensive housing. This phenomenon echoes another research finding in a study of gated communities in Guangzhou (Breitung, 2012) which showed how residents living outside gated communities appear to accept the demarcation of social status through the use of gating. However, they are potentially aware that affluent people living inside gated communities have little interest in interacting with people outside because of the identity differentiation. Although gating has not brought about social tensions or conflicts between residents inside and outside, the gates and walls have materialised the class division between the rich and poor and thus further reduced the possibilities of social interactions between different types of urban neighbourhoods.

Modern lifestyle, cultural capital and distinction

For most of the interviewees in this study, living in gated communities not only shows their income level and superior social status but is also a manifestation of their cultural taste and modern lifestyle, which makes them distinct from people in ordinary neighbourhoods. The ideas of cultural capital and distinction proposed by Bourdieu (1987) are useful “theoretical tools” to understand how living in gated communities distinguishes affluent people from others. In considering the relationship between

culture and class relations, Bourdieu criticises the perspective of Kantian aesthetic philosophy which views culture as “purity of aesthetic contemplation derived from moral agnosticism and disinterested” (Jenkins, 2014). Cultural capital (taste) arises from the struggle for social status, and people mobilise their cultural capital to compete over social status, sense of honour and distinction (Bourdieu 1987). Cultural capital and taste are not merely a neutral, disinterested and arbitrary aesthetic but manifest class relations and social-spatial segregation in Zhanjiang, where emerging gated communities have become the places to present, cultivate and maintain the superior cultural taste and distinction of affluent residents.

The majority of interviewees felt that lifestyles in gated communities are more advanced, civilised and modern than other types of neighbourhoods. For these residents, the gates and walls can prevent outsiders, such as rural migrants and potential criminals, from intruding on their neighbourhoods, making their lives safer and more peaceful. The paid management companies also put much effort into keeping the landscape and layout in their neighbourhoods clean and tidy all the time, which made residents' lives more orderly and hygienic. Residents are confident that the safe and orderly physical environment and private management of gated communities by real estate companies can enable them to enjoy a more civilised and modern lifestyle than other residents who cannot afford these houses. For instance, Ms Liu from the Central GC compared the lifestyle in gated communities with work-unit compounds:

The reason that I buy the house in this community is that I want to enjoy a more comfortable, secure and modern lifestyle. My parents now live in a traditional work-unit compound. There are few community services for them to use. And there are no community managers in their community. So they have to deal with all the community issues through their community members. And most of their residents are not active in solving these issues, which makes their neighbourhoods dirty, disorderly and bad. ... However, the situation in our community is a lot different. We have a large area of green spaces and our exclusive fitness club. We don't have to care about the management issues in our community. All these issues such as landscape [maintenance], services, security, sanitation and parking will be

taken care of by the management company. We can enjoy the beautiful scenery and the imported wines without going outside. All we need to do is buy a house in a gated community and pay the management fee monthly (Interviewee 2, Ms Liu, doctor, Central GC).

According to the interviewees, the recurrent views are that living in gated communities with high-end and diverse neighbourhood services not only makes their life more convenient and comfortable but also represents their modern lifestyles that are quite different from those poor neighbourhoods. As long as they buy housing in gated communities and afford the monthly management fees, the management companies can ensure the security, social and physical order, and hygiene of their neighbourhood, which maintains their civilised and modern lifestyle. Interestingly, one interviewee also mentioned that ‘the management services in our society is like the ‘Red Wine’ served in high-end restaurants” (Interviewee 22, Ms Wu, retiree, Central GC). What she means is that the management company will take care of all the issues and conflicts inside the community before residents notice them. This is like the services in the restaurant that the waiters will top up your red wine glass before you drink the whole glass of wine. Although they have to pay a high management fee monthly to the management company (around 400 yuan per month), they are happy to ‘buy’ this type of modern community service and distinctive lifestyle. Living in gated communities and enjoying modern lifestyles has allowed them ‘distinction’ in contemporary Zhanjiang. In contrast with the modern and ‘civilised’ lifestyle of gated communities, the traditional lifestyles in the urban villages and derelict work-unit compounds are considered totally obsolete and unbearable. Those who still live in poor neighbourhoods with ‘backward’ lifestyles are considered uncivilised, laggard and dirty with inferior social status. These attitudes reflect the underlying class struggle for the middle-class’s distinct cultural tastes (Bourdieu, 1987) which is also reflected in social discrimination against and exclusion of uncivilised outsiders based on this privileged lifestyle and space of gated communities.

The modern and civilised lifestyle in gated communities is not only defined by wealthy residents inside but also supported by local government agencies. These upscale gated communities are annually awarded the title of ‘Civilised Demonstration

Residential Quarter' by local government. As explained by the Director of the Residential Committee:

These upscale residential quarters (gated communities) are clean and tidy. The living environments inside are quiet, and the landscapes are pleasant. In addition, most residents inside are people of high quality and seldom make trouble. They can regulate their own lives very well with the help of management companies. Thus, we have given these residential quarters 'civilised communities' awards for several years. When superior officials come to our city for civilian inspection, we always introduce them to visit these gated communities (Interviewee 51, Ms Huang, the director in the Residential Committee)

According to Elias's (1978) description of the civilising process in the 18th century, Western society in that period believed itself superior to earlier societies and 'primitive' contemporary ones. Thus, the idea of 'civilisation' can refer to various facts such as technology, manners, types of dwellings and social structures, often identified with Western advanced industrial nations (Pow, 2007). In the case of the communities researched in this study, these upscale gated communities are propagandised and promoted by the local government agencies as civilised residential spaces, and the residents are considered civilised individuals who are morally and socially superior to the 'uncivilised' outsiders. These governmental practices further strengthen the distinctive, advanced and modern status of upscale gated communities, which are consequently mobilised by the residents to distinguish themselves from 'uncivilised' outsiders and justify their distinct social status and cultural taste.

Another important aspect of the modern lifestyle is the desire for natural or artificial scenery inside their neighbourhoods, such as landscaped green space. Interviewees usually referred to these factors as a healthy and 'green' lifestyle. For these residents, living in a neighbourhood with landscaped areas and green space is an essential sign of healthy and advanced living which further distinguishes them from other citizens. This is also reflected in promotional advertisements by housing developers that pay particular attention to natural resources such as mountains and rivers. Fraser (2000,

p.53) suggests that the 'marketing of green, pleasant aspects of a constructed nature to create a buffer zone between individual apartments and larger spatial contexts' can be seen as 'Oasification'. Firstly, if the housing estate is located by natural features such as rivers or lakes, housing developers will amplify these advantages in promotional materials. A famous Chinese proverb in The Analects of Confucius says: "Kind people love mountains; wise people love water." These natural features not only bring about a healthy environment for human bodies but also present the artistic conception and cultural meanings of good moral quality. As Tuan (1993) suggests, the mountains and water in Chinese culture are always associated with awe of the power of nature, the sacred, and more popularly, fortune and wisdom. When interviewees expressed their desires for natural scenery, they simultaneously presented their healthy lifestyle, superior moral values and distinct social status. For housing estates without natural features, the developers sometimes create artificial 'natural' scenery inside the gated communities to fill this absence. For instance, the developers of the Suburban GC in this study constructed a 300 m² man-made lake in the centre of the development, which the residents find attractive and are proud of these beautiful 'natural' landscapes. One resident explained that: "Although we know this lake is artificial, we love to walk around it and enjoy its beauty, and it makes our home different from other ordinary neighbourhoods" (Interviewee 17, Mr Li, owner of car repairment company, Suburban GC). In addition, a housing sales agent also pointed out that "the natural scenery of mountain and water is closely related to good fortune in traditional Chinese society". Although the local authorities forbid the use of these types of superstitions associated with natural scenery in the promotional materials for housing estates, salespeople in China always use them as selling points to attract potential customers.

The above discussion shows how the residential space, lifestyle and natural scenery of gated communities are mobilised by urban residents to show their distinction from other citizens. Residents in gated communities also display their distinction through their social practices, such as clothing, eating and drinking foreign food and wine and owning private cars. These social behaviours in upscale gated communities are essential factors that make visible their exclusive cultural capital and social status.

These social practices are embodied cultural capital - the appearance and presentation of the body to others, such as accent, posture and demeanour (Bourdieu 1986; Bennett et al., 2009). In his famous work, *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1987) pays particular attention to people's daily activities like eating, sports, shopping, and dress, and how these reflect people's embodied cultural capital and mark their distinctive lifestyles. According to Bourdieu, in many fields of the social world, people unconsciously show their social status and position through their preferences for specific activities, possessions and performances (Bennett et al., 2009; Jenkins, 2014). Affluent people, like the interviewees for this study, living in gated communities make use of their specific activities, accent, performance and preference to distinguish themselves from poor residents in ordinary neighbourhoods and replacement households in gated communities (see Chapter 4).

For instance, the following two quotes illustrate residents' preferences for conspicuous consumption and keeping pet dogs as distinct cultural symbolism of affluent residents of upscale gated communities. Ms Wang, an international trader who sells luxury clothing and bags from Europe to China, illustrated her retailing experiences in the Central GC:

One of my businesses is buying big-brand bags and clothing from European countries such as France, Italy and the UK and selling them to Chinese consumers. Today's rich people in China are extremely fond of buying these luxury clothes and bags to decorate themselves, which show their specific aesthetic standard and, more importantly, demonstrate their social status and taste to others. When I first sold these luxury goods to our neighbours [inside the gated community], only a few of them bought these expensive goods. As more and more people bought these luxury goods and exhibited them to other neighbours, I could sell them to more people. And this consumption of luxury clothing and bags shows your wealth and status to your neighbours, making them recognise your membership of our neighbourhood (Interviewee 6, Ms Wang, international trader, Central GC).

The second example is given by Ms Lao from the Suburban GC, who introduced her understanding of keeping pet dogs:

Keeping pet dogs has become an emerging social trend in our cities recently. Pet dogs can bring you lots of joy and happiness. They can even show that you have a good social-economic situation. Do you know the cost of keeping my pet dog, an Alaskan Malamute? I spend around 2000 yuan each month only for its food, and this does not include the fee for training and vaccinations. As this dog is quite big and sporty, I need a massive space in my house for it. When others notice that I have an Alaskan Malamute, they know that I am rich and own a big home. This indirectly shows my social status (Interviewee 41, Ms Lao, doctor, Suburban GC).

These two examples illustrate how residents' bodily and social practices, including are mobilised to present their distinct cultural capital and social status. Such different social practices as wearing luxury clothing and keeping pet dogs, have the similarities because they show that only rich people can afford this conspicuous consumption. Thus, these bodily practices are mobilised by them to distinguish themselves from people in the lower classes. Other similar bodily practices mentioned by the interviewees include driving luxury private cars, regularly going to the gym to keep fit and sending their children to various classes for art and sports. Residents of gated communities who cannot afford or maintain these bodily practices may be considered outsiders who do not truly belong to in the community. Although some residents such as relocated households have bought houses in the gated community, they are considered outsiders and poor people with lower social status, because they do not have enough wealth to afford similar consumption behaviours and cultural tastes. Through these various bodily practices, residents of gated communities show their distinct cultural tastes and values to their neighbours and to outsiders to manifest their superior social status and strengthen their membership of the privileged community. Gated communities have become exclusive and privileged spaces for the cultivation and development of significant cultural capital, which is mobilised by middle-class residents to define, compete for and strengthen their superior social status and justify their exclusionary practices in private neighbourhoods.

Social homogeneity

The desire for social homogeneity in gated communities was also expressed by most of the interviewees. They were eager to live in exclusive communities with other neighbours of 'high quality' and have similar socio-economic backgrounds. This made them feel relatively safe and able to enjoy life without disturbance from dangerous and uncivilised people outside their communities. Ms Yuan, an accountant living in the Central GC, gave her opinions:

The price of our house in this gated community is rather high in our city, but it is not the highest. So, some rich people from the countryside [can] still afford it, as well as some residents in urban villages. Although they are rich, their lifestyle and [life] quality are not the same levels as us. Sometimes I feel pretty uncomfortable living with them. And many community conflicts are caused by them. That's one point that I am not satisfied with within my current community. I know there is a new gated community being built in the 'Jinshawan' with a much higher price. I plan to move there with my family. I ought to get better neighbours there (Interviewee 3, Ms Yuan, accountant, Central GC).

Among the interviewees, there is a strong desire to live with like-minded people with similar social-economic backgrounds in gated communities that keep social homogeneity inside and away from the potential poor, dangerous and uncivilised residents outside their neighbourhoods. Sibley (1988) uses the term 'purification' of social space to describe the process that categorises specific social groups as potentially non-conforming and dangerous and prevents them from entering a particular area by securing boundaries and thus maintains social homogeneity inside these boundaries. In contemporary Zhanjiang, privileged residents also seek to preserve the 'purity' of 'middle-class' residential space through the filtration of upscale gated communities which exclude those poor people who cannot afford to live inside. They search for more expensive and exclusive gated communities to exclude all the possibilities of living with those urban poor and rural migrants who are considered uncivilised, dangerous and lacking middle-class cultural capital. For these residents, the 'good life' and 'modern lifestyle' in gated communities depend on the purification

of social environments that can ensure their controllable, undisturbed and peaceful modern lifestyle of their imaginations. As Ms Yu from the Suburban GC further argued:

Some clothing shops, grocery shops and restaurants on the ground floor of our residential buildings face the street outside our neighbourhoods and [are] thus open to the broader public. However, my family and I seldom use them because urban villagers and building workers usually appear in these places, making the environments noisy and chaotic. Instead, I tend to use those shops only opening for the insiders, which can ensure quiet and safe places for us. I also require my children not to visit these places with lots of strangers and poor people (Interviewee 40, Ms Yu, teacher, Suburban GC).

It is evident that people living in gated communities not only search for social homogeneity inside their residential space but also try to distance themselves from other unwanted social groups in different spaces for entertainment, consumption and diet in adjacent areas. They also expressed a strong desire to create safe, homogeneous and controllable social environments for their children in both their residential spaces and schools (as discussed above). For these residents, living inside gated communities reflects their desire to stay away from unwanted contact with unexpected and dangerous people and space outside their privileged world and away from any life experiences that may be disturbing, chaotic and painful (Sennett, 1977). And their precious children, who grow up in completely homogeneous, privileged and purified environments, may totally lack the experiences of knowing and interacting with other social groups, and this may increase their fear of uncivilised urban poor (Low, 2003) and reduce their empathy for people from different social backgrounds (Anderson, 2004).

4.3 Fear of crime, social control and search for absolute security

The fear of crime and searching for security are two of the most prominent factors for the rapid growth of gated communities worldwide, documented by many scholars (Atkinson and Flint, 2004a; Blakely and Snyder, 1998; Low, 2003). In the Chinese urban research literature about gated communities, most researchers consider that gating has existed in Chinese cities for a long period of time and fear of crime is not a

remarkable factor for the development of gated communities (Huang, 2006; Miao, 2003; Wu, 2005). However, with the rapid growth of private commodity gated communities in China in the past two decades, the fragmentation of social space and widening income inequality has led to an increased sense of insecurity for urban residents (Huang and Low, 2008; Wu, 2005; Xie and Zhou, 2014). This section discusses gated community residents' anxieties about urban crime and disorder, their perceptions of different types of social control in gated communities, and how the fear of crime has become an important factor for living in gated communities.

Security behind the gates, fear of crime and the poor 'others'

During the transformation from a centrally planned economy to a market-driven economy, the privatisation of housing provision and urban governance have destroyed the traditional strict control of the urban population by local government and created ungovernable fragmented social spaces (Bray, 2005; Wu et al., 2006). Many research studies show that this economic and social transformation has exacerbated income inequality and lack of social integration in contemporary Chinese cities and has led to the rapid increase in crime rates in China since 1978 (Cheong and Wu, 2015). Theft and violent crimes (such as robbery, kidnapping and murder) that were relatively rare in the socialist era have now become more common in contemporary Chinese cities (Bray, 2005), although the overall crime rate is relatively low compared with other countries worldwide (Zhang, 2012). Public statistics show that China's overall crime rate (reported as the number of crimes per 100,000 people) in 2021 is 30.15, ranking 109 in the world, which is relatively low in the world (World Population Review, 2021). The official government statistics for crime show a significant drop in the total number of crimes in China since 2015, from 7.2 million in 2015 to 4.8 million in 2020 (Law Yearbook of China, 2015-2020). Among various types of crimes, violent crime and theft have declined, while fraud crime has increased. These outcomes of rapidly decreasing crime rates are similar to research results for the crime rate in Guangzhou (Xu,, although many scholars have pointed out that the real crime rate in China may be higher than the official statistics due to under-reporting and under-recording (Cheong and Wu, 2015; He and Marshall, 1997; Xu, 2017).

A senior officer from the social security department of the Street Office described the crime situation in Zhanjiang:

The overall crime rates are low on the urban scale and have decreased slightly since the implementation of the 'God's Eye' program [described below] in recent years. We have also increased our police patrol squad in crowded areas in our cities. Our cities are much safer than before. ... The crime rates in the gated commodity housing estate are lower than those in the urban village and work-unit compounds because of the complete security apparatus. Most of the crime in the gated communities is fraud and theft. However, in the urban village, there are more violent crimes like armed fights and taking drugs (Interviewee 10, Mr Zhang, a government official from the Security Department in Street Office).

According to this Security Department official, the overall crime rate in Zhanjiang decreased in the last decade and this is supported by the experience of most of the resident interviewees reporting that they have encountered less violent crime in urban areas. As one interviewee stated: "There were many cases of wallet theft and 'motorcyclist robbery' in our cities before 2010. However, I have seldom heard of these crimes in recent years" (Interviewee 3, Ms Yuan, accountant, Central GC). The decrease in the crime rate in Zhanjiang is partly due to the large-scale installation of 'God Eye' programs in Chinese cities. The 'God's Eye' program, also called a Digital Remote Monitoring System, monitors urban spaces in real-time video through a series of surveillance cameras in essential locations such as banks, shopping malls, hotels, residential areas, hospitals and retail departments. Combined with face recognition technology, criminal offenders are much easier to identify and catch. This makes it risky to commit a crime in important public spaces, and, thus reduces the overall crime rate in cities. In addition, the police officer mentioned that another critical issue is that the crime rate varies between different types of neighbourhoods. The complete coverage of the CCTV system and other security apparatus, such as walls, gates and electronic recognition systems in gated communities, helps to reduce the crime rate in these neighbourhoods. This is why gated communities in Zhanjiang are considered safer than other types of communities that are without security apparatus. A recent

social survey conducted in Nanchang, China (Sun and Webster, 2019) also showed similar results about the crime rates in different types of communities in Nanchang: from high to low it is urban villages, work-unit compounds, and commodity gated communities. Another quantitative study conducted in Nanjing (Wang et al., 2021) also indicates that the increased level of entry control has significantly reduced the burglary rate in gated communities. These social surveys and statistics show that the crime rates in upscale gated communities are generally lower than in poor neighbourhoods in China. However, while the residents of gated communities can secure themselves with gates, walls, and diverse security apparatus, those living in poor neighbourhoods without the resources to support these security measures are still suffering more severe levels of crime. The local governments have not provided enough support for these poor neighbourhoods to reduce the crime rate and alleviate the underlying inequality of crime control and management between different types of neighbourhoods. Under these circumstances, living in gated communities is considered by urban residents an effective way to ensure security. As explained by Mr Gao, a resident of the Central GC:

Gated communities give us a lot of protection from crime. I think safety is the most important reason for us to choose to live in gated communities. I have lived in this community for three years, and I only remember two thefts that happened in our neighbourhood. This crime rate is relatively low. Most of our residents are high-quality people with no criminal tendencies. But, to be sure, the gates and surveillance system cannot eliminate all the chances of crime inside our community. Thus, we are careful with our personal property, such as cars and other costly property in our home, especially when I meet with people I have not met before. The gates, walls, and the 24-hour patrolling security guard make us feel safe inside our neighbourhood (Interviewee 11, Mr Gao, programmer, Central GC).

For most interviewees, the search for safety is one of the most important motives for living in gated communities. They considered that the physical design of gates, walls and various types of security apparatus, such as electronic authentication systems and surveillance cameras, helped increase the difficulty of potential criminals targeting their neighbourhood and conducting crime inside. Newman

(1972) called these physical architectural design methods to improve the security of residential neighbourhoods 'target hardening' strategies, creating a more clearly bounded and controllable private space to prevent criminal behaviour. Thus, the ownership of private and clearly-defined gated neighbourhoods and increased control over these defensive residential spaces have largely ensured the safety of residents inside gated communities. Both the physical design and the private hired security guards of gated communities have reduced residents' fear of crime in their neighbourhood. Consequently, many residents in Chinese cities seek to improve their personal security and keep away from criminal behaviours by moving to gated communities.

Residents of gated communities view gated communities as insulated forms of residential 'bunkers' for security (Atkinson, 2006; Davis, 2006). The housing developers also actively preach the importance of security in gated communities and attract potential house buyers by stressing the unique security apparatus available. For instance, Mr Wang, a manager of a real estate company, illustrates their promotional strategies:

We usually use different advertising strategies targeted at people of different consumption levels. For instance, in terms of the security apparatus, we will install a series of high-tech security equipment, such as fingerprint scanners, face recognition, infrared burglar alarms and one-button alarm apparatus, to attract affluent customers to our high-end gated communities. New high-tech security equipment and diversified protection measures enable us to draw in our affluent customers much more quickly. These affluent people are more concerned about their personal safety. We normally convince them to buy our housing by promising that our high-tech security equipment can safeguard them from many criminal behaviours, such as burglary, vandalism, and other violent crimes. (Interviewee 14, Mr Wang, general manager in a real estate company)

These housing developers and real estate agents precisely grasp affluent home buyers' anxiety about criminal behaviour, and the specific need for security in their residential spaces. On the one hand, they made use of this demand for

security to promote their gated housing estates through installing various high-tech security equipment. On the other hand, their marketing of these security services at the neighbourhood scale have largely raised the residents' awareness of risks to their homes and neighbourhood (Atkinson and Blandy, 2018), which further diffuses the anxieties and fears of crime among house buyers. In their idealised imagination of gated communities as a realised dream of complete safety and security, residents become more dependent on the security services to release them from their fear of crime. The build-up of various defensive boundaries and spaces has given residents the sign that society and the outside world are full of risks and insecurity (Baumann, 2007), which strengthens their willingness to apply more advanced security apparatus to safeguard themselves (Flusty, 1997). Among the interviewees, nearly three-quarters stated that they could not imagine residential life without gates and walls to defend them from diverse criminal behaviours. This is also a critical reason why many residents resist the government's policy of opening gated communities.

Although the decrease of the overall crime rate in the city and moves into private gated communities have generated a certain sense of security for the interviewees, it is too naive to consider that these residents are totally without fear of criminal behaviours in their neighbourhood. One crucial factor is that increased income inequality and the fragmentation of social space in cities have primarily increased community residents' sense of insecurity and fear of crimes committed by their poor and 'uncivilised' neighbours. The gated communities in Zhanjiang are mainly located near other types of neighbourhoods, such as urban villages and work-unit compounds, where residents are relatively poor. Although no apparent conflict has emerged between the rich and the poor residents, most of the interviewees (affluent residents) expressed their concern about the morality and 'quality' of their poor neighbours in ordinary neighbourhoods and indicated that they are fearful of these people as potential criminals. In their daily lives, they carefully avoid moving into these poor neighbourhoods or interacting with their poor neighbours.

For example, Ms Xie of the Central GC illustrates her feelings about her poor neighbours:

Living in our community, I can enjoy a quiet and comfortable lifestyle with residents who are similar to us. When I walk outside our community, I usually meet with residents in surrounding urban villages and migrant workers. They talk in their own language, such as 'leizhou hua' (a local language of the nearby countryside), with a loud noise, which makes me quite uncomfortable. Their behaviour is so rude, which makes them look like barbarians. I heard from my colleagues that many drug abusers live in those urban villages. That's so dangerous. So I like to stay in my own community rather than interact with those uncivil strangers." (Interviewee 23, Ms Xie, manager, Central GC).

Although in contemporary Chinese cities over 75 per cent of the urban population own their own houses, these statistics gloss the fact that millions of urban residents still live in poor neighbourhoods, derelict work-unit compounds, shanty towns and urban villages (Wang et al., 2020). Thus, the spatial sorting of different types of neighbourhoods has clearly demarcated the rich people in upscale gated communities from the poor people in ordinary neighbourhoods (Tombs, 2014). As Ms Xi says, the physical boundaries of gates and walls of gated communities serve as the instruments to 'split' the morally 'good' people inside from the 'bad' people outside who are considered more likely to commit crimes. But as argued by Low (2003), this idea of social splitting is dualistic thinking that oversimplifies and dichotomises cultural and social expectations to split the 'self' from the 'other' as good or bad. In the case of the residents interviewed for this study, around two-third of residents of gated communities consider their neighbours who are similar to them as morally good residents who are unlikely to commit crimes. However, poor residents living in adjacent ordinary gated communities are deemed to be dangerous 'drug abusers' and moral 'others' who are likely to become the source of criminal behaviours. This dualistic thinking complements and enforces their fear of poor 'others' outside their gated communities, rooted in their propertied middle-class cultural politics.

The research for this thesis shows that residents living in the suburban gated community have higher levels of fear of crime than those living in the central urban gated community. Consequently, they are more inclined to use the public spaces and services inside their neighbourhood and refuse to have contact with their neighbours in nearby areas. This is because the suburban gated community is mainly surrounded by other types of poor neighbourhoods, while there are more high-end gated communities located near the central urban gated community. As one resident of the suburban gated community explained:

I seldom hear of any violent crime inside our neighbourhood. I think our neighbourhood is relatively safe for living in. However, I feel unsafe when I visit our surrounding poor and derelict neighbourhoods because many local urban villagers and poor people live there. Most of them do not have proper jobs, and many teenage toughs always hang out, gamble and even take drugs there. Some neighbours told me that they might rob your money when you are alone. Thus, I hardly visit those neighbourhoods or have contact with those people. I usually choose to walk and play inside our neighbourhood as much as possible (Interviewee 43, Ms Zhang, retiree, Suburban GC).

It is evident that not only the physical environment but also the social environments of the neighbourhood have a substantial impact on residents' fear of crime. The outcomes show that residents of the gated community surrounded by poor neighbourhoods are more afraid of their neighbours and the outside world. For these residents, the social environments inside gated communities are relatively safe because their neighbours are like-minded rich people. However, their poor neighbours are considered uncivilised and dangerous, and this is reinforced by their discriminatory discourse, media distortion and cultural stereotypes that psychologically separate them from their 'bad' neighbours (Low, 2003). This fear of poor neighbours has been further reinforced by the 'crime talk' (Sasson, 1995) between residents, through which the risks and dangers associated with poor residents are amplified in their gossip. Thus, gated communities are increasingly becoming places of similarity, bubbles of safety (Atkinson, 2008) and insulated spaces that avoid dangerous contact with poor neighbours. Residents' feelings of security thus are partly based on the complete exclusion of their poor

neighbours, which in turn cultivates their assumptions about the risks in the dangerous world outside their fortress. Anderson (2004) indicates that Philadelphians apply various strategies to avoid meeting and interacting with Black males on the street, a strategy he calls being 'streetwise'. In Zhanjiang, the 'streetwise' residents of gated communities insulate themselves in their security bubbles and avoid walking through adjacent poor neighbourhoods or having any contact with their poor neighbours.

Among the interviewees, female residents are more concerned about their personal safety and are more often keep inside the gates of the community. For instance, Ms Chen, a retiree from the Suburban GC, illustrate her fear of crime as a female resident:

I usually avoid walking outside of our neighbourhood for a long time, especially when I am alone. Although our cities are safer than before, there are still many people of 'low quality' who may commit various crimes such as robbery and sexual assault. I cannot oppose these criminal behaviours alone. Thus, I try my best to avoid these crime risks. So I seldom go out of my neighbourhood after 6 o'clock. If I need to go out at night, I usually choose to drive my car, making me feel much safer during my visit outside our neighbourhood (Interviewee 46, Ms Chen, retiree, Suburban GC).

Most female interviewees depend on the facilities, services and public spaces in their neighbourhoods while hardly visiting their neighbourhoods outside gated communities. As suggested by Walklate (1997), compared with males, females experience higher levels of fear of crime because they are more vulnerable to certain types of crime, such as sexual harassment and rape in the streets, and have less power to combat criminal behaviours. This explains why female residents are more inclined to live and stay inside their gated communities with more secure environments and seek to strengthen their security, such as driving private cars, when they go outside of their security bubbles (see Chapter 6).

Interviewees' fear of crime has been further fuelled by the reports in local media, which describe sensational and exaggerated crime scenes in Zhanjiang. Various scary

crimes, such as robbery with violence, kidnapping and murder, are reported and disseminated through dominant media systems, from television and newspapers to popular social media, such as Weibo and WeChat in China. These crime reports have greatly changed interviewees' perceptions of the risks prevalent in urban districts and thus increased their fears and anxieties about criminal behaviours. For example, Mr Zhang from the Suburban GC illustrates his experience:

Last year, I read a report on television that a salesclerk was killed by a drug abuser in the supermarket. The drug abuser was a poor resident from an urban village. He spent all his money to buy drugs and had no money to buy food. He was starving and stole fast food from the supermarket without paying. The salesclerk discovered him and took his food from his hand. Then the drug abuser took a knife from the goods shelf and killed the salesclerk. This case makes me feel rather scared about the poor residents living in the urban villages. You need to care for your safety even in the supermarket that has many guards and surveillance (Interviewee 20, Mr Zhang, teacher, Suburban GC).

The report of a single crime case has generated a long-lasting and deep-seated fear of crime and anxiety about urban villagers. It is evident that the decreasing crime rates in the urban districts have not created a complete sense of security among these affluent residents who are still concerned about the risks in the cities and criminal behaviours of the poor and dangerous populations. The reports of extreme criminal behaviour in powerful media systems have triggered fear about the risks and crimes outside gated communities and strengthened aspirations to keep separate from poor residents. As suggested by Glassner (2003), overwhelming media reports overstated the prevalence of crime and violence in American society, which has created a 'culture of fear' among citizens. Affluent residents living inside gated communities in China have similarly been deeply influenced by media reports, which have increased the fear of crime and poor neighbours. The fear of poor 'others' has contributed to the rise in existing underlying inequalities between the rich and poor. Poor residents living in ordinary communities are not only depicted as economically deficient but also morally decayed and dangerous. And gated communities are considered as the perfect place to exclude poor people and potential scary crimes.

The reports of crime by local media systems have the most significant impacts when the criminal behaviours and environments described are congruent with the life backgrounds and experiences of the interviewees. For instance, Mr Chen, a teacher living in the Suburban GC, sent me a WeChat message two weeks after the research interview, saying:

Did you see the news on the Weibo platform yesterday? It said that there was a local criminal gang who pretended to be the service workers in several gated communities. They knocked on your door and told you that they were hired by the management company to clean your kitchen for free. Once they entered your home, they tried to kidnap your children when you were not paying attention. ... You are exposed to these scary crimes even living in gated communities. I can't imagine life without gates and walls (Interviewee 18, Mr Chen, teacher, Suburban GC).

The local media has reported this criminal behaviour of kidnapping happening inside gated communities, which has generated widespread anxieties among residents of gated communities. Some of them even forbade their children to go to school in this period. They realised that even the gates and walls could not ensure their absolute security. Ironically, this piece of news was proved by the local police office to be fake news a few days later. Gerbner et al. (1980) used the term 'resonance' to describe how news reports of local crime or people being hurt in nearby neighbourhoods have a direct and intensive impact on creating fear of crime. In this case, even one piece of fake news about crime inside a gated community has aroused deep-seated fear among residents. The consistent media reports about fabled and overstated criminal behaviours have justified the need for gated communities but can never eliminate residents' anxieties behind the gates and walls.

Following the Covid-19 pandemic out-break in 2019, some people fled from Wuhan and travelled to the southern part of China. A small number of these citizens have arrived in Zhanjiang, which has caused fear of disease among urban residents. Mr Chen from the Suburban GC told me about his feelings through WeChat in 2020:

Residents from Wuhan have come to our cities, and they may carry the new disease. Living in gated communities can ensure that they do not come into your neighbourhoods because the security guards will prevent strangers from directly coming inside. If you live in neighbourhoods without gates and walls, you may be afraid of being infected by a new virus. The gated communities have ensured our safety and prevented the spread of disease (Interviewee 15, Mr Chen, manager, Suburban GC).

In the post-pandemic period, in place of the usual fear of crime, the spread of the infectious disease has posed new health and security threats to urban residents. For residents in gated communities, the controllable environments in their neighbourhoods and the exclusion of outsiders have undoubtedly contributed to their security. They now felt even more concerned about the risks and insecurity outside their gated communities and increasingly sought to hide in their insulated security bunkers (Atkinson, 2006). In this era of social and economic change, fear of crime and uncertainty is unrelated to the actual crime rates and risks in the cities (Low, 2001), but reflects the increasing use of various means to control and secure residential neighbourhoods and exclude unwanted poor 'others'. Through the lens of gated communities, the growing 'fortress mentality' of residents (Blakely and Snyder, 1998), and their desire for safety and disaffiliation from other social groups (Atkinson, 2006) is evident in contemporary Zhanjiang.

Formal and informal social control in gated communities

The above discussions have focussed on the security situations in Zhanjiang and residents of gated communities fear of crime. This section moves on to discuss the residents' perceptions of formal (private security guards and local police) and informal (neighbourhood cohesion and intervention) control of 'deviant' and criminal behaviours inside gated communities. It also reflects on how these perceptions of various social controls influences their sense of security and fear of crime in their neighbourhood lives.

Owning private security staff and CCTV systems which monitor and control access to residential spaces is a prominent characteristic of gated communities (Atkinson and Blandy, 2005). Private security guards not only control access but also coordinate with local police to prevent crime issues and deal with deviant behaviours within gated communities (Atkinson and Millington, 2018; Blakely and Snyder, 1998). This can be seen as the formal organisation for social control inside gated communities. The majority of interviewees trusted the safety of their neighbourhoods to the private security guards whose frequent presence and attentive service have created a certain degree of safety among these residents. Mr Li from the Suburban GC described his feelings about the security guards:

The security guards in our neighbourhood are pretty enthusiastic about solving your problems and take their duties seriously. They usually deal with deviant behaviours, such as theft and fraud, in our neighbourhood. If you spot any uncivilised behaviours and potential criminals, you can directly call them, and they will react very quickly. For example, I heard that once one of our neighbour's creditors came to our neighbourhood and threatened to hurt the neighbour, the security guards called the police immediately and helped him get out of the trouble. ... Our security guards always wear neat uniforms and usually patrol our neighbourhood to keep order inside, which makes me feel safe (Interviewee 17, Mr Li, owner of car repair company, Suburban GC).

The private security guards are mostly considered trustworthy by these residents, and they feel they can ask them to solve any problems in their daily lives. This increases their sense of security because they can immediately seek help from a formal security organisation whenever they encounter what they see to be social disorder and uncivilised behaviours. In addition, the private security guards who work and patrol 24-hours a day also contribute to creating a sense of safe living environments. As described by interviewees, private security guards wear marine blue uniforms that are like the police uniform and Chinese military uniform. Some residents felt that the uniforms made the security guards look like police officials and therefore more formal and powerful, which increased their sense of safety. As suggested by Balkin and Houlden (1983), the 'occupational presence' of people in local government and police

offices with visible uniforms can create the 'symbolic reassurance' of a secure environment that helps to reduce the fear of crime. In this sense, the employment of a private security force as a means of formal social control inside gated communities has positive effects on residents' sense of security.

The residents' relationship with local police and their ability to seek help from external agencies also influence their ability to deal with crimes and fear of crime (Warner and Rountree, 1997). Mr Zhang, a government official from the Security Department in the Street Office, described how the local police force had a closer relationship with the management companies, security personnel and residents in gated communities than with poor neighbourhoods such as urban villages:

The residents in the gated communities have more trust in our ability to solve local crime issues and conflicts. Many of them call us or write letters to us to seek help for local problems. In addition, the managers of the gated communities consistently report issues and conflicts in their neighbourhoods to us, which can primarily increase our ability to deal with these problems. However, many local urban villagers tend to solve their problems through gang fights. They also like to ask the elders in their clans to solve their problems and conflicts. Some of our staff are even unwilling to be involved in the complex conflicts in urban villages (Interviewee 10, Mr Zhang, a government official from the Security Department in Street Office).

This comment indicates that the social networks and relationships between residents and local police agencies have significant influence on local communities' ability to seek help from external agencies and control criminal and violent issues. Compared with poor neighbourhoods with low trust in relations with local police agencies, the residents and management panels of gated communities have closer relationships with the local police force and rely on help and control from local authorities. This situation is similar to that in England where affluent neighbourhoods have better reciprocal relationships with local police offices than those poor neighbourhoods (Girling et al., 2005). According to the interviewees in the present study, these close-knit relationships with external agencies, such as police and government, have increased the efficiency of

local police in solving crime and disorder and have reduced their concerns about safety inside their community.

Although the reliance on, and trust in formal social control have partly reduced residents' fear of crime, several interviewees still presented their concerns about the ability of security guards to deal with crime and violence. For example, Ms Pan from the Central GC expressed her concerns:

Our security guards are zealous and hard-working, but I am suspicious about their ability to confront the criminals. Most of the security staff are relatively older adults, and they are not genuinely professional security personnel and have not got specialised training. Some of them are even very short and slight. If violence and severe crimes happen, I think they are not competent to deal with those issues. ... Some of the security guards do not strictly control the entrances and the gates, and they may let some outsiders get into our neighbourhoods. This also makes me feel unsafe (Interviewee 47, Ms Pan, retiree, Central GC).

In both gated communities, although the private security guards are considered an essential mechanism for social control, residents do not fully trust their abilities to deal with crime, especially violent crimes. The first reason is that the management companies employ retirees and relatively older people as security guards, aiming to reduce expenditure on neighbourhood management. Thus, some residents considered these security guards to be incompetent. Secondly, residents argued that the laziness and nonfeasance of some security personnel might lead to increased risks and insecurity in the community. This partial mistrust of security panels for formal social control has increased fears of crime and anti-social behaviour within the gates.

In addition to formal social control, informal social control also plays an essential role in regulating social disorder and reducing the fear of crime in neighbourhoods. Informal social control is closely connected to the idea of social capital, defined as 'features of social networks, norms of reciprocity and social organisations that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (Putnam, 2000, p12). As Atkinson and

Flint (2004b) suggest, the two main characteristics of informal control in neighbourhood issues are: “the existence of collective norms and values within a ‘community’; and the ability of that community to regulate its members to control visible signs of social disorder”. Social cohesion among neighbours in local communities which can prevent crime and violence is also termed ‘collective efficacy’ (Sampson et al., 1997). The following paragraphs discuss the informal social control in gated communities in Zhanjiang through three critical perspectives: neighbourhood social ties; expectations of informal social control; and exercise of social control (Sampson et al., 1997; Wickes and Hipp, 2018).

As discussed in detail in Chapter 4, the majority of residents valued their privacy and privatised lifestyle in gated communities and lacked social cohesion with their neighbours. As a result, most of them have not formed strong neighbourhood relationships and do not trust them to solve neighbourhood conflicts and or deal with uncivilised behaviours. This lack of social cohesion is more severe in the Central GC where residential mobility is higher than in Suburban GC. Residents of the Central GC are unwilling to directly confront neighbourhood problems and conflicts and have low expectations of informal social control for regulating anti-social behaviours. For instance, as Ms Xie in the Central GC described:

I have heard of some neighbourhood conflicts and criminal cases in the past two years, but I did not directly get involved in these issues. I think the management company and the security guards are the main agencies in charge. I want to enjoy my neighbourhood life without being bothered by these distractions. So if these issues do not influence my home and life, I tend to avoid dealing with them. ... It’s quite normal. And I don’t think my neighbours will come to help me get out of these troubles. We are not friends, and I do not even know their names (Interviewee 23, Ms Xie, manager, Central GC).

It is evident that the lack of social networks and cohesion between these residents has led to their unwillingness and resistance to actively participating in controlling crime issues or confronting conflicts. These weak social ties between residents and their reluctance to exercise social control over conflicts and criminal behaviours are similar

to the 'moral minimalism' in an American suburban area (Baumgartner 1989). If these residents are unwilling to engage with neighbourhood conflicts and issues, they may be unlikely to actively help other neighbours when problems arise. This is why residents have low expectations of informal social control over crime and anti-social behaviours. This type of social order does not arise from intimate and harmonious neighbourhood relationships but from transiency, fragmentation and isolation among residents (Baumgartner 1989). The isolation from, and lack of familiarity with other residents in gated communities have made residents less involved in trouble but, more seriously, have increased their fear of crime and violence (Low, 2003) due to the lack of informal social control. As a result, when they encounter crimes and conflicts, they cannot seek help from their neighbours or local community and need to face these risks alone.

Compared with the Central GC, the Suburban GC shows higher levels of social cohesion (see Chapter 4) and neighbourhood participation. Several interviewees expressed their willingness to help regulate local conflicts and deal with uncivilised behaviours, especially those who are representatives in the Homeowner Association. For example, Mr Li, a representative of the HOA, said:

I have good relationships with many neighbours, and our neighbourhood is like a big family to me. Thus, I always volunteer to deal with neighbourhood disputes and help the management company control uncivilised behaviours, such as littering, making noise or injuring pets. [...] For severe criminal behaviours, such as violent crimes and armed fights, I tend to avoid dealing with them by myself. I usually choose to report to the police officers and security personnel. I am concerned about my personal safety in confronting these behaviours. And I don't want to involve myself in too many long-term troubles in local neighbourhoods. They [criminals] may wish to take revenge on you, which makes me feel somewhat insecure (Interviewee 17, Mr Li, owner of car repair company, Suburban GC).

The research evidence suggests that a higher level of social cohesion and neighbourhood networks have a positive impact on enhancing informal social control in neighbourhoods. The residents of the Suburban GC are more willing to deal with

neighbourhood anti-social behaviour and trust their neighbours to help them when problems arise. However, these types of informal social controls mainly relate to 'uncivilised behaviours', such as noise, littering and graffiti, and minor crimes, such as theft and fights. When coming across severe criminal behaviour, such as armed fights, robbery or murder, residents absolutely refused to deal with these issues because they were concerned about their personal safety and afraid of reprisals. They also did not want to build up long-term bad relationships with their neighbours through their interventions, which partly reflects their aspirations to maintain and enjoy their privatised neighbourhood lives.

Search for absolute security on the new home front

The above discussions indicated that the increasing social inequalities and fragmentations of urban space have primarily contributed to the fear of crime among affluent residents of gated communities. They seek to hide behind the gates and walls to create a more controllable and secure neighbourhood space. However, the lack of social cohesion in gated communities and the partial trust in formal security agencies means residents still feel unsafe behind the gates. For example, Ms Liu from the Central GC illustrates her concerns:

There are many service workers such as the cleaner, gardener and house servant who can enter our community without the permission of the security guards, and the house servants even have the keys for several dwellings. Most of them are poor workers with low skills, and lack educational backgrounds, and some of them come from rural areas. I am really afraid that they would steal our personal belongings and threaten our children. With these low-quality servants inside, I dare not let my child play alone in the community" (Interviewee 2, Ms Liu, doctor, Central GC).

Many service workers are hired by management companies and homeowners in gated communities to perform various manual tasks, such as cleaning, gardening and housework, which are considered 'menial jobs' by the residents (Zhang, 2012). This work is crucial to keeping the community clean and orderly, but these service workers are considered potential threats because of their low *quality* and rural migrant status.

Ironically, the indispensable roles of service workers in gated communities have become a permanent source of fear and insecurity. The gates and walls can provide some protection by excluding the poor 'others' from entering, but poor 'others' can still come inside as service workers, and they can also slip inside when the security guards are not on duty. Thus, it is never possible for residents to ensure absolute safety in their gated communities.

These uncontrollable situations and feelings of insecurity in their neighbourhood space have pushed residents to further equip their homes with various types of security apparatus. For instance, Ms Yuan, living in the Central GC, depicted her use of more advanced technology in defending her home:

Although our community is safe for living in, I want more security for my own home, so I use a lot of security equipment in my house. First, our front doors are two steel anti-theft doors of good quality with infrared alarms. And I have installed grills on all the windows and our balcony. I have also installed surveillance cameras in all the rooms inside my house. I can check the videos from these cameras on my smartphone anytime and anywhere, enabling me to have total control of my home space. If thieves enter our community, they will definitely not take my house as their target because of these types of security apparatus (Interviewee 3, Ms Yuan, accountant, Central GC).

In order to ensure absolute personal security, various security measures are installed to create private homes as new security fortress. There is wide-spread use of security grills in apartments in Chinese gated communities. The use of this '3D security' (security apparatus on an individual apartment on high floors) (Sun and Webster 2019) which reflects residents' concerns about the inefficacy of 2D security (gates, walls and guards) in gated communities. While the security control of neighbourhood realms cannot totally reduce the fear of crime, residents want absolute control of their domestic spaces and properties. These wealthy homeowners increasingly use various advanced security strategies and engage in vengeful rhetoric stirred by the media, against criminals and the poor 'others' who are seen as potential security threats (Atkinson and Blandy, 2018). Their sense of safety is built upon the total exclusion of other social

groups from their neighbourhood lives, especially those groups without economic or social resources.



Figure 5: Installed iron grills on their balconies and windows

Some interviewees even prepared various defensive tools, such as glare flashlights and tear gas in their homes to prevent potential criminal issues. As one interviewee said: “I have prepared some self-defence measures in my home so that I can fight back and punish home invaders when necessary” (Interviewee 18, Mr Chen, teacher, Central GC). Both defensive architectural design and the presence of various defensive measures reflect residents’ fear of crime and risk in their private homes. The use of physical, social and financial resources to secure their absolute personal and property security in their neighbourhoods and private homes signifies the increasing sense of insecurity and fear of crime in contemporary Zhanjiang. The situation in which armed residents live in their defensive homes within gated communities in segregated cities represents many ‘layers of security’ (Atkinson and Blandy, 2018) and is becoming more common in the affluent residential spaces of today’s Chinese cities. The escape of the well-off into these security zones has presented them with temporary security but has also insulated them into various ‘spaces of incarceration’ (Davis, 2006)

behind gates, walls, security doors and iron grills, where they look for absolute security but, in the end, are overwhelmed by endless risks and fears.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore demand-side perspectives on the reasons why people seek to buy and live in gated communities in contemporary Zhanjiang. Blakely and Snyder (1998) defined three different types of gated communities according to residents' demand: prestige; lifestyle; and security. However, as this chapter shows, gated communities in Zhanjiang are not easily classified in one specific type and residents usually have a mix of complex motives. These motives are synthesised into three different aspects: practical utilities; social status and cultural symbolism; and search for security.

There are many pragmatic considerations that influenced the interviewees to buy into gated communities. Firstly, most residents paid particular attention to the importance of high-end and exclusive neighbourhood services. This motive is further amplified by the lack of high-quality public services in the urban areas of Zhanjiang. Here, the 'club goods' theory (Webster, 2001) is useful to understand that these residents seek to enjoy exclusive neighbourhood services without the disturbance of other poor residents as free riders. Secondly, residents stressed the investment value of gated communities, especially with the rapidly increasing housing values in Chinese cities in the past ten years. Gated communities are considered to be not only places of shelter but also measures of increasing personal wealth and middle-class status. This is also built upon the belief that gated communities will be the most favourable and reliable dwellings in the future. Lastly, buying a house in a gated community is an important investment for residents' children. They want to ensure that their next generation lives and grows in safe, purified and controllable neighbourhoods and enjoy better educational opportunities in good 'school districts' (Wen et al., 2017).

Living in gated communities does not only enable residents to enjoy various pragmatic advantages but also represents their social status. Compared with the relative equally

allocated housing resources in the pre-reform welfare housing system, the privatisation of housing provision has enabled residents to display their income and wealth by buying housing gated communities and present their superior social status. These affluent middle-class residents, who would have been considered 'class enemies' in the pre-reform era, have now become the new model of 'successful' and 'high-quality' citizens in contemporary Chinese society. Moreover, for these affluent residents, living in gated communities signifies their distinct lifestyle and cultural taste. As suggested by Bourdieu (1987), class struggles for 'arbitrary culture taste', such as lifestyle, fashion, food and dwellings, are the most intense social competition over the definition of vulgarity and barbarism. In this study, middle-class residents describe living in upscale gated communities as having a more advanced, civilised and modern lifestyle that represents their unique cultural taste and distinct social status. These cultural tastes and capitals are further embodied in their social practices, such as consuming big-brand clothes, eating foreign cuisines, driving private cars and keeping pet dogs. The successful social identity and civilised lifestyle represented by living in gated communities are further strengthened by being recognised by local authorities. In this sense, gated communities have become an exclusive and privileged space for the cultivation and development of their distinction and middle-class cultural taste, which is mobilised by these middle-class residents to define, compete for, and strengthen their superior social status and justify their exclusionary practices in their private neighbourhoods. Thus, their strong desire to live near 'like-minded' people and keep the social homogeneity of residents of the community helps to create a 'purified' social environment (Sibley, 1988). Living in gated communities enables them to shut out unwanted contact with unexpected and dangerous people, avoid visiting 'dangerous' spaces outside their privileged world, and stay away from all life experiences that may be disturbing, chaotic and painful (Sennett, 1977).

While the fear of crime is normally not considered as an important factor for the widespread presence of gated housing in the pre-reform era (Wu, 2005), increasing crime rates and widening income inequality in the post-reform era have led to the heightened fear of crime among urban residents (Huang, 2006; Huang and Low, 2008). Although statistics show that crime rates in China have decreased in the past five years,

the widespread media reports of various criminal behaviours in Zhanjiang and the moral discrimination against, and cultural stereotypes of poor citizens have cultivated the interviewees' fear of crime and dangerous 'others'. Under these circumstances, these affluent residents seek to withdraw into gated communities in search of safe and controllable residential spaces. The fear of crime and the search for security have become indispensable factors influencing them to live in gated communities. Most of them felt that gated communities effectively reduce criminal behaviour and are much safer than ordinary neighbourhoods, such as work-unit compounds and urban villages. The research findings indicate that defensive architectural design, homogeneous social environment and formal security guards of gated communities have provided residents with a certain level of sense of security.

However, their distrust of private security personnel (as formal social control) and lack of social cohesion and reciprocal help (as informal social control) from their neighbours in the community mean that they still fear crime even behind the gates. In order to ensure absolute personal security, they applied various security measures to create private homes as new security fronts to defend against perceived dangers and armed themselves within their homes to prepare for potential risks and crimes. These 'layers of security' of their physical bodies, homes, neighbourhoods and cities have offered limited security but insulated residents into various spaces of incarceration (Davis, 2006) and make them perpetually concerned about risks and dangers everywhere. As suggested by Bauman (2007), living in a society with uncertainty and ruled by fear, fears of crimes and disorder become self-reinforcing and self-perpetuating. By living inside gated communities and fortified homes, these affluent residents have taken for granted that all the measures to secure themselves are necessary, but finally have reaffirmed and amplified their fear of dangerous poor 'others' and the risky outside world that initially cultivated their anxieties. After investigating the motives for living in gated communities, the next chapter will begin to unveil the neighbourhood life, governance and the nuanced group-level dynamics in gated communities.

Chapter 5: Neighbourhood life, governance and group dynamics in gated communities

The marketisation of housing provision since the 1980s ended work-unit compounds as the basic residential developments while commodity gated communities have become more prevalent in contemporary Chinese cities. This transition not only largely reshaped the built environments of Chinese cities but also had significant effects on the neighbourhood lives of urban residents. However, there has been little empirical research on how this transition has transformed neighbourhood lives, relationships and modes of governance in China, and how current residents in gated communities experience these urban and social transformations. This chapter seeks to address this key research question by engaging with different key informants, such as residents (both inside and outside the gated community), staff of the management companies and local governmental officers. The chapter consists of three sections. The first section discusses the development of privatised lifestyles in gated communities and how the residents view these changes in the post-reform era. The second section explores the different roles of key organisations in the governance of gated communities and discusses the development of power dynamics and relationships between state, market and community residents. The last section focuses on the identification and stigmatisation process in the forming of group relationships and stresses how middle-class residents actively maintain these imbalanced group relations to segregate themselves from other social groups and exemplify their superior social status in gated communities.

5.1 Neighbourhood life in the gated communities

Neighbourhood life inside gated communities varies widely according to the form of built environment, social and cultural contexts, social composition and neighbourhood services. This section unveils the lifestyle, neighbourhood activities and participation of the upscale gated communities in China. It also focuses on the changing neighbourhood relationships in Chinese cities of the post-reform era and how residents evaluate these changes.

Privatised lifestyle and weak neighbourhood relationships

In gated communities, it is both observed by the author and revealed by most residents that they seldom interact with their neighbours or participate in neighbourhood activities. Most of them only know one or two neighbours in the immediate neighbourhood and even cannot call out to their neighbours by name. They usually go straight to their apartments after work without coming into contact with their neighbours. Although the management company sometimes organises neighbourhood activities for Holidays and Festivals, only a few residents participate in these activities, and most of these participants are older people and children with leisure time. For example, a middle-aged bank manager living in the city centre presented a typical day:

I am quite busy during the weekdays. I get up at 7 am in the morning, take my daughter to her kindergarten, and go directly to my work. And after that, I go directly to my workplace, a bank which is 20 minutes away by car, and finish my work at 8 pm in the evening. After I return home, I have my dinner and watch TV shows for an hour; then, I go to bed immediately. I work six days a week like this, and on Sunday, I take my daughter to some interest-oriented classes such as piano lessons and dancing lessons. During school time, I normally go shopping with my wife and sometimes watch movies, then we take our daughter back home in the evening. That's my normal life routine. My work schedule is so full that I don't have spare time for neighbourhood activities (Interviewee 1, Mr Lin, bank manager, Central GC).

In many Chinese workplaces, large numbers of white- and blue-collar workers have a '9-9-6' mode of working. This means many young professionals usually work from 9 am to 9 pm six days a week, which accounts for most of their time both on weekdays and weekends. And after their return home from work, they are eager to retreat into their private apartment units to enjoy their leisure time and their own private space. A widespread view held by many younger residents is that "After a day's hard work, I prefer to rest on my own and not be disturbed by others" (Interviewee 2, Ms Liu, doctor, Central GC). These views reflect the strong desire for privacy and private space in gated communities. Respondents viewed gated communities as the ideal residential space in which to avoid 'public disturbance' and enjoy private lives, free from surveillance by the government and their neighbours' gaze (Pow 2009). Most young

residents note that they enjoy the freedom of doing whatever they want in their spare time instead of being controlled and criticised by their relatives and neighbours. As one young resident said, “I can play online games and relax during my free time, which most of my older relatives consider bad behaviour and habit.” In addition, some residents said that they could enjoy more personal freedom in their private space, like setting up VPNs to browse foreign websites, which are not allowed by the government. Compared with gated communities in the post-reform era where domestic and communal boundaries were often crossed because there was limited private residential space (Pellow, 1996; Pow, 2009), contemporary gated communities provide their residents with sufficient private space to protect their privacy and give them freedom away from the gaze, constraint and control by their neighbours, relatives and even government.

Compared with traditional work-unit compounds and villages in the pre-reform era in which neighbourhood activities, relations and neighbourliness were active and cohesive (Bray, 2005), most leisure and socialising activities in contemporary gated communities take place outside their residential space. A young professional working in a public hospital, described her socialising practices:

On weekdays, I normally work from 8 am to 6 pm in the hospital. After work, I usually play basketball with my high-school classmates at the basketball courts in the city centre. There is a basketball court in the community, but we seldom use it because of its poor quality and lack of good lighting. At the weekend I usually go to the public park, go shopping with my wife and search for delicious local food in the city centre. My wife is obsessed with finding new gourmet restaurants in the shopping centre. To be honest, most of our activities are located outside our communities (Interviewee 39, Mr Peng, doctor, Central GC).

The daily activities of most gated community residents primarily happened outside the gated community with their friends and relatives elsewhere and have little interaction with their neighbours in the community. This situation is more commonly seen in the gated communities in the city centre, where diverse urban services, entertainment venues and public spaces are available. Here, residents choose to participate in

activities outside their own neighbourhoods because there are more choices and better environments. Furthermore, the ownership of private cars enables them to enlarge their activity space beyond their residential neighbourhood to a broader urban scale.

Age is a key factor that appeared to influence participation in neighbourhood life. The older retired residents of gated communities, especially those responsible for raising their grandchildren, show more frequent participation in neighbourhood activities and know more about their neighbours. A retired lady, who often cared for her grandson, presented a contrasting image of life in the neighbourhood:

At ordinary times, I usually take care of my grandson with my partner. So, every day, I take my grandson to the kindergarten in this neighbourhood, and after that, I spend 20 minutes doing some grocery shopping. I return to my neighbourhood and walk in the green space and do some exercise in the public sports facilities in my neighbourhood. Then after school time, I bring my grandson back home and prepare the meals for our family. At the weekend, I like walking in the public park outside our neighbourhood with my family members. If the management company organises some activities during a Festival, I normally take my grandson to join those activities and make friends with other residents, especially those of the same age as me (Interviewee 19, Ms Tang, retiree, Central GC).

Through caring for their grandchildren, taking them to the neighbourhood kindergarten and using the public spaces, sports services and green spaces, these grandparents have increased their understanding of, and interaction with other neighbours. However, as one resident indicated: "We sometimes talk about the upbringing of our grandchildren but prevent going too deep in our discussion to keep a certain distance between us." This indicates that these types of interactions are generally relatively brief and thus fairly 'thin' in terms of social content, which do not contribute to more robust social networks. It is evident that during their interactions they also value and carefully protect their privacy and anonymity inside gated communities. As explained by Wu (2005), searching for privacy and anonymity is crucial in gated communities in China, and residents consider this privacy as 'personal freedom and liberation'. This ideology

of searching for anonymity and privacy can prevent the formation of strong and cohesive social relations inside gated communities.

Interestingly, when residents were asked whether they would seek help from their neighbours in their daily lives, the usual opinion was that they usually turn to management companies and then to market services instead of contacting their neighbours. As Mr Gao, a young programmer, said:

When I encounter any troubles in my daily life, I usually seek help from the management company. They will arrive at your home and help you immediately. If they cannot solve the problem, I will try to see if there are any professional service providers that can solve the problem. For example, if you are locked out of your house, you just need to call the lock company to help you. If you have a medical emergency, you can directly contact the local hospital for an ambulance. And the service fees are relatively low. ... I don't want to bother my neighbours because I am not quite familiar with them or trust them. In addition, from my perspective, I also do not like to be bothered by my neighbours when staying in my own house. (Interviewee 11, Mr Gao, programmer, Central GC)

Residents living in gated communities have not built reciprocal relationships and social trust with their neighbours. The lack of trust and intimate neighbourhood relationships prevent them from seeking help from each other when encountering troubles and emergencies. Thus, when they come across problems and issues in their residential life, they would instead seek help from third parties, such as management companies and various market services. In return, the reliance on market services further reduces the chances of building reciprocal relationships with their neighbours. In addition, these indifferent social bonds between residents also reflect their desire to keep a totally privatised, peaceful and undisturbed environment in their homes. When comparing gated communities with other types of communities such as work-unit compounds and urban villages, many scholars suggest that other types of communities have relatively closer neighbourhood relationships and more vital social interaction and integration (S Li et al., 2012; Wu, 2005; Zhang, 2012).

The lifestyle and neighbourhood participation in suburban gated communities are slightly different from the one in the city centre. As public services and infrastructure outside the neighbourhoods are quite scarce and insufficient, residents living in gated communities are more dependent on the services and amenities provided inside their communities. The common use of these services and spaces, such as fitness clubs, entertainment centres, basketball courts and green spaces, increase their social interaction and neighbourhood participation. For example, Ms Chen, a retiree in the suburban gated community, explained her experience of the neighbourhood:

There is a fitness club in our neighbourhood, which is well-equipped with diverse facilities and a high-end swimming pool. I used to be a fitness club member in the city centre, which is far from my suburban home. So, I joined the fitness club in our neighbourhood, thus I can keep fit every day at any time... I also met several neighbours who also like doing fitness activities. We have become good friends and usually go to the gym or hang out in other places together (Interviewee 46, Ms Chen, retiree, Suburban GC).

While commodity gated communities are generally considered to lack social interactions and connections between neighbours, it is evident in this case that the surrounding environment also has a significant influence on their neighbourhood participation and interactions. Most residents living in the suburban gated community showed more participation in neighbourhood activities and social interaction because there were less satisfactory services and activity spaces in the adjacent areas. The term 'public familiarity' (Fischer, 1982) is used to explain the creation of the types of social bonds and networks evident here. Blokland and Rae (2008) argue that the hundreds of grocery stores, saloons and bakeries of early twentieth century urban neighbourhoods formed the basis of chances for people to gather together, get know each other within a locality and consequently create local public familiarity . This type of public familiarity enables the gathering of necessary information and knowledge about the social placement of others who can be socially connected with, or kept a distance from, (Blokland and Rae, 2008). From the evidence of this research, compared with the gated community in the city centre where people have alternative choices and usually use services outside their neighbourhood, residents in the suburban gated community have more chances to use, voluntarily or involuntarily, the

public spaces and services inside their neighbourhood and so increase their public familiarity with each other. This forms the basis of their consequent neighbourhood participation and interaction and the creation of relatively denser social networks. In this sense, the suburban gated community is a relatively 'enclosed' residential space due to residents' limited access to various services and use of public spaces in the suburban areas.



Figure 6: Derelict public spaces outside the suburban gated community

Around half of the interviewed residents living in the suburban gated community also mentioned that they had participated in different types of voluntary associations, such as sports organisations, homeowner associations and reading groups in their neighbourhood. Here an English language teacher from a private school illustrates her experience:

Except for working hours outside our neighbourhood, I spend a lot of time in neighbourhood activities. We have established a Badminton Interest

Group in our community, with over 50 members from our neighbourhood. We usually organise our badminton matches in the evening in the community badminton court. These are always spaces for us because there are four badminton courts in this neighbourhood, and they are exclusive for community members. And sometimes I join the Reading Club in our neighbourhood with my child. These activities are all organised by the members of our community, and I feel quite happy with them (Interviewee 40, Ms Yu, teacher, Suburban GC).

For Putnam (1993), participation in voluntary associations is not only a critical indicator of social capital but also an effective way for people to relate to each other, build up social relations, create mutual trust and reciprocal interactions. Residents of the suburban gated community have created certain levels of social bonds and trust through participation in various types of community organisations and this has contributed to the social integration of the gated community. It is worth noting that the 'Reading Club' in this suburban community was created by a number of resident parents. They put much effort into searching for financial support, recruiting new members and cooperating with the government to create a small well-equipped library in their neighbourhood and establish their Reading Club. As stated by a representative of the Homeowner Association: "Although we cannot fulfil all the service requirements in a suburban community, we try our best to fulfil our children's needs, especially for their education." According to the Chinese Statistical Yearbook 2019, the educational expenditure on young generations accounts for around one-third of the total household expenditure for Chinese households. Middle-class parents are more eager to invest in their children's education and send their children to various expensive personal skills training courses (Ong and Zhang, 2011; Zhang, 2012), and seek to consolidate their children's class identity and elite status to prepare them for success in the competitive market economy in the future. In this case, creating the library and 'Reading Club' in the suburban gated community demonstrates the parents' willingness to construct learning environments and create opportunities for their children even after school. These collective goals and cooperation undoubtedly strengthen their social networks and mutual trust.

Changing neighbourhood relationships in transition period

During the transformation of residential space in China in the last two decades, most current residents in gated communities have experienced the tremendous neighbourhood change from traditional work-unit compounds and villages (both urban and rural villages) to contemporary gated communities, especially those residents aged over 30 years. Thus, when asked about neighbourhood life and relations for this study, most middle-aged and older residents actively mentioned their previous neighbourhood life experiences and explained their feelings about the urban changes. The widespread perspective was that compared with the current privatised and disengaged neighbourhood relationships discussed above, their previous neighbourhood networks were stronger and more cohesive. They often visited their neighbours and dropped into their neighbours' homes to have dinner and chat with each other in their spare time. There were dense social interactions and neighbourhood participation in their previous neighbourhoods. For example, a sales manager in a telecommunications company illustrated her neighbourhood experience as follows:

I previously lived in a work-unit compound with my parents, where most of the residents were my parents' colleagues. There were also some tradesmen and hand craftsmen living in the neighbourhood. I felt that our neighbourhood was like a 'big family' and everyone knew a lot about each other. I often visited my neighbours, had dinner with them and even lived in their home for a short period if my parents were busy with their work... I think now we have lost the mutual bond between our neighbours and us. We share few common characteristics, and some residents even rent or sell their apartments to outsiders. Thus, it is normal to see many strangers in your neighbourhood, and they may leave after a few months, which sometimes creates the feeling of strangeness and distance. (Interviewee 37, Ms Zhao, sales manager, Central GC).

There is a consistent view that traditional tight, cohesive and warm-hearted neighbourhood bonds have been replaced by privatised, apathetic and weak neighbourhood relations in contemporary gated communities. Huang (2006) analyses neighbourhood networks of traditional neighbourhoods from a cultural perspective, in

which the traditional enclosed residential space and gating helped to define territorial collectives, promote collective residential living and thus created tight social bonds in neighbourhoods, for instance with common work-unit affiliations (Bray, 2005) and family/clan lineages in urban and rural villages (Huang, 2004). However, the common characteristics these residents now share in commodity gated communities are only similar lifestyle and material pursuits, which are not enough for forming the basis of solid social interactions and neighbourhood networks. In addition, with the demise of the work-unit housing allocation system, the commodification of housing estates and market-oriented resource allocation in the cities (see Chapter 2), increasing residential and social mobility have largely disrupted the original robust neighbourhood bonds, and neighbourhoods have become specialised spaces for privatised residence rather than spaces for intense social interaction. This explains the decrease of public familiarity in gated communities and thus the loss of traditional collective residential lifestyle, activities and identity. Consequently, people become strangers to their neighbours and neighbourhood social environments and are more willing to retreat into their individual domestic space in their gated communities.

A number of residents in the suburban gated community also mentioned that although most of the apartments in their neighbourhood were sold to homebuyers, many homeowners do not actually 'live' in this neighbourhood, which reduces social activities and interactions. Ms Lao, a doctor working in a public hospital, explained her experience in the suburban gated community:

As our neighbourhood is located in the suburban area, the convenience of daily lives is lower than that in the city centre. And many homeowners buy these apartments as their 'second' home for relaxation on the weekend because there is less noise and air pollution here. In addition, housing prices in the suburban area is a bit lower than in the city centre, thus some homebuyers buy these housing assets not for residential purposes but investment purposes. You know that housing prices in China have kept going higher for more than a decade... So the actual occupancy rate in our neighbourhood is relatively low - around one-third of the total apartments.

So you will not witness many neighbourhood activities in our neighbourhood, especially on weekdays (Interviewee 41, Ms Lao, doctor, Suburban GC).

Atkinson (2018) uses the concept of 'necrotecture' to describe super-prime residential spaces in London and New York that the rich buy while not actually living there, creating socially dead spaces from which social interactions and attachments are absent. The suburban gated community shares some similar characteristics with 'necrotecture', which partly accounts for the low social interaction in the gated community. However, the difference is that gated communities in China are more densely populated than their Western counterparts (Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Miao, 2003). In the case of the suburban gated neighbourhood studied here, the dwellings do not create a totally lifeless environment, but contributes to the lack of dense social interaction and activity in the neighbourhood through the mainly unoccupied houses.

With the demise of the traditional work-unit system, the weakening of grassroots state control, the influx of rural migrant workers and the fragmentation of residential spaces, the Chinese government vigorously promoted a campaign of 'community building' in the 2000s. This campaign aims to establish residential neighbourhoods as the new unit of urban governance and set up grassroots organisations, such as Residential Committees, to increase governmental control of the urban population, improve community cohesion and promote 'self-governance' by specific personnel appointed by governments (Xu, 2008). These organisations are in charge of providing neighbourhood services, reflecting the residents' ideas and demands, dealing with neighbourhood affairs, assisting retrenched workers, disabled and elderly and rebuilding lost neighbourhood social trust and relationships (Bray, 2006; Xu, 2008). Although this campaign seeks to mobilise local 'elites' to voluntarily complete the tasks of community 'self-governance' (Bray 2006), these grassroots organisations are closely controlled by the Street Office, and the ultimate goal of this campaign is to ease the state's economic and governance burden while re-establishing governmental control over the urban population. However, the 'community building' campaign is totally absent from the gated communities. As explained by the manager of the management company of the central urban gated community:

Our management company takes over all these governmental duties, such as dealing with neighbourhood affairs, helping elderly residents in need, organising neighbourhood activities and providing neighbourhood services. The 'community building' campaign is unnecessary and hard to implement in exclusive gated communities. First, most of these affluent people do not need help in terms of their economic, professional and daily lives. These people are already local elites with high 'quality' lives, who do not need to be governed by others. Second, these people are unwilling to participate in neighbourhood governance. Most of them like to keep their privatised residential lifestyle and avoid confrontation and conflicts (Interviewee 12, Ms Wang, manager of the management company, Central GC).

The residents' unwillingness to participate in community governance and their desire for a more privatised lifestyle weakens the campaign for 'community building' and it is hard to implement in gated communities. Although the government seeks to rebuild the lost collective relations of residential living and social trust between residents on their residential territories, the reality is that most of these duties of 'community building' are completed by the paid management company, which makes the reconstruction of harmonious, cohesive and reciprocal neighbourhood relationships difficult in commodity gated communities. An elderly resident describes how the governments of Guangzhou increase neighbourhood cohesion and harmony:

When I lived in a gated community in Guangzhou, the local government sometimes outsourced the community service to authorised 'third-party social welfare organisations' to organise different neighbourhood activities. For example, they invited a famous dance teacher to offer free dance lessons to neighbourhood members. Through taking part in these free lessons, we had more interaction with our neighbours, and some of us became friends during this process (Interviewee 7, Ms Li, retiree, Central GC).

By delivering neighbourhood service through non-profit social organisations, to some extent the government have increased the social bonds and interactions between neighbours in gated communities. However, a premise of providing these neighbourhood services is that the local governments should have enough economic

sources to support these services, such as Guangzhou as the capital of the most affluent provincial in China. However, in the case of Zhanjiang, the local government cannot afford these neighbourhood services and most neighbourhood services are provided by management companies. As the primary purpose of management companies is to earn profits, they seldom organise high-quality neighbourhood services for their residents. One of the main drivers for organising neighbourhood activities in gated communities is to complete the local government's political tasks to increase the neighbourhood cohesion and vitality.

Although residents in gated communities value the privacy and privatised lifestyles gated communities provide, most residents, especially those over 30 years old who had experienced traditional neighbourhoods, also express regret at the loss of cohesive neighbourhood social relationships and state a desire for rebuilding neighbourhood harmony. For example, Ms Wu, a retiree from the central urban gated community, illustrated her feelings:

I lived in a work-unit compound when I was a child. At that time people knew their neighbours quite well because they were all in the same factory. In our spare time, we often visited one house after another, especially during some traditional festivals and national holidays. We were in quite close relationships... But now, it is completely impossible in our community. I don't know my neighbours, and it is impossible for us to drop by in our spare time. We only communicate when public issues occur... Although we like to enjoy the harmonious neighbourhood environments like before, there are no links between us, and thus, we cannot form strong neighbourhood relations like before (Interviewee 22, Ms Wu, retiree, Central GC).

The demise of the traditional work-unit system, the commodification of housing provision, and the prevalence of gated communities in Chinese cities has been accomplished in roughly two decades. Thus, after moving into commodity gated communities, they have an intense feeling of losing cohesive social interaction, local intimacy, social trust and reciprocally beneficial relationships in traditional neighbourhoods. In contemporary commodity gated communities, they share collective residential space and neighbourhood services but lose their collective social

bonds and trust and live in a more privatised lifestyle. Although the local governments seek to increase the neighbourhood integration and vitality in gated communities, their efforts have hardly any effect in these communities inhabited by affluent people. In this sense, the transformations in neighbourhood relationships in Chinese cities share some similarities with community change in the 20th century in Western countries where traditional community ties, such as shared space, close kinship links, shared religious and moral values, were replaced by individualism and anonymity (Forrest and Kearns, 2001). The next paragraphs turn to illustrate these neighbourhood changes in Chinese gated communities through the reconstruction of 'self' during the economic, political and social transformation of China in the post-reform era.

'Self' contains multiple meanings, such as 'ziji', 'ziwo', 'sixin', and 'zidaide' in the Chinese language, which respectively relate to 'I', 'individual', 'private', 'inherent' in English. Hsu (1948) suggests that in traditional Chinese society, five core cultural elements constitute the Chinese 'self': the father-son relationship; the alienation between the two sexes; the ideal of a large family; parental authority; and the education system which viewed children as adults. Thus, in traditional Chinese society, 'self' interests are suppressed and subject to collective interests like family, clan, and other social groups. In this sense, the traditional Chinese 'self' lives under their ancestor's shadow (Hsu 1948). Later, in the Maoist era (1949-1978), the 'self' was mobilised to detach it from the traditional family, kinship and local community and reorganised to identify with newly established rural collectives and urban work-units (Yan, 2010). The 'self' had lost freedom and autonomy and could not choose their work, their residential space and or collective identity because all these attributes were already determined when they were born. The ultimate goal of this 'self' is to prioritise loyalty to the party-state and devote themselves to creating a strong and wealthy nation-state through state socialism. As Chang (2013) describes, the famous Chinese enlightenment thinker Liang Qichao suggested that modern Chinese people always have dual-self: the 'small-self' focuses on personal interest and the 'great-self' centres the interest of the nation: the small-self is always secondary to the great-self. These cultural characteristics are similar to the 'collective' cultural inheritance in Chinese society (Huang 2006). The change of connotations and meanings of 'self' in the Maoist era

was that the self no longer lived under their ancestor's shadow but creates a strong sense of belonging to the party-state, and self-interest must give way to the pursuit of modernity and restoring China's glory on the global stage (Yan, 2010).

However, in the reform era since 1978, the privatisation of the Chinese economy and housing provision, the easing of the residential constraints of the household registration system in the 1980s, and the bankrupting of large amounts of state-owned enterprise in the 1990s have primarily ended the all-encompassing control of the resource allocation and life chances by the party-state, which has increased the mobility of residents and emancipated them from the traditional constraints of various types of collectives, such as family, clan, rural collectives and state-lend work-unit institutions. In this sense, in the post-reform era, the 'small-self' is largely emancipated from the collective 'great-self' of traditional Chinese society by economic, political and social transformations of the last 40 years.

Commodity gated communities can be now seen as residential and social spaces for the initial cultivation and reflection of the emancipation of the self in the following four domains. First, in the Maoist era, urban housing estates were allocated by state-owned enterprises and belonged to the state, and urban residents did not own their private housing properties. In the post-reform era, the large-scale construction of gated communities allowed urban residents to own private property, and many residential property owners have become 'propertied middle class' through renting and selling their apartments in gated communities to other urban residents and migrant workers. In addition, as illustrated by some residents, owning housing assets in upscale gated communities can prove oneself to be successful, desirable and worthy of social interaction. This is obvious in the contemporary Chinese marriage 'market' where owning a good house and a private car is a precondition for dating. Second, as discussed above, the privatised neighbourhood life in gated communities enables residents to gain much privacy in their daily lives, which was impossible in traditional work units. The meaning of this privacy is manifold: individuals can enjoy a total privatised residential life in their apartments without the gaze and control by their neighbours and relatives; individuals can enjoy more autonomy in their private

activities like browsing foreign websites and TV programmes without the interference of local government, ; individuals can enjoy a private 'middle-class' lifestyle without the awareness of jealousy and discontent by poor residents (Ong and Zhang, 2011; Zhang, 2012). Third, gated communities' residents are more conscious of, and guard their consumer rights against the management company and even the local authorities (see the next section). In this sense, self-interest and rights are not subservient to collective interests but valued and appreciated by these residents. Fourth, residents in gated communities re-construct the self and search for individual identity in the subjective domain (Yan, 2010). These residents no longer desire to form their collective identity around residential territoriality as had been the case in most previous Chinese societies. They are more eager to enjoy their privatised residential lifestyle and greater personal autonomy, and they seek to establish their 'middle-class' identity through living in upscale gated communities (Pow, 2009; Tang, 2017; Zhang, 2012). The rise of the 'desiring self' is evident and prominent in upscale gated communities. Here, 'desiring self' means people pay attention to the physical and emotional desire in their private lives experience (Rofel, 2007). These self-desiring behaviours were constrained by the state and authorities and were considered 'inappropriate' and 'disgraceful' in the pre-reform era (Yan, 2003). As one resident jokes, "In the past, owning wealth was considered shameful and now has become the standard of being successful and competent." By having costly interior decoration in their private homes, driving luxury cars, and wearing foreign clothes with famous brands, residents in gated communities are now able to vigorously fulfil their individual desire and prove their middle-class social status and identity, desires and identities which were primarily controlled and constrained (Fraser, 2000) in the Maoist work-unit compounds.

The above four domains show why gated communities are considered residential frontiers reflecting and cultivating diverse meanings of 'self' in contemporary Chinese society. The transformation of neighbourhood relationships manifested in the cultural and ideological changes from the focus on 'great--self' in the post-reform era to the current focus on individual private property, rights, autonomy and desire. But, as discussed above, many gated communities' residents still value and miss their previous collective neighbourhood lives when they could form stable, robust, cohesive,

harmonious and reciprocal neighbourhood relations. They feel uncomfortable and awkward about their indifferent and apathetic neighbourhood relations and also feel insecure when having to face all the issues and risks of daily lives by themselves without help from their neighbours. Many residents in the suburban gated community still call their neighbourhood a 'big family' (*dajiating*) and seek to rebuild cohesive neighbourhood relationships through participation in neighbourhood activities and by knowing their neighbours. A resident explained, "My current neighbourhood life is comfortable and convenient, but sometimes I feel unfamiliar with it, and it is a pity that I cannot feel the human warmth like before." These residents of gated communities have emancipated their 'self' from the traditional social, cultural, institutional and ideological collective constraints and fulfil their desire for enjoyment, privatised residential space, personal autonomy and individual status. However, they also feel lost, uneasy, unsafe and uncertain about the detachment from the 'big-self', loss of collective identity, cohesive and reciprocal neighbourhood relationships, and collective culture and values. These complex emotions can be described as 'self-anxiety' in contemporary gated communities in Chinese cities, in which residents manifest and promote the reconstruction of the self to liberate individual needs and desire from the collective constraints of family, clan, and work-unit system in previous Chinese society, but at the same time being aware of loss of collective identity, culture, values, mutual trust and cohesive neighbourhood relationships. The lens of gated communities and changing neighbourhood life reflects the processes of the erosion of 'big-self' identification and the rapid increase of 'small-self' in the urban society of the post-socialist era. While the 'community building campaign' seeks to recall collective identity, responsibility, trust and values in urban neighbourhoods, it has not aroused a strong response among those affluent residents living in gated communities.

5.2 The rise of neighbourhood 'private' governance

The rise of gated communities worldwide is also considered to be related to the emergence of private residential governance through community or homeowner associations (McKenzie, 1994). This type of neighbourhood governance is also defined as 'contractual governance' (Crawford, 2003) because one of the critical characteristics of gated communities is the formal contractual legal framework signed

by all the residents that details the rules and regulations in their residential space (Atkinson and Blandy, 2005). This section explores the emergence of private neighbourhood governance in China to reveal its development and dynamics. It discusses the different roles those various organisations, such as management companies and homeowner associations, play in the governance of gated communities and the power relationship between these critical organisations.

The dominance of the property management companies

The demise of the work-unit system and the development of gated communities in both urban and suburban areas has created a 'power vacuum' in neighbourhood-level governance with the decreasing role of (Lu et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2006). Thus, since 2003, the Chinese government has required all developers to set up an auxiliary management company to govern the newly-built commodity gated communities according to the Property Regulation Rulings (Zhang, 2012). Under these regulations, the management company not only provides neighbourhood services, maintenance of physical infrastructure and environmental retrofitting inside gated communities, but also takes charge of managing local affairs, mediating neighbourhood disputes and implementing governmental policies. For instance, as the manager of the management company in the central urban gated community describes:

We are the service provider for this [gated] community. And in our daily work, we try to provide high-quality services to all our community members in terms of cleaning work, security surveillance, and landscaping treatment. We have quite a good relationship with most of the residents. Whenever they come across any problems in their daily lives, they can call us, and our staff will arrive in 10 minutes. And for every Chinese festival, we prepare delicate gifts for residents and organise community activities to build harmonious community relationships (Interviewee 12, Ms Wang, the manager of the management company, Central GC).

This comment shows that, in contemporary commodity gated communities, the management company plays multiple roles in providing services to community members, and they are in charge of responsibilities previously taken by local

government, including promoting the spirit of the Party and state, conducting the Census and supervising governmental policies like family planning. The staff of the management company see themselves as service providers who serve the homeowners as their consumers and clients. Thus, they are required to fulfil the homeowners' requirements as much as possible without any complaint. One staff member of the company noted: "We need to fulfil all their requirements no matter how big or trivial, even including repairing their household appliances and calling the ambulance." It is evident that the management company is the primary governmental entity in commodity gated communities and takes charge of the diverse tasks of neighbourhood governance which were previously undertaken by the residential committees and work units. However, as management companies are not governmental organisations and do not have authentic judicial and political power, they usually seek help from local government and police when criminal behaviour and violent conflict occur.

Although the staff and manager of the management company positioned themselves as serving the needs of homeowners, responsible for all the dirty and tiring works (*zanghuo leihuo*), they have another prior identity as working for profit-seeking entities. As described by Ms Liu, a doctor working in a public hospital:

Although they provide relatively satisfactory service to the residents, they earn lots of profits from the property management process. The maintenance fee in our community is nearly the highest in Zhanjiang. And they get their income from renting out those public houses to businesspeople and the government. These profits all belong to them, and we can't get even a bit of it. When there is a problem with the building quality, they even ask for an extra maintenance fee from us, which is unbearable.
(Interviewee 2, Ms Liu, doctor, Central GC)

All management companies in China are entitled to collect property management fees determined by local government charging standards according to the services provided. However, many are unhappy that the property management fees they pay are higher than the governmental standard, and the management company has not offered equivalent neighbourhood services. As the management companies do not publish

their revenue and expenditure to the homeowners, the residents do not have enough evidence to fight for their own rights. In some other cases, the developers and managers even bribe government officials to manipulate the charging standards for higher management fees (Zhang, 2012). In addition, as one security guard describes, a management company can cut the expenditure on private security services in order to increase profit:

While selling their housing estates, they (management companies) will hire young, tall and strong security personnel to display to their potential homebuyers. These personnel are just like a guard of honour (*yizhangdui*). And after selling the houses, they hire old and incompetent people to join the security personnel to reduce the expenditure... Our salary is quite low - 1800 yuan per month - thus only retired people choose to take this job. If any criminal behaviour happens in our community, our security guards may not be able to deal with it (Interviewee 34, Mr Liang, the manager of security guards, Central GC).

The presence of the 'guard of honour' displays the gloss of safe housing developments, and the actual quality of the security guards cannot fulfil the tasks of keeping the neighbourhood safe when violence occurs. This case shows that the primary goal of the management companies is selling the housing estates and maximising profits in the neighbourhood governance process, and when their interest diverges from residents' needs and requirements, they usually choose to sacrifice the homeowner's interests. Some residents described how, in other gated communities, when residents refused to pay the tuition fees and confronted the management company, the company hired local thugs (*liumang*) to threaten the residents and cut off their water and electricity supply. These examples illustrate how the management company was seen by some residents as putting profit before service –the commodity housing estate is seen as an instrument to maximise the economic income of the company without really caring about the quality of life of the community. In addition, management companies have the dominant role in neighbourhood governance, and thus they grasp the absolute power over community governance issues, including the charging of management fees, the control of financial revenue and expenditure and the use of illegitimate means to threaten the homeowners. In these circumstances, how do

residents of gated communities establish their own rights and demands? Here the Homeowner Association creates a potential vehicle for residents in commodity housing estates to defend their rights.

The emergence of Homeowner Associations

In 2003, through the Property Regulation Rulings, the Chinese Central Government endorsed the role of Homeowner Associations (HOA) as a formal neighbourhood organisation in newly-built gated communities. Since then, large numbers of HOAs have been established in gated commodity housing estates to protect the collective rights of the homeowners, especially in large cities such as Shanghai and Guangzhou (Wu, 2012). According to the Property Regulation Rulings, HOAs have responsibility for: hiring and dismissing management companies; deciding the provision of neighbourhood services; fighting for homeowners' collective interests; and cooperating with and monitoring management companies' role in neighbourhood governance. In this sense, the HOAs are supposed to be powerful self-governance organisations with the power to nominate, manage monitor and dismiss management companies.

However, the development of Homeowner Associations in commodity gated communities in Zhanjiang is in its initial stages and far behind the development of HOAs in the big cities. A number of factors internal and external factors contribute to the underdevelopment of HOAs in Zhanjiang. External factors include, firstly, local government - in this case, the Street Office - has the power to influence the establishment and organising of HOAs. Ms Zhang, one of the initiators of the HOA in the central urban gated community, told of her experience in developing the HOA:

I am one of the initial founders of this residents' organisation. The reasons for establishing this HOA were to protect our rights against the Property Management Company. The Management Company has earned lots of profits in the property management process, such as renting the communal housing in our neighbourhood to businesspeople and collecting the rents for business advertisement. However, we are the property owner of this premises and thus we own the rights to these rental incomes. We have

encouraged all the residents in our community to join our HOA. And we have gained the approval of over 1000 residents. However, the government didn't approve the establishment of our HOA because the number of members is less than two-thirds of the total in our community. In addition, the staff of the Management Company use tactics to prevent the residents from joining the HOA, which makes the process even harder. Honestly speaking, our HOA is just an empty shell with no actual authority. (Interviewee 21, Ms Zhang, a representative in the HOA, Central GC)

It is evident that the primary purposes of the activists for establishing the HOA by are to defend their consumer rights and interests, confront the monopoly of management companies in governing the neighbourhood, and in earning profits through various means, both legal and illegal. However, local government has a negative attitude to these HOAs. As one official in the Street Office said: "It's easy for those criminals to make use of these organisations to disseminate illegal information and arrange activities for their own interests." Thus, if there are no specifically emergent reasons for establishing HOAs, the government usually does not approve their establishments. These experiences are similar to those in Guangzhou, where the local government is antagonistic towards these autonomous organisations seeing them as threats to social stability (Yip and Jiang, 2011). Interviews with residents described how the HOA in the central urban gated community is one of five HOAs initiated by residents in private commodity housing estates in Zhanjiang. However, none of these HOAs was approved by the local governments. All of them failed to pass the political examination organised by the Street Office. The activists also mentioned obstruction from management companies as a second external factor. As Ms Zhang further indicates:

We tried to fight for our rights against the Management Company but eventually failed. I firmly believe that there is some relationship of (common) interest between the real estate developers and the local government. Now we normally discuss public community issues and our personal emergency needs in the HOA online groups. The HOA lost its practical power and became just a normal virtual community (Interviewee 21, Ms Zhang, a representative in the HOA, Central GC).

As the primary purpose of establishing a HOA is to confront the management company, management companies are unwilling to accept the establishment of HOAs and use their resources and power to hinder the formation of these homeowners' organisations. For instance, the company can encourage some residents with whom they have a good relationship to oppose the establishment of HOAs, making it difficult for the residents to find enough people petitioning to establish the HOAs to fulfil the legal number requirements set up by the government. Without the government's approval and the support of management companies, the HOAs have become powerless autonomous organisations and cannot challenge the monopoly status of management companies.

Internal factors are also crucial to the failure to establish HOAs. First, there are tensions between homeowners in establishing HOAs. For example, Ms Wu, a retiree from the Central GC, explained why she refused to join the HOA:

I am totally satisfied with the community management by the real estate company, and I don't necessarily need that small number of income shares from the management company. And I also heard that the initiators of the HOA have their own purposes, such as developing their own business through HOA and gaining profits from the community management process. Those are the reasons why I refuse to join them (Interviewee 22, Ms Wu, retiree, Central GC).

There are divided opinions about the role of management companies. Residents who do not care about the economic interests in neighbourhood governance and have no conflicts with management companies are not willing to take part in the establishment of HOAs. In addition, the internal disagreements between homeowners about the purpose and the efficiency of HOAs also makes it challenging to establish the organisations. Secondly, and more importantly, most residents were unconcerned about the neighbourhood management process and outcomes. For example, Mr Lin, a middle-aged bank manager living in the city centre, described his lack of concern with management issues:

Most of my time and energy is put into my work. And, when I return to my neighbourhood, I just want to relax and enjoy my spare time. It's hard for

me to face so many neighbourhood management problems after my tiring work. I know that some residents are fighting for homeowners' interest with the management company, and I received the invitation to join the HOA. But I really don't care about those economic interests and I'm unwilling to get involved in these complex governance issues. I would like to pay for the management company to solve these problems for me. It is just like the 'red wine services'. You pay for the services, and the servers manage all the issues while drinking red wine. The best service is that you can enjoy yourself during the process without noticing and being bothered by other people (Interviewee 1, Mr Lin, bank manager, Central GC).

Most residents living in gated communities are affluent people busy with their work and do not wish to participate in the neighbourhood governance process. They prefer to only engage with public affairs when severe emergencies occur. The idea of the 'red wine service' is a vivid interpretation of their attitudes toward participating in neighbourhood governance. These affluent residents are more inclined to pay the high management fees to enjoy the high-quality services from the management companies without engagement in conflicts and neighbourhood issues. The kind of attitudes toward social control here echoes to some extent the neighbourhood relationship of 'moral minimalism' in suburban areas of America in the way that residents talked about trying not to engage in problematic behaviour or doing so through other agents (Baumgartner, 1989). For these residents, the best mode of neighbourhood governance is that the management company deals with all the neighbourhood public affairs efficiently and effectively, and lets the residents enjoy their private time and space without being bothered by unnecessary interactions with other residents. This widespread 'red wine' perspective among the residents is the most important reason why HOAs are underdeveloped and seen as less desirable in upscale gated communities and are thus unable to confront the management company. Although a small section of neighbourhood activists seeks to fight for their consumer interests through HOAs, these activities are finally eclipsed by the dual pressure of the management company and local authorities.

After exploring the organisational structure and power dynamics of neighbourhood governance in gated communities, it becomes clear that local governments have retreated from providing neighbourhood services and taking part in neighbourhood governance, and that private companies have taken most of these governance functions and neighbourhood surveillance and policing. Local government seeks to employ these private and non-governmental agencies to take on quasi-governmental functions and fill the 'power vacuum' in neighbourhood governance in commodity gated communities (Zhang, 2012). This neoliberal transference of government responsibility and accountability from local government to private sectors and community is called 'governing at a distance' (Rose 1996).

Although some residents seek to fight for their consumer rights and take part in neighbourhood governance through Homeowner Associations, most of these efforts failed because of both internal and external factors. In this sense, affluent residents in gated communities are now voluntarily or involuntarily subject to the monopolistic governance of the management company, which is mostly satisfactory but sometimes oppressive, while self-governance through HOAs is suppressed and limited at the initial developmental stage. Long-developed residential private governance in America shows that it is possible for Homeowner Associations have strong power to decide the development and governance of neighbourhoods (McKenzie, 2005). And those professionals and lawyers who constitute and serve HOAs have become an important force in interest group politics with the power to influence tax regulation, services provision, and legislative and judicial policymaking (McKenzie, 1994, 2011). But at the same time, McKenzie (2005) also criticises the fact that most residents in gated communities in the US are forced to sign legal contracts and governance rules set by the developer, and untrained governing boards of HOAs may impose punitive power over other residents.

Compared with HOAs in the US, HOAs in Zhanjiang are not legally acknowledged by governments and are far less powerful than their counterparts in America, and the developers and management companies in Zhanjiang have total power and control over neighbourhood governance. There are partial similarities, however, in the

appearance, rules and feelings of gated communities which are predetermined by private developers and management companies who plan, build and introduce restrictions from the very beginning. In this sense, these gated communities are not spaces for genuine residential self-governance, and residents need to sacrifice part of their freedom to maintain the value and presupposed 'lifestyle' set by the dominant management companies.

The eclipse of the Residential Committee

Housing commodification in post-reform China has largely increased the residential mobility of urban residents, while the demise of the state-owned work-unit system of the pre-reform era has led to a mismatch between the residential spaces of urban residents and their previous workplaces (Solinger and Hu, 2012). The large numbers of migrant workers moving into urban areas also increase the population diversity in contemporary Chinese cities. All these changes have led to unprecedented ungovernable neighbourhood spaces in the cities (Wu, 2002). In order to regain control over neighbourhood governance and deliver social assistance to those outside state enterprise systems (Tomba, 2014), Residential Committees (RC) were chosen as the grassroots governmental organisations for neighbourhood governance (Wu, 2018). Although RCs are defined by the government as resident 'self-governance' organisations, they are strictly controlled by the Street Office, and their staff are professional social workers recruited by the Street Office (Bray, 2006). These RCs are governmental agencies performing administrative responsibilities such as delivering social assistance, neighbourhood education, health services and organising neighbourhood activities (Wu, 2018). Normally one RC is responsible for several residential neighbourhoods with different types, such as gated communities, work-unit compounds and urban villages. During the fieldwork for this thesis, I undertook three week's voluntary work with the 'Xinyuan' Residential Committee alongside government staff to investigate their role in governing various types of communities, including commodity gated communities and traditional work-unit compounds.

In the traditional work-unit compounds, the Residential Committee still plays a crucial role in governing these old neighbourhoods. The government is responsible for providing minimal life support for poor residents, and many old tenants living in work-unit compounds depend on governmental assistance to survive. Regulations stipulate that government staff must visit old, lonely and ill residents, especially those without relatives in Zhanjiang, twice a month. The Residential Committee is also in charge of community public management, such as cleaning issues, parking, organising community activities, building maintenance, and security problems. The Residential Committee also monitors community activities and social conflicts in the work-unit compounds. In addition, the Committee takes strict control of the household registration process and residential mobility. For example, it keeps detailed records of changes to the population composition of work-unit compounds. The RC knows in detail the renting and living situations of each apartment unit. In contrast, in gated communities, it appears that some residents rented their apartments to outsiders for economic income without notifying the management companies and this increased the difficulty of managing the communities and controlling the population flow. However, the lack of sufficient working staff in the Residential Committee I was with constrained their abilities to complete all these governance responsibilities. For example, here is a government staff member from the Residential Committee complaining about the heavy workload involved:

We have only six members of the Residential Committee, and we are in charge of nearly six communities. How can we finish these works if we need to solve all the management issues and care for everyone in these work-unit compounds? We are taking on the responsibilities of both the government and management company in these communities with no extra paid salary (Ms Chen, staff member of Residential Committee, through WeChat, 2019).

During my period of voluntary work, most of the tasks of the Residential Committee were from traditional work units because their residents are poor and cannot pay high management fees like those living in commodity gated communities. Thus, the staff members needed to deal with all the management issues in these traditional work-unit compounds. Simultaneously, they also needed to organise neighbourhood activities,

such as sports activities and public medical assistance, and publicise the government and Party's cultural propaganda and spirit. Thus, their workloads were very high, but they have low salaries for this work, and they sometimes complain about their endless work in governing the work-unit compounds.

As some of the residents in work-unit compounds sell their apartments to outsiders, such as migrant workers, residential mobility in these neighbourhoods is high. The Residential Committee needs to record all the population changes and monitor neighbourhood activities to prevent criminal and uncivilised behaviours. In comparison with the governance of gated communities, first, these Residential Committees only receive limited financial resources from the Street Office, which limits their abilities to organise neighbourhood activities and deal with neighbourhood issues. Secondly, Residential Committees are nominally 'self-governance' organisations, without powers of law enforcement and administration and lacking security personnel. When dealing with neighbourhood conflicts, RCs always need to seek help from the Street Office and local police officers.

However, in the private commodity gated community, the power and responsibility of the Residential Committee are much lower than in the work-units compound. As most residents value the privacy of gated communities and seek to escape from strict control and surveillance over their neighbourhood lives, they are reluctant to get involved in the Residential Committee for their neighbourhood governance. As one gated community resident indicated: "The management company can manage the neighbourhood, there is no need for an unnecessary governmental agency in our neighbourhood." The lack of real power in the Residential Committee makes it difficult to implement governance actions like dealing with residents' conflicts in commodity gated communities. Although commodity gated communities are under the jurisdiction of the Residential Committee, all governance responsibilities and tasks are undertaken by the management companies. The primary functions of the Residential Committee in commodity gated communities are monitoring the election and operation of the Homeowner Association and organising related public benefit activities. However, in reality, nearly all the community governance affairs and management issues are

manipulated by the management company without effective supervision or regulation from the Residential Committee.

Coupled with the failure to establish Homeowner Associations, what seems to be an imbalance of power appears to exist in these private gated communities. Under these circumstances, the management companies are able to maximise their incomes by renting empty housing, receiving business advertisement revenue and collecting high maintenance fees from residents without legal supervision from government agencies. Moreover, as the Resident Committees are not responsible for providing public goods and services in private gated communities, their power and status there are gradually marginalised and eclipsed. On the one hand, management companies reduce the overall governance workload of Residential Committees; but on the other hand, the Residential Committees lose some of their ability to monitor and control the management companies. In this context, from starting as only service providers, the management companies have come to occupy the central place in the power structure of the gated community.

It is incorrect to consider that the government loses the power and control over management companies and gated communities. Although the government has partly transferred neighbourhood governance functions to private entities and communities, its ultimate goal is to make use of these private entities to fill the 'power vacuum' in private communities and make up for the financial and human resources deficiencies in urban neighbourhood governance. These neoliberal political transformations do not mean that governmental power over neighbourhoods is diminishing (Zhang, 2012), but rather, indicate that government seeks to rely on non-political organisations, communities and individuals to strengthen their governance (Barry et al., 2013). As suggested by Tomba (2014), the gating in contemporary Chinese cities has divided the urban population into 'high quality' (*gaosuzhi*) residents of commodity gated communities and 'low quality' (*disuzhi*) residents of traditional work-unit neighbourhoods, which helps to make the city more legible for political administrations (Scott, 2008). In this case, residents of commodity gated communities are responsible for governing themselves and paying for their own neighbourhood governance, while poor residents in work-unit compounds need direct support and governance from local

government. The advantage is that the government can directly deliver aid to those in need, but the disadvantage is that this spatial division through housing market logic has led to the creation of a two-tier society in which the affluent are increasingly separated from the poor - economically, spatially and institutionally (McKenzie, 2005).

5.3 Group dynamics and established-outsider figuration

This section focuses on the group-level social relations and conflicts in gated communities and the process of identification/disidentification between residents from different groups, which contributes to understanding of the complex 'figuration' (Elias and Scotson, 1994) and underlying class exclusion processes in gated communities. This analysis stresses the relations of four prominent groups of residents during the investigation of gated communities: middle-class residents of gated communities; replacement households in gated communities; service staff in gated communities; and local residents living in the adjacent traditional ordinary gated communities, urban villages and work-unit compounds. The following analysis begins to discuss how these four main social groups relate to each other using established-outsider theoretical framework, which improves our understandings on the group-level social networks in Chinese gated communities. As the interviews were mainly conducted with middle-class residents, the focus is on their views and experiences of distinguishing insiders from outsiders and how the residents maintain these figurations.

The local 'barbarians' outside gated communities

When asked for their opinion of their neighbours, most middle-class residents, approximately 60 per cent, articulated negative attitudes towards residents living in adjacent 'ordinary' communities. These residents are considered 'barbarians' with low educational backgrounds, low-end jobs (less well-trained), 'uncivilised' behaviours and even criminal tendencies. For instance, Mr Zhang, a teacher in a secondary school, says:

I suppose those residents (living in traditional ordinary communities) are usually farmers and fishermen with low educational backgrounds. Many of

them even do not have a proper job. Some of them will ask their children to drop out of school to participate in farm work. Thus, the next generation is still lacking educational experience. For me, they are like the 'barbarians' in primitive society with low horizons and crude behaviours, such as shouting in the street and fighting with each other (Interviewee 20, Mr Zhang, teacher, Suburban GC).

The above quote shows clearly this teacher's disidentification from the local residents based on employment or lack of employment, income, educational background and local language. Local residents living in ordinary neighbourhoods are considered 'outsiders' because of their low-end occupations and low economic income levels. Official statistics show that in 2019, 49.3% of the population of Zhanjiang were engaged in primary industry work, such as farming and fishing (Zhanjiang Yearbook, 2020), or what Castells (1998) calls 'replaceable generic work', different from modern 'high-end' information-related work such as managers, professionals and technicians. In this case, the cleavage between 'replaceable generic work' and information-related work is used by middle-class residents of gated communities to distinguish themselves from local 'barbarians'. Although the local residents have lived in the areas for far longer than the residents of gated communities, they are clearly considered 'outsiders' with stigmatised characteristics such as lower human values and bad behavioural codes. As Smith (2005) indicates that American cities were considered as urban wildernesses by the white middle class in the 20th century, and similarly in contemporary Chinese cities, local residents with low status jobs are similarly labelled by middle-class residents of gated communities as 'barbarians' with low human worth and disordered behaviours. In addition, many residents described one local rural language (*leizhouhua*), as ugly and uncivilised because the rural migrants talk in their language in public places with what are considered to be loud voices and impolite body language. These marked disidentification and stigmatisation processes reflect negative social constructions of the local 'outside barbarians' living in ordinary neighbourhoods. Gates and walls serve not only as physical barriers, but also as symbolic representations of the 'civilised' residents inside and 'barbarians' outside the gated neighbourhood.

The imagined criminality of residents living in adjacent ordinary neighbourhoods is another criterion for the disidentification process of local residents. A large proportion of interview respondents were prone to believe that the poor local residents living in ordinary neighbourhoods, especially in urban villages, were more likely to exhibit criminal behaviours and were seen as 'dangerous populations'. Ms Xie, a young manager working in an archive, depicts her concerns over 'poor' local residents:

I think most residents living in urban villages are poor and lack cultural quality. You can see a lot of news in the newspaper and social media about their bad behaviour such as gang war and gambling. There are many dangerous '*baifenzai*' (drug abusers) among those poor residents. Drug abuse is a common criminal behaviour in our city, especially in the poor urban villages. [...] Poor villagers with 'low virtue' have no proper jobs and are inclined to criminal behaviour. They do not take responsibility for their family or care about their social reputations (Interviewee 23, Ms Xie, manager, Central GC).

This quote shows how middle-class residents of gated communities impose their negative views on the local residents living in adjacent ordinary neighbourhoods based on ideas about criminal behaviour. These negative images of the local residents stem from newspapers, TV reports and social media, which creates a detrimental 'they-image' of poor residents. Local social media and news agencies are prone to exaggerate stories about the criminal behaviour of migrant workers in order to appeal to larger audiences (Zhang, 2001). In this case, the local residents are deemed by the residents of gated communities to be dangerous populations with tendencies to commit theft, violent behaviour and serious crimes such as drug dealing, as well as being addicts. This stigmatisation of local residents as criminals serves as a negative 'fantasy' that further leads to the disidentification process and enlarges division between the two groups. In addition, local residents are considered to have 'inferior human values' and 'no social reputation', which implies that they do not constrain their social behaviour or conform to the 'civilised' norms of middle-class residents (Elias, 1978). These imagined uncivilised behaviours and 'inferior human worth' further exaggerate the disidentification from local residents by middle-class residents of gated communities and increases perceptions of the local residents' low social status.

In Elias and Scotson's (1987) 'Winston Parva' model, length of residence is an essential criterion for distinguishing outsiders, by which newcomers are distanced and stigmatised for their short period of residence. However, in this case, although local residents have lived in adjacent more traditional gated communities for longer periods than the new communities, but without displaying upward residential or social mobility they are considered incapable and lazy populations with low human values by the middle-class residents of the new gated communities. In this context, length of residence is not an indicator of an 'established' (insider) group but a manifestation of 'outsider' status. For instance, Ms Deng, a sales manager for a medical company, illustrated her opinions of local residents who had lived in ordinary neighbourhoods for long periods:

I have no contact with those neighbours [residents in the adjacent ordinary neighbourhoods] at all. We have different economic and educational backgrounds and even values. Maybe not all, but most of them work in low-end industries like farming. They are fatuous and lazy people. They do not strive to study and find good jobs in other developed cities like Shenzhen. Especially for young people, those who are diligent and clever all struggle for a better life in the big cities like Shenzhen. Thus, those remaining in the derelict old neighbourhoods are primarily poor and idle people (Interviewee 46, Ms Chen, retiree, Suburban GC).

As illustrated by Tomba (2010), most residents living in traditional work-unit compounds and urban villages are non-state-owned enterprises personnel who did not qualify for the substantial housing subsidies available in the housing reform era (the 1980s and 1990s). They also cannot buy into commodity housing estates due to their limited economic resources. Thus, they are considered poor and incapable people by those living in commodity gated communities. Moreover, compared with other big cities in Guangdong Province like Guangzhou and Shenzhen, work opportunities, especially for high-salary jobs in secondary and tertiary industries, are limited in Zhanjiang, and wage levels are consequently lower than in developed metropolitan areas (He et al., 2021). Large numbers of the younger generation of Zhanjiang, especially the next generation of wealthy families, choose to find jobs and settle down in other more

developed cities. because of this, residents of ordinary neighbourhoods, especially urban villages, are considered people with lower social value and less competent by residents of the new gated communities, and in this case, the long residence in ordinary neighbourhoods does not symbolise admission to the 'established' groups, as in Elias and Scotson's model. On the contrary, length of residence symbolises failure to achieve desirable residential and social mobility and leads to their being seen as 'outsiders' by the middle-class residents of gated communities.

'Inferior replacement households' in gated communities

When asked about the neighbourhood relations in the gated communities, most interviewees referred to a group of residents called 'replacement households' (*huiqianhu* in Chinese terms). These residents are rural incomers who have rapidly become rich through receiving displacement compensation (Du et al., 2020) from housing developers for requisition of their land and houses and now are able to engage in conspicuous consumption, including housing consumption in gated communities. Most middle-class residents of gated communities exhibit negative attitudes towards 'replacement households' through several different identification processes. The first is through the idea of a 'civilised' code of conduct from the perspective of middle-class residents. Most interviewees talked about the 'uncivilised' behaviours of replacement households in their community. They attribute these behaviours to the low 'quality' (*suzhi*) of households from rural areas. In the Chinese language context, the low quality (*di suzhi*) refers to negative personal characteristics, such as uncivilized behaviours, limited educational backgrounds, inferior clothing and even physical qualities (Kipnis, 2006). For example, Mr Lin, a general manager working in a bank, gave his opinions toward those replacement households as follows:

I think the overall neighbourhood living is in good order and harmonious. However, I dislike some behaviours of the small group of replacement households. I cannot understand some of their behaviours. For example, last time, a replacement household got married and put lots of flowers on the corridor in our building, which made it difficult to walk. One of the replacement households even installed a car parking pole in the public

space for his parking. These behaviours are hard to imagine for us (middle-class residents). I think most of them [replacement households] are people of low quality (*suzhi*), so they do not care about others. Thus, they behave as they wish (Interviewee 1, Mr Lin, bank manager, Central GC).

The 'uncivilised behaviour' of replacement households, including littering, random car parking, spitting, making noise and even their traditional conventions like putting flowers in shared spaces, are frequently mentioned by middle-class residents. Even if they do not witness the behaviours themselves, they usually assume that replacement households do these 'uncivilised' things. For example, even residents who do not have direct evidence of the replacement households littering from the balconies (*gaokong zhiwu*) presume that these households are responsible for this 'uncivilised' behaviour. They actively build up their code of conduct from their own understanding of 'civilised' behaviours to stigmatise replacement households, and this acts as a precondition for their disidentification from them. These 'inferior' households are considered to lack distinguishing group charisma (Elias and Scotson, 1994), referring to the civilised behaviours, and imposed lower human virtue. In this case, the undisciplined, lawless and uncivilised behaviours of small number of replacement households are identified by middle-class residents as the group characteristics of all replacement households. Thus, gating is not the only criterion by which insiders are distinguished from outsiders. Although the replacement households are living inside the gated community, in other words, they are 'propertied class' (Zhang, 2012), they are considered outsiders by middle-class residents due to their 'uncivilised behaviour', poor educational background, rural household registration status and traditional conventions, and low quality (*suzhi*) in a broader sense.

A lifestyle based on consumption capacity is another by which replacement households are distinguished from middle-class residents. Middle-class residents generally feel that the consumption patterns of replacement households in their gated communities are quite different from their own. These consumption behaviours include style of dress, car ownership, alcohol consumption, fitness activities and the like. Moreover, middle-class residents considered their own consumption behaviours

modern, decent and healthy, in contrast to the replacement households. For instance, Mr Zheng, a retiree living in the central urban gated community, gave his opinions:

I think although we live in the same community, they [replacement households] are pretty different from us. [...] They do not participate in the membership of the fitness club inside our community, and they seldom consume the wines and drinks in the recreational centre inside. I think their lifestyle is old-fashioned and I do not like to make friends with them. Our consumption habits are quite different. [...] There was one time when my friend came to visit my home. He saw those replacement households in worn rustic clothing and slippers wandering around, which made me feel embarrassed. He might think that I live in an ordinary neighbourhood with peasants (Interviewee 48, Mr Zheng, retiree, Central GC).

The quote above illustrates how the different lifestyles between replacement households and middle-class residents are mainly based on consumption capacity. With the rapid growth of the economy of China in the past 30 years, a prominent feature of the emerging middle class is their conspicuous consumption capacity (Tsang, 2014). Although replacement households received large compensation payments for their land acquired by the government, buying houses in exclusive gated communities has consumed considerable amounts of this money. Thus, without high-paying jobs, they are not able to engage in conspicuous consumption behaviours like their middle-class neighbours. These different lifestyles based on consumption capabilities become another criterion for middle-class households to disidentifying replacement households. In addition, from the perspective of someone like Mr Zheng, buying a residential property in an exclusive and upscale gated community helps to demonstrate his economic power and, more importantly, his middle-class status. Thus, the restricted consumption, lifestyles and 'peasant' identities of replacement households are considered an 'identity contamination' (Elias and Scotson, 1994) of the 'purified' class homogeneity in the gated communities, which prevents middle-class residents from manifesting their middle-class social status.

The 'dehumanised' service staff in gated communities

As documented in related gated community studies (Hazelzet and Wissink, 2012; S-M Li et al., 2012; Zhang, 2012), community and domestic service staff, is an essential group of people whose work is critical to ensuring the high quality of life inside gated communities and keeping the neighbourhood tidy, clean and safe. However, these service staff are disidentified by middle-class residents as people with low-skill occupations and inferior human values. There are clear employer/employee distinctions between the service staff which the middle-class homeowners further exaggerate to emphasise the class division between these two groups. The service staff are sometimes even considered as sources of instability and danger in the community. For example, Ms Zhang, a retiree who has the experience of hiring two domestic workers, described her opinions:

One year ago, I hired two domestic workers in my house. One is for cooking, and the other is for cleaning. These services do save me lots of time and energy in these tedious and tiring works. However, after I read some news on social media about the criminality of domestic workers, such as theft and even kidnapping, I chose to give up hiring them. I want to keep my home safe. [...] Sometimes, you can see other service staff walk in and out of our community. This makes me feel unsafe because some of them are rural migrant workers with inferior human virtues. And their appearance inside our community makes the population composition more complex and unstable (Interviewee 43, Ms Zhang, retiree, Suburban GC).

Middle-class residents consider service staff to be of 'low human value' (*meijiazhi*) and the source of potential criminality. These disidentifications not only derive from the long-lasting discrimination toward rural residents and migrant workers in China (Chen, 2013; Du et al., 2020) but also come from the employment relationship between these two groups. Service staff are considered underlings who engage in low-skilled manual labour for extremely low wages and who completely obey the orders of their employers. Therefore, even though they follow all the rules of the gated community, they are considered a source of danger and anxiety by the residents. Ms Zhang chose to dismiss the service staff in her house in order to stay away from people with lower social status and keep her in complete control of the safety of her. However, she does

not want to exclude all service staff from the neighbourhood. Thus, these feelings and anxieties prompt her to keep a social distance from service staff in the neighbourhood, further deepening the disidentification and class division in the gated community.

In addition to the disidentification and discrimination, service staff are even regarded as valueless humans by middle-class residents and enjoy fewer human rights in some respects. For example, Mr Liang, who works as a security guard manager in the gated community, described his working experience:

Although we are working hard in our post, the affluent residents show little respect to us. They only consider us as their servants. Last month one of my colleagues stopped an outsider from entering our community because he is not one of our residents. Shortly after, a resident came to my colleague and shouted at him for not letting his friend in. He used the word 'watchdog' to humiliate my colleague, which is so insulting. [...] When the conflicts between us [service staff and middle-class homeowners] happen, we are told by the management company to put up with their scolding and beatings, and we cannot justify our complaints because they are our consumer gods (*Guke Shangdi*) (Interviewee 34, Mr Liang, manager of security guard, Central GC).

As well as the disidentification and imbalance in social status revealed in the quote above, the significant power differentials between and oppression by middle-class residents and service staff (Elias and Scotson, 1994) are exposed in their group relations. In extreme cases, the security guards are considered 'watchdogs' or merely instruments for the community's safety, implying the dehumanisation of service staff in the gated community. And this dehumanisation is reflected in their conflicts with middle-class residents, in which they cannot justify their actions or claim normal human rights, such as defending themselves against personal attacks by middle-class residents. These power differentials derive from not only their employment relationship with middle-class residents but also their work unit (in this case, the management company). In the case of Winston Parva (Elias and Scotson, 1994), outsiders' groups sometimes annoy the established groups by being noisy, destructive and offensive as revenge for being stigmatised. However, in the case of the gated communities studied

in this thesis, the service staff are reduced to 'paralysing apathy' (Elias and Scotson, 1994), which means they hardly fight back against the established groups because of the deeply embedded class and status differentials. Compared with the propertied replacement households, these service staff are unpropertied and 'useless' groups of people on the bottom layer of disidentification in the gated community.

In order to defend their jobs in gated communities, the service staff have to obey the rules of the management company and bear the middle-class residents' unreasonable accusations and abuse. Although these imbalanced and oppressive relationships have not created sharp conflict in daily lives, they have planted the seeds of discontent and hostility. If the power figuration and social circumstances change, these destructive relationships may bring further confrontations between service staff and middle-class residents. For example, Ms Liu, a young doctor at a public hospital, recounted her experience during the Covid-19 Pandemic:

As the fast-spreading of the Covid-19 virus, the local government of Zhanjiang requires all the gated communities to close gates to prevent the unnecessary movement of residents. Thus, security guards become 'disease prevention workers' and gain the right to control our rights of free movement. They can go out grocery shopping freely, and when I asked them whether and how I could go out, they were quite impatient and shouted loudly at me, 'Stay in your home and do not bother me!' I am a homeowner in this gated community and should not be treated so rudely and slowly (Interviewee 2, Ms Liu, doctor, Suburban GC, in 2019 through WeChat).

In this specific circumstance, the security guard, at the 'bottom layer' of gated communities, gains the partial supremacy to govern, restrict and control residents. They have continually lived at the bottom of the power figurations and are sometimes discriminated against and oppressed by middle-class residents, but this changed external social and political environment gave them the power to fight back against their 'masters' and 'gods' and vent their discontent and frustrations. In some extreme cases in Wuhan, the guards even beat homeowners who slipped out of gated communities to buy food and groceries. These times were the 'highlights' of their lives. As Ms Liu further illuminated: 'When the lockdown of gated communities ended, the

light in their eyes seemed to fade.’ With the loss of government power to authorise actions by community guards, they have gone back to the previous low-class status of service staff who must bear the even harder abuse and discrimination of the middle-class residents.

Maintaining the stigmatisation of the ‘outsiders’

Following the above discussion of the disidentification and stigmatisation of ‘outsiders’ by middle-class residents, it is necessary to understand how these imbalanced group relations are maintained. As Elias and Scotson (1994) noted in the established-outsider figuration, the established group excludes its members from non-occupational contact with outsiders by means of social control in the form of praise-gossip and blame gossip. During the interviews for this thesis, it became clear that middle-class residents purposely reduced their social contact with other social groups and implemented measures to maintain this social exclusion. For instance, Ms Yu, a young English teacher in a private educational institution, describes why and how she refuses to contact replacement households in the gated community:

I have little interaction with them [replacement households]. They are less educated and with rude behaviours. I also ask my child to stay away from their children. I am worried that my child will pick up some bad habits from them, such as dropping out of school and being addicted to mobile phone games. Thus, I forbid my child to play with their children. [...] Mr Wang’s son sometimes plays with the children of the replacement households. When I discussed this situation with other neighbours, we felt it was inconceivable and weird. We thought he lacked educational consciousness and self-restraint. We thus told our children not to play with Mr Wang’s son anymore. This is good for their growing up (Interviewee 40, Ms Yu, teacher, Suburban GC).

As a teacher, Ms Yu indicates her prejudice towards replacement households and their next generations based on her perception of their poor educational background and detrimental parenting style. Thus, she actively reduced social contact with these replacement households and cut down the social connections between their children.

Moreover, when members of the 'established' group - in this case, Mr Wang's son - break the rules of taboo on social contact, they will be punished through 'blaming gossip' by other 'established groups members and contact with these rule-breakers is reduced. Here, taboos on social contact are maintained through their inter-group 'blaming gossip' about those who have contact with 'outsiders'. And 'blaming gossip' and restrictions on social contact not only exist in the middle-class adults but also extend to the next generation.

Taboos on social contact between the established and the outsiders are kept alive by informal social control such as 'blame-gossip' (Elias and Scotson, 1994). Here, as well as informal social control like exclusion from social contact, replacement households are excluded from participation in important community organisations such as being able to have representatives on homeowner association committees. As explained by Mr Chen, a general manager of a biscuit factory, who is also one of the representatives of the homeowner association:

Usually, when we recommend and elect representatives to the homeowner associations, we do not consider replacement households. Because they are peasants with less educational experience and less sense of responsibility, they cannot even obey the community rules in their daily lives. I think they cannot take up positions in the homeowner associations. If some of them engage with our homeowner representatives, this may cause many conflicts in our decision-making and job execution (Interviewee 15, Mr Chen, manager, Suburban GC).

The above quote shows that replacement households are rejected as representatives of homeowner associations because of their so-called less-educated backgrounds and low quality (*suzhi*). It is clear here that replacement households are excluded from both social contact and are deprived of the right to engage in these quasi-governance organisations. These exclusion processes derive from discrimination and prejudice towards rural villagers and rural migrants (Chen, 2013; Du et al., 2020) as people with inferior social status and morality (Pow, 2007b). The established-outsider relationship is maintained by reducing social contact and keeping absolute power in the self-

governance organisations, and the low participation in community organisations further reinforces the social interaction and class division between the two groups.

The above discussions highlight the formal (HOA) and informal (gossip) measures to maintain the idealised image of the established and slander the reputation of the outsider. These are the essential instruments for maintaining the stigmatisation of outsiders and the group charisma of the established group. Elias and Scotson (1994) further suggest that this mechanism is extremely powerful when both groups internalise the belief that the established group is superior to the outsider group. This means when the outsiders' group mentally recognise and accept the superior status of the established group, it is hard for them to challenge this imbalance in group relations. The figurations of gated communities here show exactly these extremely imbalanced relations. For instance, Mr Chen, a replacement household from the Suburban GC, gives his opinions of the middle-class residents:

I always see those residents [middle-class] in our neighbourhood, but we hardly have any interactions. It's normal because we have different types of occupations and lifestyles even though we live in the same neighbourhood. [...] The residents [middle-class] sometimes complain about the rule-breaking replacement households, and I admit that some replacement households behave badly, such as littering and random parking. These are natural in rural living, but we need some time to get used to these 'civilised' social norms (Interviewee 27, Mr Chen, replacement household, Suburban GC).

Similar viewpoints regarding middle-class residents as virtuous citizens, being hardworking and competent, and with superior social status, exist among the replacement households and the local residents in the adjacent ordinary neighbourhood. These viewpoints are partly the result of the changing social circumstances in China. Unlike the socialist era in China, when egalitarianism was the predominant ideology (Wu et al., 2006), the discussion of class stratification and differentiation is common in the daily discourse of residents and admitted by the authorities. Some replacement households and local residents in ordinary neighbourhoods even concur with the assignment of inferior social status and superior

social status between themselves and middle-class residents. Thus, these disidentification processes in the mindsets of both groups further reinforce and maintain the social division and imbalanced established-outsider figurations between these social groups.

The spatial order of gated communities

Building on the discussions of identification/disidentification and stigmatisation processes inside/outside gated communities and the mechanisms for maintaining these complex established/outside' figurations, this part investigates the spatial order of gated communities that is both manifested in and, in turn, exaggerates these group figurations and divisions. For Davis (2006), gated communities are considered an urban pathology that results in extreme socio-spatial polarisation and segregation, and in the early analysis of the spatial order of gated communities in Shanghai, Pow (2007b) suggests that the formation of territoriality and spatial exclusion by gated communities is deeply embedded in the moral discrimination between urbanites and rural migrants.. In the research cases for this thesis, the spatial order of gated communities is mainly based on the discrimination against poor local residents ('barbarians') and 'inferior' rural residents, while the fear of criminality outside the gated community becomes an important factor in creating exclusionary attitudes in suburban gated communities. In the quote below, Mr Li, an owner of a car repairment company, shows his recognition of the spatial order of gated communities:

I hardly visit the adjacent areas outside our community. This is because those residents [local urbanites and urban villagers] are different from us. They don't speak Mandarin; their residential space is dirty and disordered; their behaviours are rude and violent. [...] I dare not even go out of our neighbourhood at night because there is not enough lighting or security apparatus like security cameras outside our neighbourhood. I am afraid of being robbed and attacked while walking outside at night. I feel that in the suburban area, the inside area (inside gated communities) and the outside area are two different worlds. The gates and walls guarantee peaceful lives

inside (Interviewee 17, Mr Li, owner of car repairment company, Suburban GC).

These negative views of local residents ('barbarians') as morally inferior and dangerous people with criminal dispositions form part of the construction of the contrast between safe and ordered gated communities and the dangerous and disordered outside areas. The low-quality physical environments and lack of security apparatus in the areas outside the gates further exacerbate these negative feelings about the outside neighbourhoods. People with inferior morality and criminal dispositions, dangerous physical environments, and the extremely different lives of the gated communities and outsider areas together underpin the spatial order of separation and exclusion in gated communities. In this sense, for middle-class residents, the outside neighbourhood areas are primitive, uncivilised, dangerous and entirely beyond their everyday lives, and these attitudes are manifested in the social segregation process and underlying exclusionary logic toward 'outsiders'.

But as well as the spatial order demarcated by gates and walls, there are spatial divisions inside the gated communities created by stigmatisation and emotional barriers between middle-class residents and replacement households. Ms Chen, a retiree living one of the suburban gated communities, illustrates her understanding of spatial order inside the community:

Those residents [replacement households] like to stay in the amusement park area to use the fitness and recreation facilities in public space. Sometimes they gather at the southeast corner of the playground under the tree to play chess, cards and occasionally dance with each other. It's awkward to see these rural behaviours in our neighbourhood, and they sometimes make some noise. Thus, I usually avoid going to these areas because I don't want to have any contact with them. I don't like to be considered playing with those people with *disuzhi* (inferior human values). [...] If I want to keep fit, I normally go to the fitness club in our community. I have to pay 2000 yuan a month for it. It's expensive, but it is worth the price. I can enjoy better facilities and avoid mixing with those *disuzhi* people (Interviewee 46, Ms Chen, retiree, Suburban GC).

This description is supported by my observation of the area, that these specific small-scale spaces become the common activity space for social interaction by the replacement households. They actively form their in-group familiarity and social cohesion through their typical and traditional activities, such as playing chess and dancing. These social activities and behaviours are considered inappropriate and wrong by the middle-class residents, and thus the spaces themselves are stigmatised as 'uncivilised' and disordered. These deep-rooted views of inferior moral order and the discrimination against replacement households help to construct moral geographies of exclusion (Pow, 2007b) and create spatial division even inside the gated communities. In contrast with these stigmatised spaces are the high-end bars and exclusive fitness centres in the gated communities that exemplify middle-class residents' modern and 'civilised' lifestyles.

5.4 Conclusion

Contact with interviewees inside and outside the study neighbourhoods revealed that many residents live largely privatised lifestyles. Such lifestyles are valued and pursued because residents can lead peaceful and undisturbed lives in their private homes without surveillance by the government. These findings echo those of Pow in his earlier work (2009; 2007) and show that many residents seek to avoid the possible surveillance or gaze of their neighbours, or the possible judgements of their more elderly relatives. This privatised lifestyle offers them more privacy and autonomy in their private homes. However, they also lose the previous collective neighbourhood lives in traditional work-unit compounds where they could form more stable, robust, cohesive, harmonious and reciprocal neighbourhood relations. The neighbourhood social lives in the suburban gated communities are, to some extent, different from the one in city centre. As the public services and infrastructure outside the neighbourhoods are quite scarce and insufficient, residents living in the suburban gated communities are more dependent on the services and amenities provided inside community. The use of wider neighbourhood services and public space has increased their 'public familiarity' (Blokland and Rae, 2008), and participation in voluntary neighbourhood organisations has increased their mutual trust and reciprocal relations (Putnam, 1993). Thus, the suburban gated communities have formed more cohesive neighbourhood

relationships inside, while the gated community in the city centre have less relations between residents. From this comparison, it can be seen that the different built environments of the city centre and suburban areas have profound influences on the social relationships inside gated communities.

Many interviewees in this study presented their views that traditional tight, cohesive and warm-hearted neighbourhood bonds are replaced by privatised, apathetic and weak neighbourhood relations in gated communities. Although the local government seeks to reconstruct traditional cohesive and harmonious neighbourhood relationships through the 'community building' campaign and third-party public welfare organisations, these have limited influence in gated communities. Because of these transformations of neighbourhood relationships, residents in gated communities feel uncomfortable and awkward about their indifferent and apathetic neighbourhood relations and feel insecure about facing the issues and risks in daily lives without the help they previously had from neighbours. These social changes in urban neighbourhoods can be understood as the disappearance of collective bonds and identity in gated communities together with the emancipation of the 'small-self' from the 'big-self' based on Chinese cultural contexts. Gated communities are residential and social spaces for the initial cultivation and reflection of the emancipation of small-self. Residents of gated communities have emancipated their 'self' from traditional social, cultural, institutional and ideological collective constraints and fulfilled their desire for physical enjoyment, privatised residential space, personal autonomy and individual status. However, they also feel lost, uneasy, unsafe and uncertain about the detachment from the big-self, loss of collective identity, cohesive and reciprocal neighbourhood relationships, and collective culture and values, the 'self-anxiety' created during the tremendous transformations of neighbourhood relationships.

Housing commodification in post-reform China has increased the residential mobility of urban residents, and the demise of the state-owned work-unit system has created a 'power vacuum' in private communities (Zhang, 2012) in urban neighbourhoods' governance. In these urban contexts, management companies have become the primary governmental entity inside gated communities. They take charge of all the

governance functions of previous neighbourhoods of the work-unit system, including those previously taken by government. Management companies have been able to take dominant power over community governance including charging management fees, controlling financial revenue and expenditure, and the use of illegitimate means to threaten homeowners. Thus, the management company was seen by some residents as putting profit before service –the commodity housing estate is seen as an instrument to maximise the company’s economic income without caring about the quality of life in the community.

Although some activists in gated communities sought to fight for their consumer rights through HOAs, their attempts failed due to both external and internal factors. The most crucial factor is that the more affluent residents are inclined to pay the high management fees to enjoy the high-quality services and avoid confrontation or conflicts and neighbourhood issues. For these residents, the best mode of neighbourhood governance is that the management company should deal with all the neighbourhood public affairs efficiently and effectively, and let the residents enjoy their private time and space without bothering with unnecessary interactions with other residents: they are seeking ‘red-wine services’ from neighbourhood governance. In this sense, the HOAs in gated communities in Zhanjiang are powerless organisations, and there is a lack of genuine ‘self-governance’ in gated communities.

The local governments have set up grassroots ‘self-governance’ organisations, the Residential Committees, to regain control over the urban neighbourhoods. These RCs play an essential role in traditional work-unit compounds and are responsible for most neighbourhood governance issues. They provide minimal life support for residents who cannot afford the management fees of private management companies. However, in gated communities, the role of RCs is marginalised and eclipsed because of the dominant role of management companies and the residents’ reluctance to be monitored and governed by local authorities. However, it is incorrect to say that the government loses power and control over management companies and gated communities. Neoliberal political transformations do not mean the reduction of governmental authority over neighbourhoods, but rather indicate that government

seeks to rely on non-political organisations, communities and individuals to strengthen their governance capacities (Barry et al., 2013). At the same time, the gating of different types of neighbourhoods has helped to make the city more legible to political administrations (Scott, 2008). However, the negative impact of these modes of governance is the creation of a two-tier society in which the affluent are increasingly separated from the poor - economically, spatially and institutionally (McKenzie, 2005).

In analysing the neighbourhood relations between middle-class residents and other social groups in their daily lives at the micro-level, several processes of disidentification of outsider groups stand out. First is that it is not only the rural residents (peasants) but also the local urban residents (urbanites) living in ordinary neighbourhoods who are considered outsiders by the residents of gated communities. Although these urban residents have urban 'hukou' status, they are regarded as local 'barbarians' by around one-third of residents of gated communities due to their low-end occupations and supposedly criminal dispositions. In the case of gated communities, length of residence does not serve as a criterion for being an 'established' group, as was the case in Winston Parva (Elias and Scotson, 1994): it is considered as a sign of being an outsider lacking social and residential mobility. Second, the replacement households are disidentified as outsiders by the middle-class residents in gated communities because of their rural hukou status and their low-consumption lifestyles. Although they received large displacement compensation payments from the housing developer and considered themselves as 'propertied' middle-class (Zhang, 2012) living in gated communities, their middle-class neighbourhoods treat them as complete outsiders. Third, service staff are treated as outsiders by both the middle-class residents and replacement households due to their low economic, and inferior occupational, status as 'underlings'. These service staff are considered as 'dehumanised' instruments which reflects the significant power differentials and oppressions that exist in gated communities. Unlike the cases in Elias' research, in this study, the spatiality of gated communities plays an important role in influencing group-level social relationships, and the middle-class residents as newcomers have stronger power than those local residents with longer length of residence.

Maintaining the stigmatisation of outsiders is an important means for securing the privileged and powerful identities of the established groups. The research results show that middle-class residents of gated communities actively reduce their own, and their children's social interactions with replacement households inside, and local residents outside, the gated community to maintain their 'established' identities. Middle-class residents who contact 'outsiders' are punished by being rejected by other middle-class residents and being slandered in informal social control 'blame-gossip' in their daily communications. In addition to these informal forms of social control, replacement households are excluded from participation as representative on homeowner associations and thus deprived of the right of participating in quasi self-governance organisations. This further exacerbates the divisions between established and outsider groups. These disidentification and stigmatisation processes of local 'barbarian' and 'replacement households' are further manifested in the spatial order of gated communities, where the adjacent ordinary neighbourhoods are considered primitive, uncivilised, dangerous places, entirely beyond the everyday lives of the middle-class residents. This imbalanced spatial order reveals the underlying social segregation and exclusion of 'outsiders'. Even inside the gated communities, the deeply-embedded discrimination and stigmatisation of replacement households help to construct the fragmented social space, unfolding the highly contradictory class divisions and conflicts between the middle-class residents and replacement households showing that gating is only one visible way to create and strengthen class segregation between homeowners inside and others outside. The analysis in this chapter unveils urban segregation not only through residential segregation by physical barriers (gates and walls) but also through residents' unequal social interactions, disidentification processes, stigmatisation and viewpoints of different social groups, which allows a more nuanced and deeper understandings of urban segregation of gated communities in Chinese cities. The next chapter will move to investigate the mobility patterns of residents in gated communities and their engagements with public spaces on wider urban scales.

Chapter 6: Mobility, social segregation and engagement with public space

Many urban scholars consider gated communities to be extreme forms of residential segregation and urban fragmentation (Coy, 2006; Davis, 1996; Massey, 1996). The social segregation between residents living inside and outside gated communities of Zhanjiang at the neighbourhood level has been discussed in Chapter 5. This chapter seeks to further probe these questions of social segregation and the fragmentation of urban space at the city level through examining these wealthy residents' mobility patterns (Atkinson and Flint, 2004), activity spaces (Wang et al., 2012) and engagements with urban public spaces. This chapter has four sections. The first and second sections explore the modes of travel and the activity space of affluent residents of high-end gated communities in order to understand the dynamics of social segregation beyond their residential space. The third section compares the mobility patterns of residents inside and outside gated communities in urban and suburban areas to gain a deeper understanding of segregation in the city and the transport exclusion faced by poor residents. The fourth section examines how the residents of affluent gated communities interact with other social groups and engage with public spaces in the cities. This section also explores their feelings and values towards the public lives and spaces of Zhanjiang.

6.1 Modes of travel and 'corridors'

In analysing the mobility of affluent residents of gated communities, the conceptual typology of 'dynamic spaces of segregation' suggested by Atkinson and Flint (2004) is employed here. This typology consists of three key concepts: territories, corridors and objectives. 'Territories' are linked with residential neighbourhoods, in this case, gated communities surrounded by gates, walls and other security technologies such as CCTV. 'Objectives' refer to non-residential locations to which people travel on a daily basis with repeated patterns of movement. This idea of objectives is similar to the concept of 'activity space' in related research studies in human geography (Wong and Shaw, 2011). As Wang et al. (2012) illustrate, as well as residential segregation, people

may also be segregated according to their daily activity space (workplace and leisure spaces), which in turn varies interdependently with lifestyles, social networks and values. People may live in the same places but can experience different lives and spaces regarding where, how and for what purpose their time is spent (Wang et al., 2012). Exploring their activity spaces (objectives) on a broader urban scale can provide better understanding of the time-space segregation between residents inside and outside gated communities. Lastly, the idea of 'corridors' refers to modes of transport that aim to create immunity from unwanted encounters and potential dangers. Corridors and modes of travel include private cars, first-class trains or air travel, or even anonymous clothing styles designed not to attract unwanted attention (Atkinson and Flint, 2004). The following two sections apply these conceptual tools to analyse and understand the dynamic patterns of the mobilities of wealthy residents of gated communities of Zhanjiang.

High dependence on the private mode of transport

The interviews and structured observations clearly demonstrated that private cars are the dominant mode of transport for residents of gated communities. They regarded private cars as their first choice for travelling to workplace, entertainment, and social network destinations. If their destinations were quite close to their residential neighbourhood (for example, within 10 minutes' walk), they would choose to walk or ride a bike, customarily considered 'healthy travel'. Although the public bus system in the central district of Zhanjiang is well-designed and efficient, most of the residents chose not to use public transport because of the low speed and disordered environments. As illustrated here by Ms Yuan, a young accountant working in the finance department of a public hospital:

I usually go to work and return home in my sedan car with my husband on weekdays because our workplaces are near each other. At the weekend, my family and I always drive to the shopping mall in the city centre, wildlife zoos in the suburb area, large amusement parks in the adjacent cities. ... I have my [community-designated] parking lot in my neighbourhood; it's so convenient. I seldom use the public bus in our city because they are slow

and crowded. Sometimes you may even meet with local people talking loudly in their own dialect, making me quite uncomfortable (Interviewee 3, Ms Yuan, accountant, Central GC).

Residents inside gated communities rely extensively on their private cars in their daily commuting to workplace and entertainment locations. The use of private vehicles enables them to move freely in and between cities in an unfettered manner, resembling somewhat the kind of lifestyle deployed by affluent tourists in European metropolises (Bauman, 1998). This type of free and fast mobility at the urban scale is underpinned by a well-structured highway system, parking space arrangements and petrol stations in the city centre, suburban areas, and between adjacent cities (Urry, 2016). And many new highways and parking lots in suburban areas near gated communities are sponsored by the real estate companies and mainly used by the residents of private gated communities. From the perspective of 'splintering urbanism' (Graham and Marvin, 2002), these fortified residential spaces, leisure spaces, and work spaces are connected by private highways, parking lots, technological mobilities and networked infrastructure, which tends to orient urban space towards the dominant logic of freeways, car parks and automobile users' access to urban space. The high dependence on private transport increases the potential for, and power of mobility of, affluent residents of gated communities, while the avoidance of public transport reduces their exposure to social encounters in public spaces. For these wealthy residents, private cars provide faster, more pleasant and 'light' (Bauman, 2013) experiences of mobility, while public buses are relatively slow, crowded, and 'heavy' with unwanted encounters with other passengers, rude manners and uncivilised behaviours, noise and theft. Thus, travelling and commuting in private cars not only provide a sense of 'flying' in the wider urban environment but also enable residents to avoid disordered and unwanted social groups in the public spaces (Sennett, 1992).

Elderly residents of gated communities, who are unable to drive, or are tired of driving private cars, mainly choose expensive online car-hailing services as their primary mode of transport. The following two quotes illustrate the developed car-hailing system in Zhanjiang. Ms Pan, a retiree from the Suburban GC, shares her experience:

I do not know how to drive cars, and I am too old to learn about it. So in my daily travelling, I usually choose the online car-hailing service. This type of transport service emerged in Zhanjiang three years ago and has become quite mature now. It's very convenient. You can order the service on your mobile phone, and the drivers will arrive in around five minutes, which is much faster than traditional taxi services. You can even choose different service levels, such as standard cars, business purpose vehicles and luxury cars. The summer in Zhanjiang is so hot. If I am going to shopping centres, with these services, I enjoy the air conditioning all the way without being exposed to the hot and stuffy weather. (Interviewee 47, Ms Pan, retiree, Suburban GC)

Another interviewee, Mr Dong, a driver for an online car-hailing service, helps us to better understand the nature of these mobility patterns and the demands made by passengers:

I provide luxury car services, which is the most expensive level of services in our cities. My car is a V level Benz business car with a price of around 700,000 yuan (about £87,000 GBP). And I spend approximately 150,000 yuan (around 18,000 pounds) on improving the interior trims. Thus, the minimum charges of my services is 110 yuan (about £14 GBP) per journey. I provide the greatest service to my passengers while respecting their privacy during the trip. ... I usually pick up my passengers in the office buildings of the Central Business District, Government Offices, private enterprise buildings, upscale gated neighbourhoods, and sometimes the airports. The destinations vary a lot, like the upscale gated neighbourhood, grand hotel, famous restaurants, bar streets near the seaside and scenic zones and so on (Interviewee 32, Mr Dong, online-hailing car driver).

The use of online-hailing services by elderly residents of affluent gated communities preferred is another mode of private transport. Yet, car-hailing service drivers are 'outsiders' to these residents and have little communication with them. This situation is similar to the Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, example described by Anderson (2012), where homeless people, poor people and Black nannies and caretakers contribute to the diversity of the public space but are generally ignored by the young

white mothers in the neighbourhood. Like Black service workers in this American neighbourhood, online car-hailing drivers in China provide good services and behave particularly politely to the affluent aged residents in gated communities as they would to their employers, but they are ignored by and invisible to these employers in the mobile space of their cars. This quasi 'cosmopolitan canopy' (Anderson, 2012) provides space where affluent residents are exposed to proximity to and encounters with other social groups but do not create effective social interactions. In addition, in the words of Mr Dong, luxury online-hailing car services can be understood as part of a more expensive and exclusive private transport infrastructure system. These linked 'corridors', such as private cars and online-hailing services, can be seen as a 'path toward urban closure' (Pope, 1996) which terminates in exclusive destinations, such as hotels, restaurants and upscale gated communities. In this sense, exclusive gated communities are connected by private transport, car-hailing services, private highways and parking lots to entertainment and work destinations. These corridors create a 'premium network space' (Graham, 2000) for affluent residents allowing them to avoid poor urban residents and potential dangers. This is also evident in Ms Pan's descriptions of her enjoyment of the air-conditioned environment inside the car-hail car and also in shopping centres in Zhanjiang, a city located in the tropical zones. Underpinning these comfortable environments and luxury circulations around the city is the consumption power of wealthy city and gated community residents to be able to afford the high costs of these services. This phenomenon further exaggerates the social and technical disparity between the 'cool' insiders and the 'stuffy' outsiders (Dick and Rimmer, 2019). Wealthy residents can enjoy secure, controllable and 'air-conditioned' environments in their gated communities, private cars, and shopping malls, while other residents outside who cannot afford these things are only able to live and work in derelict neighbourhoods, underdeveloped old city centres, and deserted open streets.

Another aspect of the choice of private modes of transport is the linked problem of inadequate public service systems like buses and other forms of public mobility. One interesting mode of transport found in this study is the private bus system in the Suburban GC. As illustrated by Mr Chen from the suburban GC:

One of the advantages of living in our community is that you can enjoy the exclusive bus system for your daily commute. These shuttle buses depart towards the city centre in the morning and return in the afternoon around 6 pm back to our community. This is quite convenient for those who cannot drive themselves or cannot drive in specific situations. You know that the [public] bus system in this suburb is underdeveloped with only one bus route toward the city centre. You have to wait for up to an hour to take the public bus. But if you are a member of our community, our exclusive shuttle bus service can solve these traffic problems. (Interviewee 15, Mr Chen, manager, Suburban GC)

And according to another interviewee, Mr Li, this private shuttle bus route exclusively serving their gated community is the first one in Zhanjiang. This exclusive bus system is another case of the premium networked transport infrastructure provided only for wealthy residents of gated communities. In China, some private urban infrastructure tends to be provided in megacities such as Shanghai and Shenzhen, but even in these major cities, it is not a common mode of infrastructure provision (Wu and Gaubatz, 2013). For example, international companies such as the Suez and Vivendi Group have provided purified drinking water through premium water networks for selective residential neighbourhoods in Shenzhen. Thus, it is interesting to see that, in this study in Zhanjiang, the Hengda real estate company, as the second-largest housing company in China, similarly provides shuttle bus services, another 'premium network space' for the members of their housing developments. The traditional state's monopolised forms of urban infrastructure provision are transformed into new forms of privatised and competitive infrastructure provision – the 'unbundling' of infrastructure networks (Graham, 2000)- which allow infrastructural capital to unevenly colonise urban space (Graham, 2000). On the demand side, only affluent and influential residents are able to pursue and enjoy these private modes of transport, exclusive infrastructure systems, and even 'mini-cities' (Atkinson and Blandy, 2005). The gated communities here, with their affluent residents and influential developers, serve as exclusive spaces for diversification of consumer demands, within which private companies are able to make use of consumer segregation and geodemographic targeting techniques to construct their infrastructure 'brand' (Graham and Marvin, 2002). And these infrastructure 'brands' can only be utilised and enjoyed by specific

social groups in selective neighbourhoods, increasing the mobility inequality between rich and poor. Furthermore, the emergence of these private transport systems raises concerns about whether private provision of urban infrastructure in ordinary cities will become more common and public provision of urban infrastructure will gradually decline in the future.

Security, invisibility and status

For residents of gated communities, private modes of transport not only present them with speed, convenience, comfort and efficiency but also ensure their security outside their residential spaces. Some interviewees indicated that choosing private mobilities (such as private cars) as their primary mode of transport between key destinations is driven by the desire for more secure mobile spaces. Here Ms Chen, a retiree from the Suburban GC, explained her experience of driving private cars in the city:

I am actually a person who indulges in travelling around every corner of our cities in my spare time. As I retired five years ago, I have lots of free time, and I have already been to most of the places in our city. ... Normally I drive my car to visit these places because it is convenient, and this way of travelling makes me feel much safer than walking. Especially when I travel to those old urban districts with complex paths and disorderly urban environments; and other places like the old railway station and urban villages with people from diverse places also make me feel unsafe. But by driving the car, I can improve my safety and view the scenery at the same time (Interviewee 46, Ms Chen, retiree, Suburban GC).

This second quote from Ms Chen depicts her experience of driving a car in the congested city centre:

When I am driving in the city centre during rush hours, there are lots of people, maybe from the urban villages, who usually ride their electric bicycles on the highway. These people usually go very fast and do not obey the traffic rules, making me feel quite nervous and insecure. I hope electric bicycles will be forbidden in our cities so that I will not see these people anymore (Interviewee 46, Ms Chen, retiree, Suburban GC).

Ms Chen's behaviour represents the characteristics of this type of affluent resident of gated communities. They do not retreat totally into their own private spaces (Massey, 1996) and are somewhat engaged in experiencing and wandering the city's public spaces. However, their movement and engagement with public spaces occur with total safety in mind while circulating through the city, especially when they traverse what they consider to be relatively 'dangerous' spaces. These spaces include dilapidated work-unit compounds, poor urban villages and old city centres full of transportation junctions, disordered environments, and dangerous poor and uncivilised residents. They are willing to enjoy these public spaces through the windscreens of their cars, like the tourists described by Bauman (1998), without actually entering the public spaces or interacting with other social groups there. They are scared of being exposed to strangers and the diversity of people in public spaces. This sense of insecurity resonates with the urban situations depicted by Sennett (1992) that American urban elites are fearful of exposure to strangers and the disorder and diversity of public spaces. In its extreme form, as Ms Chen describes, residents want policymakers and urban planners to utilise urban regulations to prevent the appearance of other residents, for instance, with electric bicycles from 'their' 'premium' spaces. Crucially for these wealthy residents, uses of different modes of transport display the users' underlying economic income levels and social status. As one interviewee pointed out: "I don't like using the public buses because my colleagues may think that I cannot afford the private cars or the petrol cost" (Interviewee 3, Ms Yuan, accountant, Central GC). These viewpoints echo the kind of middle-class hyper-consumerism described by Zhang (2012) in Chinese upscale gated communities, where the power of owning a luxury private car has become an essential criterion for being seen as insiders in the community life of these privileged spaces. In the case here, the discrimination directed at other social classes, based on the types of transport they use, can be seen in the negative attitude toward electric bicycle users. This mistrust and fear of different social groups and retreat into shielded mobile corridors are becoming the 'misanthropy' of networked affluence (Atkinson, 2008), in which wealthy urbanites embrace and celebrate social similarities in gated communities and other privileged urban spaces while shunning social contact with diverse urban populations.

Interestingly, a small number of residents, primarily the wealthiest interviewees, talked about their tactics of being invisible in public spaces to ensure their personal safety. In this excerpt, Mr Li, the chairman of a real estate company in Zhanjiang, shares his experience of public spaces:

You know I am a celebrity with a little bit of a reputation in Xiashan (a sub-district of Zhanjiang). It's common for people on my level to take several safety precautions when going out in public spaces. Of course, I am no exception. Normally I take one bodyguard with me to protect my safety. And one bodyguard is not conspicuous in public space..... My private car is a Toyota with a clear one-way windscreen. I commonly wear my working clothes, a regular business suit, when walking in public spaces. You know the famous Chinese proverb 'do not expose your money to others'. I feel much safer and more comfortable in public spaces through these protections. (Interviewee 13, Mr Li, chairman of real estate company)

The first impression of his description is the wholly enclosed circuit of protected movement and withdrawal from public engagement by these wealthy groups. The private vehicles, view-blocking glass and private bodyguards cut off many of the everyday visual and physical links with strangers and other social groups. And this safe 'distance' is the prioritised guarantee for their free movement in public spaces (Graham and Marvin, 2002). Another vital intention here is to be invisible and inconspicuous in public spaces. Through regular clothing, personal vehicles with standard brands and one-way windscreen preventing the interiors being visible from outside the vehicle, they are able to be invisible to other social groups by elaborated distancing strategies and entering public space in less visible ways in their movements at the urban scale. This scenario resonates with the cases of affluent golfers in Mexican cities (Anaya 2018), in which class, gender and space differences are manipulated by the influential and affluent classes who move between visibility and being invisible according to particular circumstances. The wealthy interviewee residents' private cars and cloaked appearances (Atkinson, 2016) resemble the high walls and gates outside the upscale golf clubs that seclude the lower classes, caddies, and female golfers. By being invisible to other social groups, these secluded residential and mobile spaces ensure

residents' security in public places and prevent unwanted social interactions with urban disorder and poor others.

6.2 Activity space and 'objectives'

The last section discussed modes of travel as 'corridors' chosen by residents in gated communities. This section moves on to discuss the activity spaces and 'objectives' of residents of gated communities. Revealing their activity spaces and 'objectives' outside gated communities, such as workplace and leisure space, gives a better understanding of the dynamic patterns of the segregation of gated communities' residents at the broader urban scale (Atkinson and Flint, 2004).

Workplaces

Workplaces are essential components of activity spaces outside the residence (Wong and Shaw, 2011). The interviews for this study highlighted that the majority of residents worked in the Central Business District and the new Economic and Technological Development Area in southern Zhanjiang. These two areas are considered the most developed and wealthy areas in Zhanjiang, containing large numbers of office buildings for white-collar workers and various services such as shopping centres, restaurants, and hospitals. A typical experience of mobility in relation to these areas can be seen in this account by Ms Yuan, an accountant working in a public hospital, who introduced her working experience in the CBD as follows:

On weekdays I usually work from 8 am to 6 pm. We usually have some financial work that needs to be done on the day. Thus, I sometimes get off the job at 8 pm. Sometimes I need to go to the District Government Office of Xiashan, which is just five minutes away from our hospital. I sometimes go to the 'Guomao' shopping mall to eat dinner and go shopping with my colleagues after work. It's quite convenient because it is located across the street from our hospital. If a new movie comes out, I will drive to the 'Jinyi' cinema with my friends and colleagues to enjoy it. I have to say it's pretty

enjoyable working in the city centre. (Interviewee 3, Ms Yuan, accountant, Central GC)

Most of the interviewees' workplaces are closely connected with cinemas, luxury shopping malls and restaurants with visible security guards or less visible economic prohibitions, such as the minimum consumption limit and members-only access, which tend to exclude lower-paid workers. These workplaces and recreational facilities in the CBD provide enjoyable and secure working conditions for these affluent residents of gated communities. This type of highly fragmented and poly-spherical patchwork of purified urban spaces has been termed 'foam' (Klauser, 2010). The affluent workers in these areas are attracted and attached to these prosperous and 'foam-like' working and recreational spaces connected by shielded corridors, such as private cars, as their ideal workplaces, and they are subtly protected from potential unwanted social groups by carefully placed barriers, screens or other markers of space. The booming white-collar economy and concentration of the service sector in the city centre of Zhanjiang helped to create this type of exclusive workplace required by wealthy groups.



Figure 7: Office buildings and shopping malls in city centre

A minority of interviewees said that they often need to go on business trips to other cities and even other countries for work purposes. Thus, the locations and geographies of their workplaces can be extensive. For example, Mr Wang, a general manager in a real estate company, illustrates his working experience:

Our corporate headquarters are in Foshan (another city in Guangdong Province). Thus, in my career, business trips are very common. I go to Foshan once a week for business meetings. ... I usually drive my car or take the high-speed train to Foshan. Driving is convenient but a little bit tiring. If I have enough time, I will take the high-speed train, the environment in the first class is satisfactory, and I can relax during the journey. Sometimes I need to participate in project investigations in other cities in China; then, I will go by plane, which is the fastest way. I have been to many cities in China and enjoy different delicious cuisines and the various local customs of other places. However, the frequency of such business often makes me feel somewhat exhausted. But this is the characteristic of my job as the manager of a real estate company (Interviewee 14, Mr Wang, a general manager of a real estate company).

These multiple and extensive workplaces provide residents with abundant travel experience, new working opportunities, upward development in their career and unfettered shopping opportunities in duty-free consumption spaces. These types of mobile working life experiences and extensive workplaces are supported by their mobility and choices of diverse modes of travel - private cars, high-speed trains, and aeroplanes. However, as these 'mobile' working modes sometimes create a 'harried experience' (Linder, 1970), they often use comfortable first-class trains and private aircrafts to relax and rest. Through their extensive workplaces and working experiences, these time-limited but spatially unfettered affluent urban residents (Bauman, 1998) separate themselves from poor social groups not only in their residential spaces (gated communities) but also in their extensive workplaces and mobility patterns to their destinations. As argued by Bauman (2000), the ability and freedom to move to follow work and leisure interests have become a main stratifying factor of modern society, as seen in the extensive workplaces and mobile working modes of residents in gated communities.

Leisure spaces

In general, the leisure spaces of residents of gated communities cover a wide range of urban spaces and can be found across the suburban areas of Zhanjiang city. These general leisure activities include going to movies or gyms, shopping in malls, going for a picnic, walking in parks, dining in luxury restaurants, and so on. More exclusive leisure activities such as playing golf, sailing yachts, joining motor racing, and enjoying cultural events like opera and concerts are also featured in residents' accounts of their leisure. For example, Ms Zhang from the Central GC described her leisure activities as follows:

I have been retired for three years, and my son is studying for his postgraduate degrees abroad. Thus, I have lots of leisure time to enjoy my retired life with my husband. In the city centre, I usually go to the shopping mall, restaurants, beaches, gyms, cultural heritage spots and parks, etc. There are also different kinds of places to visit in the suburban areas and prefectures of Zhanjiang: the newly-built Confucius Cultural Centre, the integrated amusement park and the 'Jizhaowan' Golf Club in Wuchuan (a prefecture of Zhanjiang). I think this golf club is the only place to play golf in Zhanjiang. It is far from the city centre, but it takes around 50 minutes if you drive there. Sometimes we will attend concerts given by music stars in the sports centre. It is an excellent chance to have a close encounter with entertainment stars if you buy the tickets in the dress circle (Interviewee 21, Ms Zhang, retiree, Central GC).

Ms Zhang's account shows that the built environment of Zhanjiang contains a variety of attractions and possibilities for many different types of exclusive leisure spaces, such as shopping malls, cinemas, luxury restaurants, museums, that meet desired leisure activities for the affluent residents. These exclusive recreational and leisure spaces commonly used by interviewees have high levels of security, surveillance, and simulation, like those found in urban environments of American cities (Sorkin, 1992). The wide use of these exclusive leisure services has created new modes of segregation between the wealthy and the poor. These places are constructed for wealthy residents to move, consume and be entertained in without encounters and interaction with other kinds of people

(Bauman, 2000). Their economic and mobile power allows them the opportunity to move freely at the urban scale without constraint. As described by Merrifield (2013), the city centre has been conquered by the rich bourgeoisie becoming the playground of the wealthy groups, and the current built environment is dancing to the tune of financial capital, real estate speculation, historic preservation and gentrification. It is a mosaic of 'packaged developments' (Knox, 1991), in which shopping malls, affluent housing complexes, refurbished heritage and resort developments are 'bundled' together (Graham and Marvin, 2002) and separated off by highways and security practices from the poor zones which often geographically surround them. These urban scenes that are appearing in the metropolitan areas of China are now gradually 'taming' the urban environment (Smith, 2005) of middle-tier cities like Zhanjiang. Affluent residents of gated communities favour and celebrate the rapid development of Zhanjiang and the increasing numbers of exclusive leisure services, construction of large amusement theme parks, and private commercial airports and introduction of first-class high-speed trains, while the needs of poor residents still living in derelict communities is eclipsed in these prosperities (Atkinson, 2021).

Another remarkable feature of these leisure spaces is the extensive destinations of tourism travel for the residents of gated communities. Most of the interviewees have been to a wide range of cities for tourism all around China. In addition, around half of the respondents have experience of travelling abroad, mainly in Japan, Korea, South-east Asia and European countries. For instance, Ms Yu, an English teacher in a private high school, shared her tourist experience:

Travel is one of my personal interests. During my holidays, mainly in July and August, I like to travel to other countries with my colleagues. I have been to Korea, Japan, Thailand, Germany, France and the UK. During the journey, I can see the beautiful scenery, enjoy the local cuisines and hotels, visit the famous landmarks, shop for foreign renowned brand clothes, etc. I felt pretty relaxed during my tour, and it helped me broaden my horizons. Although I have been to many places, one of my colleagues has been to many more places than me, such as America, Canada and South America.

I hope to travel to more places, especially those famous tourist attractions worldwide (Interviewee 40, Ms Yu, teacher, Suburban GC).

These descriptions of extensive spaces of tourist destinations are underpinned by the strong economic power and mobility of China's new middle classes. Being able to travel for non-work reasons is only available to a small section of elites and itself is a mark of status (Urry, 1990). In this example, tourist trips to destinations, such as Korea, Thailand and France, are designed, scheduled and imagined as the places for the ideal practice of tourist movement and for transnational consumption of goods and services. These places are sites for entertainment and consumption, as described in the tourist guide, rather than experiences of slow movement through spaces and encounters with other people (Sheller and Urry, 2006). The interviewees are thus time-rich and spatially-unfettered 'tourists' (Bauman, 1998) in the globalising world with the power of mobility to manifest their social status in their highly mobile lives. At the same time, time-poor and spatially-anchored vagabonds (Bauman, 1998) are left behind. In relation to this, Ms Yu also expressed her admiration for her more affluent colleagues' ability to travel more widely, and hoped to imitate them, seeking to cover as many tourist attractions as she could. In the age of conspicuous travel consumption, famous tourist destinations serve as ideal places that 'one has to visit at least once in your life as an essential element of a social contract' (Caletrio, 2013). The ability of wealthy residents to travel to famous tourist places has become 'a canon of conduct' (Caletrio, 2013) for those the classes beneath them which evokes the tourist consumption desires of less wealthy groups. Consequently, their tourist experiences and destinations and their conspicuous consumption behaviours in these places (Urry, 2002) have become a crucial mark of their middle-class social status, distinguishing them from poor people without the time, mobility or economic resources for tourism.

According to the interviewees, increasingly diverse types of bespoke and private leisure spaces and services can be found in contemporary Zhanjiang, catering exclusively to newly-affluent groups like themselves. These services include members-only shopping malls, private cinemas and private recreational clubs. One interesting example of these leisure spaces is the interviewees' choices of dining spaces. In addition to regular dining destinations such as high-end chain stores in shopping malls,

five-star hotels, and luxury restaurants, approximately one third of interviewees mentioned several newly-built private restaurants in Zhanjiang, both in the city centre and suburban area that only provide exclusive and even invisible services for affluent guests. As described by Mr Li from the Suburban GC:

In the past, I normally liked to go to luxury restaurants and hotels with my friends, my family members and my colleagues, such as 'Huangguang' and 'Xilaideng' restaurants in the city centre. However, several private restaurants have emerged in our city in recent years, such as the 'Yuzhuangyuan' and 'Tangyuan'. These restaurants do not have a normal lobby for public dining. They only provide private rooms for their guests. And you need to reserve in advance. You can enjoy your own private dining spaces in these restaurants without other public creating annoying issues. Compared with the previous luxury restaurants, you can enjoy a quieter, more comfortable and pleasant dining environment with your own waiters and services. ... I have been to a sushi restaurant called 'Yi yin' several months ago. The famous chef is from Japan. It provides a series of high-end cuisines, such as 'Penaeus japonicus Bate' and 'Kobe Beef', etc. It's quite good. Although it is located in 'Dongding' Square, its destination is quite secret. You need to follow the detailed instructions on the invitation letter to get into the restaurant, which took me around 20 minutes. Its food is quite recommended, and it is probably the 'glass ceiling' of food in Zhanjiang. But the price is relatively high, at least 10000 yuan for each meal (Interviewee 17, Mr Li, owner of a car repairment company, Suburban GC).

With the increase in people's income in recent years, traditional high-end dining consumption in luxury restaurants and hotels with their elegant environments and high-quality services are attracting more citizens from the general public. As a result, 'private home cuisine' restaurants have become more popular and welcomed by the wealthiest groups. In traditional Chinese history, 'private cuisines' were provided by private chefs in mansions of high-ranking officials in the feudal dynasty and could only be enjoyed by those most affluent and influential. Exclusive restaurants in contemporary Zhanjiang have used this idea to attract extremely rich customers to enjoy bespoke dining experiences. With

this new type of conspicuous dining consumption, wealthy guests can enjoy high-quality meals made by famous chefs, exclusive music performances, and private dining space, without encountering other guests. These types of private dining spaces provide wealthy residents with carefully secluded, insulated and secure micro-spaces or 'cloaking' spaces' (Atkinson, 2016) that help to prevent unwanted encounters 'poor' others in public spaces in the city. In fact, the Chinese name of the restaurant that this resident described, 'Yi yin', literally means 'invisible fish restaurant', describing an exclusive, mysterious and invisible space that only those with high levels of personal wealth can enjoy while drawing prestige from these aspects of such experiences. Unlike the golf clubs with high walls and gates (Ceron-Anaya, 2018), where urban residents can still guess what is inside, this 'invisible fish restaurant' can only be found and seen by economically-privileged customers by a series of signals given in the invitation letter. These wealthy residents enjoy the most luxurious and delicious private cuisines while being totally invisible and undisturbed by other classes, cloaking the increasing 'dining' inequalities. As a result, they are also increasingly cut off from the wider public and other social groups and actively retreat into, not only private neighbourhoods (gated communities), but also into various private leisure spaces, such as stores, restaurants, bars and recreational clubs.

Aeromobility spaces

An important and specific activity space that emerged from the interviews is 'aeromobility space' (Lassen, 2006), which combines workplace and leisure space. Aeromobility space is international long-distance work-related and leisure-related activities accessible only by aeroplane (Lassen, 2006). It only emerges in the lives of the most affluent proportion of the residents of gated communities. Ms Wang, an international trader, shared her international work and tourism experience:

My formal work in Zhanjiang is running my plantation with various types of trees such as camphor trees and ficusunia. Another work of mine is the international trade in luxury articles such as bags and clothing. I usually go to Paris twice or three times a year for my international trade business. Each

time I spend around one month there. Apart from travel for my own business, I usually have some short trips, visit some tourist places, and visit some of my friends and colleagues abroad. These leisure activities make me feel relaxed and happy on the journey. [...] Also, I always visit shopping malls in Paris to buy souvenirs and gifts for my family members and friends in China. These luxury foreign goods are always welcome in China, and my friends at home all admire my opportunities to travel abroad (Interviewee 6, Ms Wang, international trader, Central GC).

Ms Wang's experience describes aeromobility space as series of luxury and secure nodes, such as airports, high-end hotels, shopping malls, and theme parks. These places are sometimes conceptualised as 'non-place' (Augé, 1995), providing a sense of travelling without moving because these similar places are not relational, historical, and connected with local social culture and identity. These economically privileged aeromobility spaces become detached and protected nodes for upper-middle classes creating free movement without contact and encounter with other social groups. These spaces are combinations of work and leisure spaces, and the wealthy can travel to distant places for their work purposes and leave their travel corridors (airports and planes) to enjoy tourist places, go sightseeing, and visit their friends and relatives. The leisure activities create feelings of excitement and distractions along the corridors and become indispensable components of the aeromobility spaces of wealthy groups. The mobility of aeroplanes allows wealthy groups to switch from their work to leisure and tourist activities in hours, even in seconds (Lassen, 2006). This kind of scheduled international travel through specific security and leisure nodes across the globe indicates the trend toward a more mobile and networked lifestyle for rich people (Elliot and Urry, 2010), which further separates them from immobile poor people who cannot afford these mobilities.

Another emerging related form of mobility for residents of gated communities is private business aviation. Although only a small percentage of the wealthiest interviewees mentioned this type of mobility in their work and life, it has profound socio-cultural significance. The ability to travel in private planes not only extensively increases the

mobility of the rich but also serves as a symbol of the most successful and affluent businesspeople. For example, Mr Li, a chairman of a real estate company, depicted his working experience:

Because of work requirements, I always visit countries in Southeast Asia for business meetings and project research. Normally, I will get to those countries by business plane of my company. It's quite convenient and fast. You can arrange your flight according to your own working schedule. Thus, it can improve your working efficiency. During the journey, you have a larger space and better services than conventional passenger flights, making the flight experience more enjoyable. But I have to take a business flight from Guangzhou airport because there is no business aviation airport in Zhanjiang, which makes it a little bit inconvenient. These troubles will be solved soon as two general aviation airports are being built in Zhanjiang now. We will be able to take business flights from our own city in less than five years. ... The business aircraft that I normally take belongs to our company. I hope to own my own private aircraft in the future. Then I will be able to travel around the world more easily, which makes me look more like a billionaire (Interviewee 13, Mr Li, chairman of a real estate company, Central GC).

For Mr Li, business aviation mobility, compared with conventional passenger aviation, has unique advantages and attractions. It is faster and more flexible with its exclusive private aircraft and general aviation airport. This enables affluent passengers to bypass traditional transportation and time-space corridors through the highly exclusive space of aeromobility (Lassen, 2006), which reinforces the social-spatial stratification of the wealthiest groups and produces new types of activity spaces. Travelling via private business aviation not only improves the mobility of wealthy groups but also provides them with the social reputation of being rich and successful. Travelling and working through private business aviation thus create the symbol of wealth, social status and the lifestyle of the richest groups (Elliott and Urry, 2010). Moreover, this highly exclusive elite mobility is underpinned by increased construction of the urban infrastructure system (Graham and Marvin, 2002). According to the interviewees, more than two private business airports will be built in Zhanjiang in the next five years. With

more private airports to be built in the future, increasing numbers of affluent people, especially those with abundant resources, will seek to participate in this type of private transportation and own private aircrafts, further exacerbating social-spatial and mobility stratification (Bauman, 1998).

Although aeromobility space is exclusive to the upper-middle class, it is crucial in understanding current urban systems and underlying mobility inequality. This type of space operates almost as a kind of dream world that can be mentally and physical occupied by wealthy groups of the city and aspired to by the less well-off. The aeromobility of the wealthy also arouses desires in other groups for consumption, exclusion, and security through multiple media and global travel (Davis and Monk, 2011). These places of conspicuous consumption, and tourism connected by extremely mobile 'corridors' serve only those with abundant resources and exclude the 'immobile' poor residents and infrastructure workers in the immobile physical infrastructure systems, who are facilitating the greater movement of the wealthy groups and thus enlarging the mobility inequalities between different social classes (Graham and Marvin, 2002).

6.3 Mobility-based socio-spatial segregation: comparative analyses

This section further examines the socio-spatial segregation of residents in the city through their mobility and activity patterns in comparative analyses of two aspects. The first comparative analysis focuses on the comparison between mobility patterns of poor residents living in the 'ordinary neighbourhoods' adjacent to the gated communities studied and rich residents living in upscale gated communities. This comparative analysis seeks to understand the transport exclusion (Lucas, 2012) faced by residents and how they are segregated from affluent residents in their activity spaces in the cities. The second aspect compares the different mobility patterns between residents of gated communities in the city centre and the suburban areas. Comparing these two types of affluent spaces may help us understand how local built environments and transport infrastructure influence the degree of social segregation at the urban scale (Flint and Robinson, 2008).

Mobility patterns and activity spaces in the adjacent poor neighbourhoods

In terms of the modes of travel, residents living in ordinary neighbourhoods outside the two researched gated communities mostly used public transportation and walking/cycling as their primary choice. None of the interviewees living in ordinary neighbourhoods owned private cars. The effective public bus system in the city centre of Zhanjiang has extended the activity space of poor residents in ordinary neighbourhoods. For example, Mr Huang from an adjacent work-unit compound, depicted his experience of using public transport:

I work in a property management company in the 'City Garden' community, located in the Mazhang district of Zhanjiang [a suburban area]. I take Bus 12 and change to Bus 27 to get to my workplace. It takes me around 50 minutes to get there. I sometimes go to the city centre or the public parks at the weekend. I take Bus 11 or Bus 12 to get there in 20 minutes. The bus transportation in our city is quite convenient for me, and each trip costs me only 2 yuan, which essentially decreases the commuting time and my expenditure. (Interviewee 24, Mr Huang, from a work-unit compound outside the Central GC)

This example illustrates how essential destinations in the city centre of Zhanjiang, such as workplaces and recreational facilities, are connected by dense bus routes, which are frequently used by residents of ordinary neighbourhoods. The effective bus system enables residents of these ordinary neighbourhoods in the city centre to extend their work opportunities on a broader urban scale (Hine, 2016). The cost of commuting by the public bus system is relatively low - about only 1 or 2 yuan for each trip. Compared with poor residents in Singapore who spend around 9.8% of their household income on public transportation (Lau, 2011), the cost of public transport in Zhanjiang is lower and affordable by poor residents of Zhanjiang, which enables them to increase their range of activities for both work and leisure.

The ability of poor residents to make use of public transport is highly dependent on the developed bus system in the city centre. However, there are hardly any public transport

systems in the suburban areas of Zhanjiang. Poor residents living in ordinary suburban neighbourhoods cannot enjoy the benefits and convenience of public transport. For instance, Mr Chen, a restaurant waiter living in 'Linkou' village in the suburban area, depicted his mode of travel:

There is only one bus route, Bus 911, from our village towards the city centre. And it takes around 30 minutes to walk from our village to the nearest bus station. This makes our journey to the city centre quite inconvenient and time-consuming. And I have to transfer three times on bus routes to get to the city centre, which makes my travel cost and time much more. Thus, I seldom use public transport. Instead, I usually ride my bicycle to my workplace, a restaurant not far from my home. It takes me around 10 minutes to get there. And for daily grocery shopping and buying food, I choose to walk to these places. These facilities are all located in our village, and it's convenient for me to walk there (Interviewee 16, Mr Chen, waiter, from 'Linkou' village outsider the Suburban GC).

Compared with the suburbanisation process in the megacities in China like Beijing and Shanghai, which began in the late 1990s (Ma and Wu, 2004; Pow, 2009), suburban development in Zhanjiang has not been as significant, and public transportation development is also in its initial stages. Although small numbers of private housing estates have been built in suburban areas of Zhanjiang, relatively few public transportation routes are available here. Thus, the lack of adequate public transport in the suburb is inconvenient and has led to the immobility of local residents, especially for poor people from ordinary neighbourhoods. They seldom use public transportation and, instead, their primary choice of modes of travel are walking and cycling. Their low mobility patterns and lack of affordability for public transportation (Lau, 2011) also constrained their shopping and recreational activities to around their local residential spaces. Their lifestyles are similar to those immobile migrant workers in the suburban area of Wenzhou, China (Lin and Gaubatz, 2017), whose activity space is highly constrained to the suburban area.

The workplaces of residents in ordinary neighbourhoods also differ between the city centre and suburban areas. The workplaces of poor residents in the city centre are

scattered on a wide scale across the city. These workplaces include service sectors in the city centre and manufacturing sectors in the suburban areas. The effective bus transportation system in the city centre allows these poor residents the possibility of working in places far from their residential locations. However, for those poor residents living in the suburban area, the lack of adequate public transportation has left them with fewer working opportunities because of the long commuting distances and times. The following two examples indicate the difference between the city centre and suburban areas. The first example is illustrated by Ms Lin from the city centre, a general worker in an electronics factory:

I am a general worker in the manufacturing factory at 'Taiyuan' industrial park. My workplace is in the 'Potou' district [a suburban area of Zhanjiang]. I work for nearly 9 hours a day. And my work includes assembling electronic components, packaging and labelling commodities, etc. My work is not intense, but it is a little boring. I take Bus 47 and transfer to Bus 39 to get to my workplace. The commuting time is around an hour and 10 minutes. It's a little bit longer. But compared with the commuting time in the megacities, it is acceptable for me. (Interviewee 4, Ms Lin, from a work-unit compound outside the Central GC)

The second example is given by Mr Wu from the suburban area, who is a neighbourhood security worker:

I currently work as a security guard in the 'Haidong' community. My working hours are the 'three shift' system, from 9 am to 5 pm, 5 pm to 1 am, and 1 am to 9 am. Thus, my working schedule is not fixed. I have to go to my workplace at different periods of the day. Thankfully, my home is not far from my workplace. I can walk to the 'Haidong' community within 10 minutes. ... I am lucky to get this job because one of my relatives recommend it to me. But I have to say that the working opportunities in our suburban district are very limited. So many young people in the urban villages do not have proper jobs and hang around all day long (Interviewee 49, Mr Wu, security guard, from an urban village outside the Suburban GC).

Compared with the inadequate provision of public transport in the suburban areas, the dense bus routes and effective public transport system in the city centre provide inner

city residents of ordinary neighbourhoods with more choice of working opportunities. Although they must endure long working hours and lower salaries, they have gained their working opportunities without the constraints of poor public transport provision and resulting inaccessibility (Church et al., 2000). In comparison to the low-income residents in India who are dependent on walking and cycling and have little choice of employment locations (Srinivasan and Rogers, 2005), poor residents in Zhanjiang enjoy many more options for the geographical locations of their workplaces. However, poor people living in the suburban areas have many fewer choices of working opportunities due to the lack of sufficient public provision of transportation. This 'geographical exclusion' (Lucas, 2012) of poor people who cannot access public transport services in suburban areas services has further led to their exclusion from working opportunities, revealing the importance of public transportation in improving residents' working opportunities, especially for poor residents. This finding echoes a Canadian study (Paez et al., 2009) which shows that low-income people tend to have much smaller ranges of workspaces than the average population because of the lower public transport provision in their living environments.

In terms of shopping and leisure spaces, most residents of ordinary neighbourhoods shop in their neighbourhood retail stores and food markets, and their recreational activities are usually constrained to their home, neighbourhoods and nearby public spaces. The following two interview quotes show examples of the recreational activity spaces of young and old residents in ordinary neighbourhoods. Mr Huang, who works in a property management company, detailed his recreational activities as follows:

My working-hours schedule is usually nine-to-five from Monday to Friday. Thus, I have relatively more spare time. I normally like to play games on mobile phone at home after work. I like to play the famous one called 'King of Glory' with my young colleagues. Or I always watch TV series with my family members. Sometimes I go to the city centre to watch movies, go to the bars, and dine with my friends, but I rarely do this because the prices for food and entertainments in the city centre has been rising quite fast in recent years. Even a cup of Milk Tea costs more than 20 yuan, which is quite

shockingly expensive (Interviewee 24, Mr Huang, from a work-unit compound outside the Central GC).

The second example is from Mr Zhou, who is an older retiree from a work-unit compound:

In the daytime, I usually shop for groceries in the nearby fresh food market and retail stores. There is one grocery shop inside our neighbourhood and another bigger one in the street outside our neighbourhood. I sometimes play cards and Chinese chess with my old colleagues in our neighbourhood. At night, I usually watch TV with my wife at home or take a walk in the park nearby. As well as these activities, at the weekends, I sometimes go to the 'Coastal Park' and the 'Sea Viewing Corridor' with my family members around every few months (Interviewee 50, Mr Zhou, from a work-unit compound outside the Central GC).

These two representative cases show the activity spaces of both young and old residents of ordinary neighbourhoods at the urban scale of Zhanjiang. Compared with the dispersed workplaces (for those in the city centre) discussed above, their recreational activity spaces are more focused on their neighbourhoods and nearby areas. Although they sometimes visit the amusement facilities in the city centre and public gardens a little far away from their residential space, and long commuting times reduce the frequency of their visits to these leisure activities. Like the leisure activity space of ordinary residents in Beijing (Wang et al., 2012), their activity space is intense and compact within a modest spatial coverage around their own neighbourhoods. Their recreational lifestyles are similar to the life experience of the 'vagabonds' described by Bauman (1998) - poor residents seen as 'flawed' consumers who cannot afford diverse types of sophisticated consumption choices and whose potential for consumption is very limited due to their inadequate resources. And, compared with rich residents in gated communities, the relative immobility, low-level consumption and lack of leisure activities of residents of ordinary neighbourhoods are clearly reflected in their narrow and restricted recreational activity spaces in the city.

Although the dense bus systems in the city centre have to some extent enlarged ordinary residents' workspaces, poor people living in suburban areas lack access to

public transportation which has reduced their working opportunities and prevents them from being able to use various public services, such as parks, sports facilities and libraries. Overall, these poor residents have relatively compact and intense activity spaces around their residences. Their activity spaces are primarily focused in their own neighbourhoods, nearby retail stores, fresh food markets, and surrounding public spaces like parks, squares and seaside sceneries, although some poor residents in the city centre have more dispersed workplaces thanks to the public transport system in the city centre. These results indicate that socio-spatial segregation caused by gated communities not only exists in residential space but also is clearly manifested in the wider activity spaces at the urban scale in contemporary Chinese cities like Zhanjiang. The technological annulment of temporal and spatial distance (Bauman, 1998), or 'time-space compression', tends to polarise the distance between rich and poor and increase inequality instead of reducing it. Compared with the wealthy residents of gated communities, residents of ordinary neighbourhoods who are not able to have a choice of lifestyles and pay for residential security are left constrained in their locality and expelled from private housing estates, working opportunities, and adequate urban public facilities.

Dual-suburb in the city

Compared with the built environments in American cities, where most gated communities are located in the low-density and car-dependent suburban areas away from the city centre (Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Low, 2003), gated communities in China are built both in the city centre and suburban areas (Douglass et al., 2012). As in Chapter 4, the suburban areas of Zhanjiang are relatively underdeveloped and made up of poor neighbourhoods like urban villages and traditional work-unit compounds. Compared with major cities in China, such as Shanghai and Guangzhou, where the suburban areas are built up with new CBDs and new towns (Shen and Wu, 2017; Wang and Li, 2006; Wu et al., 2006), many suburban areas in Zhanjiang are still inhabited by poor residents and are thus often avoided by affluent residents. Therefore, the following discussions compare the mobility and activity patterns of gated communities' residents in the city centre and suburban areas and seek to understand how the local built environments influence their movements in, and engagements with, public spaces.

This comparison also further explores urban development and social environments in the suburban areas of Zhanjiang.

Regarding the modes of travel, most residents of gated communities in the suburban areas depend more heavily on the use of private cars than their counterparts in the city centre. Older-aged residents of gated communities who are unable to drive cars usually travel with their family members or choose online car-hailing services as for essential transportation, mainly because the public transport systems in the suburban areas are underdeveloped. And the dense highway networks in the suburban areas have improved mobility on the premise of private car ownership. This transport system has dramatically divided rich people with private vehicles from poor people without these means of mobility. For instance, Mr Chen from the Suburban GC illustrates his modes of travel:

I usually go to my workplace in the city centre by car. If I need to go shopping or visit recreational services, I also drive to the newly-built 'Wanda' shopping centre, which takes me only around 10 minutes. The large underground parking lot makes the journey much easier. I sometimes visit 'Wanda' shopping centre even at 10 p.m. thanks to this convenience. [...] Driving is the most convenient way because the bus system in our region is still undeveloped. There is only one bus route towards the city centre. And the nearest bus station from our neighbourhood is 30 minutes away on foot. Thus, I never use public transport in our districts (Interviewee 15, Mr Chen, manager, Suburban GC).

The impression here is that the highway system in the suburban area provides the residents of gated communities with convenient access to services on a broader scale of the city, and thus driving private cars is their primary mode of transport. They seldom use public transport because of the low level of public transport development in the suburban area and the consequent inconvenience. Compared with the residents of ordinary neighbourhoods in the suburban areas who have few options for their modes of transport, these wealthy groups can easily make more expansive journeys to urban spaces for work and entertainment owing to their ownership of private cars and the developed highway systems in the suburban areas. In these suburban areas,

neglecting the development of public transport has generated enormous physical and social distance between rich and poor that cannot be crossed without private cars (Haug and Bock, 1987). This widespread shift toward highways and automobiles as the dominant form of transport (Graham and Marvin, 2002) in the suburban areas of Zhanjiang has thus exacerbated social segregation based on the different modes of travel between people in gated communities and other ordinary neighbourhoods.

In terms of activity spaces, residents of gated communities in the suburban areas are less involved in public spaces and public recreational facilities than their counterparts in the city centre. These residents seldom travel to surrounding areas such as parks or nearby ordinary neighbourhoods and are unwilling to send their children to local schools and hospitals. The most important reason is that suburban areas of Chinese cities are always less developed than the city centres, except some big cities like Beijing (Feng et al., 2008), and thus the word 'suburb' carries negative connotations in Chinese culture (Ren, 2021). Around two-third of affluent residents of Zhanjiang consider the suburbs of Zhanjiang to be underdeveloped and economically decaying, with many uncivilised 'barbarians' living there (see Chapter 4). For example, Mr Li, the owner of a car repair company, depicts his daily activity spaces:

My workplace is in the city centre, a car repair company. I usually drive my car to work and simultaneously take my daughter to school. I chose the No.12 Primary School for my daughter because the teaching quality in this school is much better than schools in the suburban area. And many children of poor households congregate in the suburban schools. I don't want my children to be influenced by them. [...] There are fewer services and facilities in the surrounding areas. Thus, I usually go shopping and dining with my family members in the city centre, about 15 minutes away by car. Even for daily grocery shopping, I like to drive to the nearest shopping mall. On the weeknights, I sometimes take a walk with my wife in the gardens in our neighbourhood. I seldom go to the public parks in the suburban area, because it is not well equipped and far from our neighbourhood. (Interviewee 17, Mr Li, from the suburban gated community).

Here, fewer public services and well-developed public spaces are provided in the suburban areas in Zhanjiang than in the city centre. Thus, the high-end community amenities and settings inside the gated communities are favoured and used by most residents, and their use of public space is less than their counterparts in the city centre. As well as the physical environment, the social environment in the suburban areas also play an essential role in reducing the residents' use of public spaces. As discussed in Chapter 4, approximately a quarter of residents of gated communities considered their poor neighbours living in adjacent work-unit compounds and urban villages as uncivilised and immoral 'barbarians'. Thus, they seek to avoid engagement with these poor neighbours by abandoning public spaces and services. Some avoid sending their children to local primary schools in suburban areas to keep them distant from other social groups. Consequently, residents of gated communities in the suburban areas have less chance of encountering and interacting with their poor neighbours in adjacent neighbourhoods. The restriction of residents of ordinary neighbourhoods to derelict public spaces and retreat of the wealthy into high-end private gated communities have revealed the underlying social segregation based on clearly-demarcated class division (gated communities) in the suburban areas of Zhanjiang. Although the proximity of different income groups may foster social cohesion and interaction (Manzi and Smith-Bowers, 2005), in this case, the investigation of the mobility and activity patterns of residents in the suburban areas of Zhanjiang reveals more profound social segregation between different social classes. The construction of several gated communities in poor suburban areas of Zhanjiang has brought about severe urban fragmentation between various types of neighbourhoods and extreme social segregation and polarisation between the rich urban 'pioneers' and poor local 'barbarians' (Smith, 2005), constructing the current 'dual suburb' (Roitman and Phelps, 2011) for the two different and divided worlds of the rich and the poor in Zhanjiang.

In relation to this, most residents living in the Suburban GC pointed out that the poor physical condition of the built environment and the complex social composition of residents are the most important reasons that they seldom use public space. More specifically, the large numbers of low-income social groups living in the adjacent ordinary neighbourhoods have reduced their willingness to use the public spaces in

suburban areas. For example, Ms Chen, a retiree living in the suburban gated community, illustrates her perspectives:

There are some public spaces outside our neighbourhood, but I seldom use them. This is because most people who use these public spaces are mainly from urban villages and poor neighbourhoods. There are also some migrant workers and building workers. These people sometimes act uncivilly, which makes me feel uncomfortable. And I have nothing in common with them. At night, I dare not walk outside our neighbourhood alone because there are no security apparatuses or police staff outside our neighbourhood. And there is not enough lighting equipment. I am afraid of being robbed by the poor people outside my neighbourhood. I would rather walk and rest inside our neighbourhood, which is more comfortable and safer (Interviewee 46, Ms Chen, retiree, Suburban GC).

Although these residents have bought into the gated housing estate in the suburban area, they admit that most people, including themselves, considered the suburbs economically underdeveloped with poor, uncivilised and low-status inhabitants. The people living in adjacent neighbourhoods, such as villagers, migrant workers, building workers, and residents of the derelict work-unit compounds, are perceived as potentially dangerous and immoral social groups by residents of gated communities. Thus, these social environments in adjacent neighbourhoods have increased their unwillingness to use public spaces and services. Moreover, compared with the urban environment in the city centre, the security services like security cameras and patrol police officers, are less developed in the suburban areas. These residents have chosen to abandon their use of public activity spaces and have retreated into their private neighbourhoods, which, they feel ensures their safety by reducing social contact with poor residents. If they want to visit public spaces such as parks and squares, they instead go to the city centre where they consider it more developed, safer and more attractive. Through their segregated mobility and activity patterns, they try to keep the potential dangers and chaos out of their neighbourhood and social world. This need for 'social splitting' of 'purified spaces' by gated communities from the 'outsider world' (Low, 2003) is deeply embedded in the thought of these wealthy residents in the suburban culture of Zhanjiang. Compared with the relatively mixed

neighbourhood environments in the city centre, the insertion of several affluent gated communities into deprived suburban areas (Blandy, 2008) creates a stark contrast and division between the rich insiders and the poor outsiders, and leads to the deeper avoidance of social contact and usage of public spaces by the rich residents of gated communities in this 'dual suburb'. These two geographically adjacent social classes (rich and poor) are not only segregated by gates and walls but also through their modes of transport, activity spaces, and the discrimination and prejudice by 'insiders' against the 'outsiders'.

6.4 Engagement with and values toward public spaces

This last section discusses gated communities' residents' engagement with public spaces and quasi-public spaces through investigating their actual social encounters and social interactions in Zhanjiang. This section also inquires into their values toward the public spaces, public lives and interactions with other social groups. Detailed analysis of social behaviours in public spaces allows a deeper understanding of the extent to which these residents have engaged in or retreated from urban public spaces. This analysis could also deepen understanding of whether the rapid rise of quasi-public spaces has led to the 'end of public spaces' (Mitchell, 1995; Sorkin, 1992) in contemporary Chinese cities.

Most interviewees presented their aspirations to use public spaces and services in the city centre. However, the public spaces they most often mentioned were mainly quasi-public spaces, such as shopping malls, restaurants, bars, and theme parks. These are quasi-public spaces because, although they are to some extent publicly accessible, they have clear boundaries and increasing levels of manipulation and surveillance (Sorkin, 1992), and are managed and controlled by private organisations and interests (Langstraat and Van Melik, 2013). In terms of the actual engagements of these quasi-public spaces, such as high streets, shopping centres and marketplaces, most residents of gated communities focus on their own consumption behaviours and necessary activities without engaging in social interactions with other people. As explained by Ms Liu from the Central GC:

On weeknights, I usually go shopping in the 'Guomao' shopping mall opposite our hospital with my colleagues. You know, buying clothes and handbags is our women's hobby. After shopping, I will watch a movie or drink tea in the Tea shop if I still have time. [...] I do not communicate with other people there because I must finish my shopping in a relatively short time. And I always walk and talk with my colleagues, and there is no need to speak with other people. I always focus on my own activities with my partners (Interviewee 2, Ms Liu, doctor, Central GC).

First of all, these quasi-public spaces such as shopping malls and theme parks have invisibly excluded those urban residents as they cannot afford the high cost of consumption in these spaces. In these 'malls without walls', the security staff and the CCTV actively exclude the poor, homeless, beggars, and even young people, from entering (Minton, 2012). In addition, although residents of gated communities have encountered other users and strangers in these quasi-public spaces, they do not have actual social interaction with other users and only pay attention to their own consumption and recreational activities. For these residents, communication with other people makes no sense for their consumption purposes and wastes their time and distracts them from enjoying shopping and consuming. As suggested by Bauman (2000), these public yet non-civic spaces tend to serve only consumers and encourage consumption actions instead of inter-action between strangers. Sharing the same consumption space with other consumers engaged in similar activities encourages the behaviours of consuming (Uusitalo, 1998) while reducing the need for social interaction. In the contemporary city centre of Zhanjiang, many vital traditional public spaces and streets have been replaced by shopping malls, office buildings and cultural complexes where public activities are divided into different mono-functional compartments under the strict surveillance of the private security force (Davis, 2006).

There are still some real public spaces in Zhanjiang, such as public parks, seaside sceneries and beaches. When visiting these public spaces, residents of gated communities have chances to encounter other social groups, but few of them will interact with strangers in these public spaces. This is because they regard social

interactions with strangers and other social groups as unsafe and disturbing. For instance, Ms Deng from the Central GC shares her experience:

I sometimes go for a walk or go running in public parks or the seaside sceneries at the weekends in my spare time. Sometimes I go alone, and sometimes I go with my husband. [...] When I see other people in these places, I usually do not talk to them. Sometimes we will nod and smile at each other, but I am unwilling to have deep conversations with strangers. It is unnecessary and disturbing. And I am afraid of being defrauded by strangers. However, I will talk to other neighbourhood members in our gated community when walking in our private gardens since we could find more common topics (Interviewee 31, Ms Deng, manager, Central GC).

To Sennett (1992), cities should be designed to fulfil the intersection of space and time and create encounters and diversity, rich and complex stories. However, in this case, encounters between different social groups have not resulted in meaningful social interactions. Although these public spaces do not exclude free access by diverse social groups, they do not generate mutual trust and empathy or increase the knowledge and understanding between them. This is because social interaction between strangers is considered redundant and even dangerous by residents of gated communities. Like American cities the 'street wisdom' to protect oneself in public spaces uses diverse strategies to avoid meeting potentially dangerous strangers, such as black people (Anderson, 2004). In this case, poor residents, urban villagers and migrant workers in Chinese cities are also deemed dangerous and uncivilised strangers who need to be avoided in public spaces. With the increasing economic and identity fraud crimes in Chinese cities (see Chapter 5), the affluent residents of gated communities are increasingly afraid of being exposed to strangers and seek to shield themselves in public spaces. These wealthy groups are more inclined to stay in their safe zones, such as shopping malls or their gated communities, and interact with their neighbours behind the gates freely and comfortably because they are like each other. Communication between these affluent residents in gated communities with similar social and economic backgrounds is easy because they only exchange comments about their daily routines and familiar phrases within their social class, involving no controversy or commitment (Bauman, 2000). Keeping strangers at a safe distance and

preventing intimate social interactions with 'others' is an expected response rooted in fragile and fluid social bonds in modern society (Bauman, 200).

A certain proportion of interviewees of gated communities explained why they seldom interact with other social groups. Many highlighted that their lifestyle, behaviours, morality, and social identity are quite different from poor urban residents outside the community, and this makes social interaction difficult. For example, Ms Xie, a manager working in an archive, illustrates her own experiences and opinions:

I do not like to communicate with people living in the surrounding ordinary neighbourhoods and passengers walking in public squares, especially poor citizens with low educational backgrounds. They are quite ignorant and stubborn. They talk in quite loud voices, just like [they are] quarrelling with you. And we have quite different lifestyles. Many of them do not use 'WeChat' and online shopping. It is tough to talk with them. Thus, I normally do not interact with them when I visit places outside our neighbourhoods (Interviewee 23, Ms Xie, manager, Central GC).

For Anderson (2012), the meanings of genuinely public spaces are to encourage encounters between strangers from different social, racial and ethnic groups, even in segregated urban spaces. However, in this case, the distinctions between different social groups, such as class, lifestyle and values, have further prevented residents of gated communities from deep interaction and encounters with other social groups. Thus, the exposure to difference and disorientation in urban public spaces have not facilitated empathy or cosmopolitan moments (Anderson, 2012), but only fear and withdrawal (Sennett, 1992). This withdrawal from the public sphere may be rooted partly in the wealthy residents' intolerance of social problems and apathy toward public responsibilities (Wang et al., 2012). Their defence of their self-isolation and withdrawal from public spaces is simply recast as questions of different lifestyles and social moralities. Current public spaces in Zhanjiang are not anonymous, open and egalitarian spaces that ignore difference and reinforce citizenship (Caldeira, 2000). Rather, these public and quasi-public spaces have become increasingly secure, commodified, controllable and homogeneous (Minton, 2012), at least for the affluent residents of gated communities.

A small number of residents of gated communities suggests that, in the current Internet Age, they are more accustomed to communicating with other citizens and engaging in public affairs in social media and online communities. As depicted by Ms Yuan, an accountant working in a public hospital:

I seldom have interactions with others in public spaces. ... But it does not mean that I totally do not know what happens in the outside world. I usually read the news and current affairs on the 'Weibo' platform [a microblog website and app in China] and communicate with other Internet users on WeChat [a multi-functional social networking software]. With these new communication technologies, I can talk with others, discuss public affairs and read news on social media to know about what is happening worldwide without going out of my home. I think these are enough for me to communicate with the outside world (Interviewee 3, Ms Yuan, accountant, Central GC).

It is suggested by many scholars that electronic space, or cyberspace, of television, talk radio, social media and the Internet has unfolded a new frontier for public space, in which television, social media and the Internet are substitutes for traditional public spaces (Mitchell, 2003). Similarly, some residents of the two studied gated community also highlighted their engagement with other citizens and public affairs on television, social media and the Internet. However, these electronic and virtual spaces are far from actual public spaces. The first reason is that these electronic spaces are run and manipulated by private companies and present news and content aligned with the interests of sponsors and selected audiences (Mitchell, 1995). The private companies own the rights to control and select discussions and information to fulfil their own interests. In addition, as explained by Hillis (1994), the values, vision and desires of privileged social groups are more easily exemplified by electronic spaces and cyberspaces, while marginalised groups like the poor and homeless are becoming more invisible and neglected than they were in traditional public spaces. Electronic public spaces cannot provide equal access for underprivileged groups to represent their desires and social requirements. Thus, although cyberspace has created more opportunities for the interviewees to know about other social groups and the outside

world, these limited and controlled engagements in electronic and virtual public spaces do not enable them to fully interact with and engage in the real public spaces of the city.

6.5 Conclusion

Responding to the literature on urban social segregation, private mobilities and public space, this chapter has investigated the mobility patterns and activity spaces of the wealthy residents living in the two studied gated communities and their encounters and interactions with other social groups in public spaces.

Through an examination of the modes of travel of residents living in these gated communities, it was identified that these privileged residents make great use of private modes of travel, such as private cars, SUVs, online car-hailing services, and, to a large extent, they avoid using the well-developed public transportation system in the city centre, which they consider slow, undesirable and not matched with their high social status. The use of these 'premium network spaces' (Graham and Marvin, 2002), such as private highways, car-hailing services, and exclusive bus systems, enable them to seamlessly traverse and enjoy urban space with the security of being invisible to unwanted social groups. The emergence of the private bus system in the suburban gated community reveals the increasing mobility inequalities by the wealthy groups who already own a stronger mobility capacity (Sheller, 2018).

The investigation of the activity spaces of residents of these two gated communities shows that they move in exclusive and privatised activity spaces. Most of their workplaces are in the CBD and high-tech development zones, closely connected to cinemas, luxury shopping malls and restaurants. These spaces are equipped with visible security guards or less visible economic restrictions, such as the minimum consumption limit and members-only access, which tend to exclude lower-paid workers from such experiences and places. Increasingly diverse types of bespoke and private leisure spaces and services have emerged in the contemporary city centre of Zhanjiang, only catering to new affluent groups like the residents of the gated

communities in this study. These spaces and services provide wealthy residents with carefully secluded, insulated and secure micro-spaces - 'cloaking' spaces (Atkinson, 2016) - that avoid unwanted encounters or interactions with the 'poor' residents in the city. Both their workplaces and leisure spaces cover a wide range of urban spaces, even in the national and international spheres. They are emancipated to engage in mobile working, global tourism and commodity consumption, and international investment (Bauman, 1998). Global travel and the increasing use of business aviation by these residents reveal that the private provision of space, mobility and infrastructure systems not only provide wealthy groups with privileged 'corridors', but also help to produce elite identities, habitus, atmospheres and temporalities (Sheller, 2013).

The comparison of mobility patterns between residents living in the high-end gated communities and poor residents living in adjacent ordinary neighbourhoods shows that poor residents have a more constrained and compact scale of activity spaces and fewer choices of types of recreational activities. They are more dependent on public provision of transportation and public spaces, such as public parks, squares and seaside corridors. Although the well-developed public bus system in the city centre offers more work and leisure opportunities for inner city residents , poor residents living in suburban areas are confronted with various types of transport exclusion (Church et al., 2000) which delimit their access to working opportunities, urban facilities and social services (Lucas, 2012). This situation of severe mobility-based segregation and social polarisation between the rich and the poor is further exacerbated by the deficient transport systems and mobility technologies in the suburban areas, creating 'dual suburbs' (Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991) of Zhanjiang. Compared with the mixed neighbourhood environments in the city centre, the insertion of several affluent gated communities into the deprived suburban areas of Zhanjiang has created a stark contrast and division between the rich people inside and the poor outsiders, which consequently leads to the greater avoidance of social contact and use of public spaces by rich residents of gated communities in this 'dual suburb'.

The examination of social interaction and engagement by residents of gated communities in public spaces indicate that most of the public spaces recognised and

frequently used by the interviewees are quasi-public spaces like shopping malls and theme parks. These quasi-public spaces usually have clear boundaries and high levels of manipulation and surveillance (Sorkin, 1992) and are managed and controlled by private organisations (Langstraat and Van Melik, 2013). Even in quasi-public spaces (such as shopping malls) or public spaces (like public parks), residents of gated communities are focused on their own recreational and necessary activities and resist communicating with strangers. These physical proximities cannot facilitate empathy or security because they are invisible to each other (Anderson, 2012). For residents of gated communities, encounters in public spaces with other social groups are unnecessary and sometimes disturbing and even dangerous. They are more inclined to interact with their neighbours in their gated community and retreat from public spaces into a more 'purified' environment (Low, 2003). This self-isolation in public space is due to their intolerance of, and indifference to, urban problems (Wang et al., 2012) and the moral discriminations they make towards unprivileged social groups (Pow, 2007). The residents interviewed justified their retreat from public spaces and segregation from other social groups as being simply issues of different lifestyles, cultural tastes, and values rather than class and economic inequality. Some of the interviewees turned to electronic and cyberspace as their new public spaces for social interaction and encounters, but these private and commodified network spaces are far from being genuinely civic spaces. Cyberspace is mainly controlled by, and works for, private enterprises and private interests, and most marginalised groups are further ignored in these virtual spaces. Overall, the privatisation of residential space (gated communities), segregated mobility and activity patterns, and social secession from meaningful public spaces enable the wealthy residents of gated communities to freely and securely traverse and experience the developed urban facilities and public services in the city centre of Zhanjiang, spaces which are undisturbed and immune from the 'invisible' urban poor and increasing social resentment of unprivileged social groups. The next chapter will further the disconnection and exit from the wider public by these wealthy residents in gated communities through their social networks and use of public facilities.

Chapter 7: Exclusive social networks and ‘exit’ strategies from the city

The previous chapters discussed the social segregation and affiliation of wealthy residents in gated communities created by their mobilities patterns and activity spaces in the cities. This chapter seeks to further investigate these questions through the residents’ wider social networks and use of public/private services in the city. The chapter consists of two sections. The first section looks at the residents’ diverse social networks of neighbourhood relationships, friendships and kinships, focusing on how upscale gated communities, as exclusive residential spaces, influence the formation of these networks to give a better understanding of the spatial organisation and the spatial construction of their exclusive social networks (Blokland and Savage, 2008) in contemporary Zhanjiang. The second section investigates to what extent these middle-class residents have ‘exited’ from the public realms of their cities by exploring their use/consumption of local public/private service (Andreotti et al., 2015).

7.1 Exclusive social networks and gated communities

Urban scholars pay particular attention to the neighbourhood as an important locus for forming the strong and cohesive social networks that are considered crucial and positive for society (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Putnam, 2000). In contemporary Chinese cities, the traditional cohesive and robust social networks formed in work-unit compounds in the pre-reform era have declined (Bray, 2005; Forrest and Yip, 2007). The separation of work and residence and the spread of private commodity gated communities have largely reorganised social networks in Chinese cities (Hazelzet and Wissink, 2012). However, relatively little research discusses the transformation of social networks, or the social effects brought about by these private commodity gated communities (Douglass et al., 2012). This section thus focuses on exploring the diverse social networks of affluent residents in the two upscale gated communities and seeks to understand how living in gated communities influences the formation of their social networks. Exploring their social networks can further understanding of the extent of their ‘exit’ from urban public spaces (Andreotti et al., 2013) and their disaffiliation

from spaces where most poor residents congregate (Atkinson, 2006). The discussions of these social networks are divided into three main aspects: friendships, kinship and neighbourhood relationships.

Friendships

Most residents interviewed of the two gated communities highlighted that they had a significant number of friends who they interact with regularly for different purposes such as morning tea, dining, sports, classmate reunions, outings and shopping. These friendships are not restricted to the gated communities they currently live and extend beyond their residential spaces. Their friends are primary and secondary school classmates, childhood playmates, work colleagues, parents from parent associations, previous neighbours and interest activity associations. While classmate friendships are the most common relationship mentioned by interviewees, work colleagues' relationships and neighbourhood relationships are more often mentioned by immigrants from other cities. Their diverse friendship networks are dispersed in Zhanjiang and even other cities and nations. For example, Mr Lin, a manager from the Central GC, depicted his widespread and dense friendship network:

I have about four or five friends that I usually contact. We always play basketball and table tennis together in the sports complex and basketball courts in the city centre. Sometimes we also go hiking and picnicking or visit the surrounding cities for two-day short trip. We always have morning tea in restaurants at the weekend, which is a local custom for Cantonese citizens. Most of them are my high school classmates, and we have been friends for over 20 years. The friendships formed in that period are relatively pure and long-lasting. Also, some others of my high school friends work in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and even America and UK. We always have conversations on WeChat [a popular social media platform], and we can only meet every half year when I go to visit them by driving my own car. (Interviewee 1, Mr Lin, manager, Central GC).

The residents interviewed have dense and widespread friendship networks and various types of frequent contacts at the local urban scale. Moreover, their friendship

networks are far-reaching into other metropolitan areas and even cities in the rest of the world, which shows the spatial expansion of their friendship networks beyond gated communities. These types of friendships are different from the cohesive and dense friendships formed in traditional work-unit compounds in the pre-reform era (Bray, 2005; Huang, 2004). Although many friends have now moved to more developed cities, these friendships networks in remote areas are well maintained through the highly mobilised transport network (driving private cars) and advanced communication technologies (remote video and online chat) (Castells, 2000). For Bauman (1998), the lifestyle and social practices of the global age do not support long-term and embedded social relationships. However, in this case, we can find the social networks of the affluent residents maintain long-term friendships with friends both at the local, national, and global scale through different types of mobile and electronic communications (Elliott and Urry, 2010).

An important aspect of their friendships is that the source friendships vary greatly between older residents (mostly over 40 years old) and younger residents (under 40). Among the older interviewees, a number of their friendships are their former colleagues and neighbours from their previous residential places in work-unit compounds and rural villages. Many of their friends still live in those relatively poor neighbourhoods, and thus they sometimes visit them there. In contrast, younger interviewees showed greater homogeneity in their friendship networks. Most younger interviewees described their close friends as having largely similar educational and income levels as themselves, with similarly high-status professions. About three-quarters of interviewees revealed that most of their close friends had at least an undergraduate degree and worked in high-income professions such as the Internet and financial industries and high-status professions such as government officials and doctors. And more importantly, most of their close friends live in upscale gated communities like themselves. Some residents explained that they are more likely to interact with these people with similar status and high-end living environments. For instance, Ms Yuan from the Central GC illustrates here the characteristics of her friendships:

Most of my close friends are my secondary school classmates. Three of them now live in Zhanjiang, and the others primarily work in Guangzhou and

Shenzhen. Lots of them are programmers for the Internet giants such as Tencent and Alibaba. Some of them are managers or accountants. I cannot think of any other professions. ... Some of my classmates are from other professions such as farming and manufacturing. Some of them still live in rural villages and work-unit compounds. I have less contact with them because their career backgrounds are too different from ours, and their living environments are undesirable to visit. Another reason is that the income gaps are too large that they cannot properly fit into our friends' circle. For example, most of them cannot afford the price of those newly-built gated communities, private kindergartens or golf clubs. Some do not even own cars (Interviewee 3, Ms Yuan, accountant, Central GC).

Most of Ms Yuan's friends are from high educational backgrounds and high-status professions such as the Internet and financial industries, among the most profitable sectors in China. This finding echoes with a large-scale survey of eight cities of China (Cheng and Yanjie, 2014), showing that the social networks and social capital of migrant workers are generally smaller and fewer than those of urban workers, and migrant workers can hardly interact with people with high social status and educational backgrounds. Affluent residents of gated communities, on the contrary, can easily become friends with people of higher educational backgrounds high-status professions, which indicates the increased inequality of social capital between middle-class residents and migrant workers. More importantly, these affluent residents actively choose to become friends with others in upscale gated communities while abandoning acquaintances living in poor neighbourhoods. These types of 'self-selective' social networks among affluent residents of gated communities show the selectiveness and exclusiveness of their social networks and undoubtedly further widen the social capital disparity between themselves and poor 'others' outside gated communities. Moreover, with the growth of gated communities and other privileged nodes connected by new communication technologies (as discussed above), these wealthy residents not only separate themselves from poor citizens, not only by living in gated communities,) but also through their exclusive and privileged social networks (Atkinson, 2008).

Most of the interviewees admitted that they socially and economically took advantage of their friendship networks, especially elite friends from gated communities. These common reciprocal advantages include borrowing money from friends, introducing schools and teaching institutions for their children, contacting doctors, and introducing marriage partners. Some interviewees look for business support, such as finding a lawyer for litigation, searching for business partners to develop their own company. For example, Mr Li, a manager from the Suburban GC, illustrated his own opinions:

I think friendship is of great importance to me. I always turn to my neighbours in our gated community for help when I come across difficulties in my life. For example, when my child is going to enter primary school, I will consult and discuss with my friends about their choice and opinions. They usually give me helpful advice. One of my friends works in the Education Bureau of Zhanjiang; he can help my child enter any primary school in Zhanjiang. If I am going to buy a house, I will consult with my friends working in a real estate company; they will recommend appropriate housing resources to me without charging a fee. And in return, I will take them on a trip on holiday or invite them to a dinner party in a high-end restaurant. Sometimes I will take them to Wuchuan County to play golf (Interviewee 15, Mr Li, manager, Suburban GC).

The impression here is that affluent residents of gated communities rely quite significantly on their friends in their gated communities in every aspect of their lives, both culturally, socially and economically. Tang's (2014) research into Chinese middle-class social networks indicates that the rising middle-class in China have benefited from their old social networks in the Communist bureaucratic system to become privileged groups in contemporary Chinese cities. But she also suggests that these social networks are less important for the post-Communist new middle-class citizens. However, the investigations here suggest different outcomes: even these new middle-class groups are deeply reliant on their social networks at work and in their lives. Moreover, the social networks between these affluent middle-class groups living in gated communities are created and maintained through expensive activities, such as private schools and golf clubs, based on different types of economic and social

'investment' (Andreotti et al., 2015). Thus, these reciprocal supports based on close-knit friendship networks are unavailable and unimaginable to the underprivileged in poor neighbourhoods and are both socially and physically separate from affluent residents in gated communities and their networks. But in fact, poor residents are in deeper need of such social networks and supports to provide them with better life chances to overcome their economic difficulties. For Bourdieu (1987), social capital is the exclusive social networks of elite social groups. Although this viewpoint may be reductive (Blokland and Savage, 2008), it precisely reflects the exclusive and expensive forms of friendship demarcated by the privileged spaces of gated communities; and these exclusive friendship networks serve as a vital instrument to maintain middle-class status as 'socially affluent' (Bourdieu, 1987) in the social spectrum.

Family relationships

The findings of this research into the family relationships of residents in the two gated communities show a significant distinction between the older generation (mostly over 40 years old) and the younger generation (under 40). Most of the older residents attach great importance to their family relationships in their lives in terms of their social interactions, recreational activities, residential choice, and social-support networks. Their relatives are in various types of neighbourhoods - work-unit compounds, urban villages, and other gated communities. Their long-term and solid family networks are based on their shared life experience and the strong clan relationships in traditional Chinese families (Parish and Whyte, 1980). And their frequent social interactions and mutual material support further consolidate their family ties: such family ties almost appear to be invisible in the emerging, younger middle-class. Most of the younger residents interviewed indicated that they have little contact with their relatives apart from for their parents. A certain proportion of young interviewees even state that they have deliberately decreased social interactions and connections with poor relatives living in old and derelict neighbourhoods. For instance, Ms Xie, a young manager from the Central GC, illustrated her opinions:

Actually, I have minimal contact with my relatives. I grew up with my parents in a commodity gated community and have not been familiar with my relatives since childhood. I normally attend the family reunions for the Spring Festival once a year. On top of that, I have no chance to meet most of my relatives, especially those living in rural areas. Some of them are extremely poor and behind our times. Some without proper jobs even want money from you without any effort. ... Our lifestyles are quite different. I like to visit the shopping centre, surf the Internet and go sea surfing in my spare time. And they are hardly interested in these activities. Moreover, our living environments are also different. Some of my relatives still live in traditional work units, rural areas and urban villages, where I don't like visiting (Interviewee 23, Ms Xie, manager, Central GC).

These factors are illustrated in more detail by the experience of another interviewee, Ms Yu, a young English teacher in a private teaching institution, who explained why she was unwilling to have contact with her relatives:

I think the sense of values between my relatives and me, especially those from rural areas, are pretty different. For example, every time I meet with my relatives, they often urge me to get married and have a child. They always impose these traditional women's obligations on me, which drives me crazy. And they also consider that work in government and public institutions is better than mine. This type of job discrimination is common. Also, they sometimes ask you to do something that you don't like as an elder relative (Interviewee 40, Ms Yu, teacher, Suburban GC)

The two quotes above show two crucial reasons why these younger generations of middle-class residents have little contact with their family members. First, since the Introduction of the 'family planning policy' in 1982 (Levy, 2013), most urban residents have had only one child. Thus, most interviewees grew up as only children with no siblings. The emotional bonds between them and other relatives are relatively weak compared with older generations. Second, and more importantly, the rapid economic growth in China in the past 30 years has changed the social and economic circumstances between these younger generations and their older relatives. A recent large-scale survey in Guangdong (He et al., 2021), shows that the rapid development

of industrialisation and the development of the services sector in Guangdong Province (the higher-level administrative unit of Zhanjiang) has led to urban immigrants with agricultural backgrounds becoming part of the professional middle-class with increasing personal wealth. However, in medium-sized cities like Zhanjiang in Guangdong Province, the agricultural population still accounts for nearly half (49.3%) of the total population (Zhanjiang Yearbook 2000). The industrialisation and professionalisation processes have created greater economic segregation in medium cities like Zhanjiang than in other big cities. Thus, the widening economic gap between the emerging 'propertied middle class' (Zhang, 2012) and their relatively poor relatives has resulted in different consumption behaviours, lifestyles, marriage expectations, and professional values (Xie, 2013). Based on these large-scale social and economic transformations between generations, wealthy residents living in upscale gated communities consider their relatives living in ordinary neighbourhoods as poor, behindhand, uncivilised and even immoral. Like their 'self-selective' friendship networks, living in upscale gated communities not only becomes a signal of their lifestyle and social status but is also an important 'gating threshold' to filter out the poor, laggard, uncivilised and valueless friends and relatives from their exclusive social networks. In this sense, during the tremendous transformation of built environment in Chinese cities, the elite neighbourhoods of emerging high-end gated communities play an essential role in shaping and demarcating the social networks of new urban affluent groups, exclusionary and hostile toward those who cannot afford to 'buy' into this wealthy world.

Another key finding here is that the choice of partners for young middle-class residents of the studied gated communities was even more homogeneous than the older generation. Although the partners of young residents of gated communities are more diverse in their geographical origins, their social and economic characteristics are highly homogeneous. Many interviewees agree with the emerging materialisation of the standards for choosing spouses. For instance, Mr Wu from the Suburban GC described his views of mainstream marital values in contemporary Chinese society:

For young people like us, the value of 'men dang hu dui' (a well-matched marriage) is deeply rooted in our minds. If you watch the news, many marital

problems may occur if you marry 'Fenghuang nan' and 'Fenghuang nv' (young men and women from rural areas). Your living habits, consumption customs and sense of values are quite different from those of the lower class. Thus, most marriage dating activities today will state the conditions of admission, such as having an undergraduate degree, owning a house in an upscale gated community or earning at least 200,000 yuan each year. You have a more advantageous position if you own a good home [like big flats in gated communities]. And most of us are totally happy with these measures and ideas because it saves you lots of time choosing your partner (Interviewee 42, Mr Wu, government officials, Suburban GC).

In a society with increasing mobility and fluidity (Urry, 2012), the marriage values of the emerging middle class in China are deeply imbued with the importance of equivalent economic, cultural and social capital between partners. This class homogeneity in their marriage networks is materialised through various types of admittance criteria in their marriage matching and dating activities. Thus, the social hypergamy phenomenon (Xie, 2013), which refers to increasing one's socioeconomic status through marrying into a higher class, is less likely to happen in contemporary Chinese society among these young middle-class residents. For the modern younger generation in Chinese society, owning a house has become the prerequisite for marriage. Living in an upscale gated community means you have advantages in choosing your spouse. Thus, the affluent residents of gated communities are more likely to marry similarly economically privileged house-owning partners, such as other residents in gated communities. This type of matched marriage may further help wealthy residents transform their economic capital into social capital (Bourdieu, 1986), deepen their class identification.

Neighbourhood relationships

The social networks of residents of the two communities studied showed significant differences between the central and the suburban gated community. Most of the interviewees living in the Central GC did not interact with their neighbours and seldom even knew who they were. They had difficulty naming any three of their neighbours

and there was little mutual social support between neighbours. However, more than half of those who live in the suburban gated community, do have regular contact with their neighbours. They have participated in various types of voluntary associations, such as sports clubs, homeowner associations and reading clubs, in their neighbourhood. They also have some level of mutual support with their neighbours, such as childcare and information exchange.

The following examples show different characteristics of neighbourhood networks in these two gated communities. Mr Zheng, a retiree living in the Central GC, describes his social networks in the neighbourhood:

I have lived in this neighbourhood for over four years. I only know the household living next door, but actually, I have little contact with them. When we meet in the elevator, we say 'Hi' to each other. Apart from that, we have no further interactions. If I come across any difficulties in my life, I will contact the management company for help. They will get to my home in 10 minutes. Otherwise, I will seek help from the other service companies or my relatives and friends. When we come across any public issues, such as the maintenance of the building and maintenance fee, I will have some discussions with my neighbours on WeChat groups. But these situations do not often happen (Interviewee 48, Mr Zheng, retiree, Suburban GC).

Many interviewees living in the Central GC suggested that the length of residence in the neighbourhood did not appear to improve the strength of social networks between residents. They had only superficial contacts with a limited number of neighbours, without actual mutual social interaction or social support. The economic criteria for entry into living in the community are the only similarities between these residents (Wu, 2005): there are nearly no common emotional and interest bonds between these wealthy residents. There seem to be two crucial reasons why they have little contact with their neighbours. First, the presence of an efficient neighbourhood management company (see Chapter 4) helps them solve different types of problems that occur in their neighbourhood lives. This may increase efficiency in solving problems but reduces their dependence on mutual support between neighbours. The second reason for limited contact between neighbours is that their dense social networks with their

friends and relatives in the cities serves their social and affection needs rather than neighbourhood networks. And their use of virtual communication to solve management or community issues in their neighbourhoods further reduces their face-to-face contact with neighbours. All these factors lead to residents' low participation and involvement in their local community.

In contrast, Mr Chen, a general manager in a biscuit factory living in the suburban community, described an entirely different situation of social networks there:

I have good relationships with my neighbours. I know at least eight of them quite well. We always meet with each other while hanging out in the neighbourhood garden. And I often ask my neighbours to go swimming in the gym with me once a week. We help each other in our daily routines. ... I have also attended two voluntary associations in our neighbourhood: a tennis club and a reading club. We always organise tennis matches in the sports centre with our neighbours, which makes us good friends. ... And I sometimes join the voluntary cleaning activities in our neighbourhood to help make our neighbourhood clean and tidy (Interviewee 15, Mr Chen, manager, Suburban GC).

The situation in the suburban gated community manifests quite different forms of neighbourhood networks from the one in the city centre. According to the interviewees, two main factors give rise to these different social relationships. First, the low levels of service provision in the suburban areas and the contrasting well-developed services inside the gated community have increased their everyday use of neighbourhood services. Frequent co-presence and encounters in the community create public familiarity (Fischer, 1982) between residents, which help to define people with similar values and norms, and eventually produce social attachment and solidarity (Blokland and Rae, 2008). Through these frequent interactions and community activities, the residents have built relatively close relationships with their neighbours. Second, the lack of certain services in the gated community, such as bookstores for their children, push them to create their own services for themselves and to organise community activities around these services. Through participation in these various types of voluntary

associations, they have built up regular contact with their neighbours and created mutually reciprocal relationships and trust (Putnam, 2000). Moreover, although the management company is primarily in charge of neighbourhood governance, these residents have appeared to proactively participate in some management activities, such as cleaning the grounds, which indeed help to foster social attachment in the community. However, it is crucial to note that membership of these types of voluntary associations which produce beneficial effects of social capital (Putnam, 1993) are typically formed inside gated communities without any spill-over effects in surrounding neighbourhoods. The affluent residents of the gated community have very few social connections with residents outside, and their various organisations are not open to poor outsider residents. The dense neighbourhood relationships inside the Suburban GC could be considered exclusive forms of social capital created at the expense of external social fragmentation (Forrest and Kearns, 2001) of the broader neighbourhood environments in the suburban areas.

According to the above analysis of the complex friendships, family and neighbourhood relationships of affluent residents living in gated communities, it is clear that, although they have dense social networks and abundant social capital, their social networks are highly exclusive and only include other wealthy residents (mainly from upscale gated communities) and seldom overlap with poor residents living in ordinary neighbourhoods with fewer social resources, even though they are urgently in need of them. In this sense, the spatiality of gated communities is crucial in influencing the formation of interviewees' various types of social networks. Living in gated communities creates a 'gating threshold' to filter out poor citizens who do not belong to these elite social networks. Consequently, the social networks of the wealthy residents of gated communities studied appear to have varying levels of 'exit' (Andreotti et al., 2015) and disaffiliation (Atkinson, 2006) from the wider urban population and local citizens according to their residential spaces and socioeconomic status. The following Table 4 suggests a typology to illustrate three different types of disengagement by these wealthy residents of gated communities in relation to their

social networks and their access to services; and suggests the major social-demographic groups falling into each type.

	The local 'belongsers'	The local 'exiters'	New 'elective belongsers'
Primary Social-demographic characteristics	Older local residents, mainly retirees	Young local residents, mainly managers and professional workers	Young migrants, primarily managers and professional workers
Friendships	Strong inside strong outside	Weak inside strong outside	strong inside weak outside
Family relationships	Strong inside strong outside	Weak inside weak outside	Weak inside weak outside
Neighbourhood relationships	Strong inside weak outside	Weak inside weak outside	Strong inside weak outside
Access to goods and services	High inside high outside	Weak inside strong outside	Strong inside weak outside

Table 4: Social networks inside and outside gated communities

Most of the interviewees fall into these three categories - local belongsers, local exiters, and new elective belongsers - according to the extent of their disaffiliation and exit from other people and services outside their gated communities. The first category is the local 'belongsers' consisting mainly of older residents (mostly over 40 years old) in both the gated communities studied. These residents have dense friendships and family relationships networks due to their shared life experiences and the strong clan relationships in traditional Chinese families (Parish and Whyte, 1980) and traditional neighbourhoods like rural villages and work-unit compounds. Thus, although they live in gated communities, they sometimes visit their friends and relatives in other ordinary neighbourhoods and participate in various social activities with other residents in the

city. These older residents of gated communities have not totally withdrawn from the wider public and still keep close connections with local ordinary neighbourhoods and public services.

The second category - local 'exiter' - primarily includes younger residents who are the part of the new affluent groups in the cities. Their friendship networks are dispersed across different upscale gated communities in Zhanjiang and often other more developed cities and nations. Their friendship networks in various privileged but physically distant areas are well-connected and maintained through their highly mobilised network (driving private cars) and new communication technologies (remote video and online chat) (Castells, 2000). Gated communities have become an effective 'gating threshold' for these new affluent groups to filter out poor, laggard, uncivilised and valueless friends and relatives from their exclusive social networks. They also have limited contact with their local neighbours both in upscale gated communities and adjacent ordinary neighbourhoods. In this sense, they can be understood as local 'exiters' who have only minor connections with their neighbours and relatives (apart from their parents), and seldom participate in local activities or use the public services.

The last category is the new 'elective belongers' (Savage et al., 2005) who are mostly professional migrant workers from other cities and regions in China. 'Elective belonging' suggests the way that middle-class residents "claimed moral rights over the place through their capacity to move to, and put down roots in, a specific place which was both functionally and symbolically important to them" (Savage et al., 2005, p38). As Savage (2010) further explains, elective belonging contrasts with traditional local affiliation in oppositions between: the mobile incomers and stable locals; those with choice and those fixed in place; and the agent and the object; and all these oppositions are embedded in the mobilisation of the present against past. As professional and mobile migrant workers, the interviewees for this study display many similar 'elective belonging' characteristics and values. As newcomers in Zhanjiang, these residents have built certain levels of neighbourhood relationships and friendships with their affluent neighbours and claim their belonging to the high-quality physical environments and exclusive neighbourhood services in upscale gated communities. At the same time,

they have negative attitudes toward their poor neighbours in adjacent ordinary neighbourhoods and actively avoid interacting with the outsiders or visiting the surrounding public spaces, especially in the suburban areas. These migrant workers with better wealth and mobilities have actively chosen to belong to their upscale gated communities while cutting off their links with immobile and poor local residents and 'exiting' from local public spaces and services. The emergence of these 'elective belongers' and their exclusive social networks have further revealed the underlying social disaffiliation, segregation and inequality of Zhanjiang.

7.2 The use/consumption of public/private services

This section begins to explore the use and consumption of local public/private services in the cities by the wealthy residents living in upscale gated communities interviewed for this study. This helps further understanding of their partial 'exit' (Andreotti et al., 2015) and disaffiliation (Atkinson, 2006) from the city where they live and reveals the underlying and increasing social inequality between them and poor residents in ordinary neighbourhoods. The previous chapter has already discussed the use of public/private transport, thus this section seeks to focus on other crucial services, such as education and medical services.

In general, the interviewees from both two studied gated communities make little use of public services, such as public transportation, sports facilities, libraries and leisure services; and compared with the Central GC, the residents in the Suburban GC have even lower levels of use of public services. This evidence suggests that affluent residents of high-end gated communities in contemporary Chinese cities have, to a large extent, retreated and exited from the cities. For example, Ms Yu from the Suburban GC illustrates her experience in using various public/private services:

I seldom use the bus transportation in our city because it is slow and crowded. The real estate company has built high-quality highways that connect our neighbourhood with the city centre. Thus, I tend to drive my private car. [...] And, for public parks, sometimes I visit the 'Coastal Park' to enjoy the seaside scenery. But in most cases, I would rather use the garden

in our neighbourhood; it's close and convenient to use. When I want to play tennis with my friends, I usually rent a private tennis court in the city centre, costing around 30 Yuan per person per hour. It's not that expensive, and you can enjoy much better environment and services there than other derelict tennis courts in the public parks. ... I am now teaching in a private educational institution that gives middle-school students high-quality courses. Although our tuition fees are higher than in public schools, many students still pay for our excellent teaching quality (Interviewee 40, Ms Yu, teacher, Suburban GC).

Most of the residents interviewed show that usually use private services instead of local public services. The local public services and infrastructure, such as bus transportation, parks, and libraries, are considered derelict and inefficient compared with alternative private services, such as private cars, private provision of tennis courts and exclusive neighbourhood gardens and private educational resources. While these residents partially abandon public services and increasingly rely on diverse types of private services depending on their consumption power, other lower-class residents can only rely on the inadequate public provision of services (Saunders, 1986) in the city, especially in those economically underdeveloped cities like Zhanjiang. As Saunders (1986) suggests, the primary division in modern society is not in the means of production but in the process of consumption between those who can satisfy their primary consumption needs through private ownership and those who can only rely on collective consumption (Castells, 1977). In the built environment of Zhanjiang, in contrast with underdeveloped public infrastructure and services, more and more various private services, such as private sports centres, gyms, educational institutions, shopping malls, and private cinemas, have emerged in the city centre and are favoured by those residents with resources. These affluent residents have congregated in private commodity gated communities which are further connected to various private services and other privileged spaces by 'premium spaces' like private highways, telecommunications and private car-hailing systems (see Chapter 6), making the city more fragmented and unequal (Graham and Marvin, 2002). The urban spaces of contemporary Chinese cities may gradually be colonised by the newly rising middle-class (Atkinson, 2006) and become the playgrounds of wealthy groups (Merrifield, 2013).

The following discussion focuses on the use/consumption of two crucial services - educational and medical - by wealthy residents in gated communities. In terms of education, although public schools are still the choice of most interviewees, several high-quality private secondary schools have been increasingly favoured by these middle-class residents in recent years. Most interviewees apply different strategies to acquire good education resources in private schools, while lower social classes are completely excluded from these private services. For example, Mr Li from the Suburban GC illustrated why he chose a particular private school for his daughter:

My daughter is 17 years old, studying now at the 'Lianjiang City Experimental School'. It's a new private school but of excellent quality. It was established in 2016, and its teaching achievements have surpassed the best public school, the First Middle School of Zhanjiang, within three years. In 2019, 13 students from our school entered the top two universities in China, ranking the first in Zhanjiang. And the top 30 students in each grade have lots of one-to-one tutorials from the best teachers in the school. And the educational facilities and environment are much better than other public schools. Thus, I sent my daughter there. And many of my friends have consulted me about the situation of this school. I am sure it will be more popular in the coming year (Interviewee 17, Mr Li, owner of a car repairment company, Suburban GC).

Mr Li indicates that although there are many good-quality public schools in Zhanjiang, the emerging private schools are developing very fast and surpassing most public schools because they invest lots of resources. These private schools not only spend money to hire qualified teachers from public schools, but also 'buy' good students from public schools. Thus, more and more middle-class parents are willing to send their children to these private schools for the better educational resources and environment, where their children will become more competitive and confident of winning in the College Entrance Examination than children whose parents who cannot afford these educational resources. Some middle-class parents send their children to other big cities to attend 'international middle schools' with tuition fees of over 100,000 Yuan per year. to gain more exclusive and better educational opportunities, hoping to increase

the children's the admission chances to famous universities abroad. Their private strategies in choosing private schools for their children show the substantial educational inequalities between families with different resources. And the children of these middle-class families are more likely to succeed and secure their class status in the future.

Buying into a gated commodity housing estate in a good school district is another strategy for accessing educational resources. Ms Yuan from the Central GC described her strategy to ensure her child has better educational resources:

When my son was ready for entering secondary school, I bought a school-district house in the 'Dingsheng' community to get him admission to No.2 Middle School of Zhanjiang. There were two experimental classes [for students with higher performance in school examinations]. One was for students from different districts, including rural areas, of Zhanjiang. The other was for students from the city centre with more high-end neighbourhoods. I asked one of my friends, a leader in that school, to help transfer my son into the second one. I hoped that my son could interact with other students with better family backgrounds and social resources. I'm sure that this will help him greatly in his future career and development (Interviewee 3, Ms Yuan, accountant, Central GC).

As in most Chinese cities, Zhanjiang applies educational policies to strictly define the connection between the location of residence and school district enrolment (Wen et al., 2017). Thus, buying residential properties to acquire better educational resources is a common strategy used by affluent families of gated communities. These affluent families buy houses in desirable school districts simply to get their children into good-quality schools. Many interviewees admitted that they sold the school district housing immediately after their children had entered their ideal schools and got most of their investment capital back. These strategies help affluent residents gain better educational resources in good-quality public institutions but can only be applied by those families owning sufficient circulating capital. In addition, middle-class parents mobilise their social and economic resources to get their children into classes with students of similar and higher socioeconomic status. This strategy reflects their

aspirations to decrease their children's contact with lower classes and enjoy a more 'purified social-class' environment. In addition, many interviewees indicate that, in undergraduate and post-graduate higher education, they aim to send their children to other countries with high-quality education systems, such as the US and UK. These strategies can be understood as a further 'exit strategy' (Andreotti et al., 2013) for their children to gain knowledge and skills in international contexts and improve their educational background and competitiveness in the future. Thus, these wealthy groups are highly dependent on the use/consumption of various good-quality private services but are still able to take advantage of local collective services when there are not enough good private services. Through these various private strategies, they partially exit from the local public services and also keep their distance from underprivileged social groups.

In terms of using medical resources, the interviewees use both public and private hospitals depending on their specific situation. For relatively serious diseases, most interviewees still choose to use public hospitals because of their good reputation. On the other hand, for common health problems, most interviewees prefer to select good private hospitals, which have rapidly emerged in recent years, such as gynaecologic hospitals, children's hospitals and dental hospitals. Compared with public hospitals, they do not have to queue for several hours for registration and can enjoy much longer consulting time. One interesting service mentioned by several interviewees is the 'VIP clinic' - a new service in public hospitals - which is an excellent alternative for those who want to enjoy a better environment and clinical services from Professors/Associate Professors in high-quality public hospitals. Ms Xie, a manager from the Central GC, talked about her experience:

For common diseases, I would rather go to private hospitals to deal with them because this can save you lots of time and energy instead of queueing in the lobby of public hospitals with loads of other people. You have to stand there for a couple of hours with many migrant workers and poor people from the rural areas. They usually make a lot of noise and sometimes jump the queue, which really drives you crazy. I easily become irritable and annoyed when visiting public hospitals. Fortunately, more and more private hospitals

are emerging these years, and it's convenient and comfortable to visit them for usual medical issues. A few years ago, my father required a surgical operation, and I tried to use the 'VIP clinic' services in the public hospital. The experience was excellent because you can enjoy consultancy from professor doctors, a single-person ward and better nursing services (Interviewee 23, Ms Xie, manager, Central GC).

The interviewees describe a growing trend in the emergence of private hospitals and more involvement in private medical treatment because of the convenience, luxury environment, and abundant resources. At the same time, the expensive services in private hospitals have blocked the way for less-privileged groups to use them. The use of 'VIP clinics' in public hospitals further shows how affluent residents manipulate different strategies to enjoy high-quality medical resources in good-quality public sector hospitals while keeping their alternative in private hospitals. These subtly 'remaining' strategies in public sectors allow them to make use of public resources to the full extent. According to some of the interviewees, the prices of the 'VIP clinics' are five to 10 times more than the normal public hospitals in terms of registration fees and accommodation fees, which is even more expensive than some private hospitals. Thus, these exclusive services in public hospitals serving similar functions as the private hospitals, are highly profit-driven and exclusively reserved for elite and middle-class consumers. In this way, the choice and consumption of various types of medical services are becoming the new criteria for the manifestation of prestige and distinguishing social status. Residents of gated communities develop different strategies for using medical services to distance themselves and exit from unprivileged social groups and ensure a purified social environment in their medical consumption. With the limited medical resources in Chinese cities, poor residents who cannot afford private medical treatment or VIP services in public hospitals may face even more severe issues of accessing medical treatment. These consumption cleavages in crucial sectors, such as housing, education, health that influence people's life chances (Dunleavy, 1979), have clearly revealed the increasing inequality between people with resources (here, residents of gated communities) and those without.

7.3 Conclusion

This Chapter investigated the issues of social segregation, disaffiliation (Atkinson, 2006) and partial exit (Andreotti et al., 2013) from the city and public spaces through the residents' social networks and use/consumption of public/private services. Our interviewees have dense social networks and widespread friendships networks, not only in their own city but also in other metropolitan areas and even foreign countries. These friendship networks are well-maintained through their highly mobilised transport network (driving private cars and planes) and advanced communication technologies (remote video and online chat) (Castells, 2000). However, these residents are more inclined to contact friends and relatives from similar socio-economic backgrounds and live in upscale gated communities. Most of the interviewees also showed little interest in interacting with people from nearby neighbourhoods outside their gated communities. Thus, the reciprocal relationships and trust which create beneficial effects of social capital (Putnam, 1993), are typically formed inside gated communities without spill-over effect in surrounding neighbourhoods. These gated communities can be considered as 'gated thresholds' that filter out poor, laggard, uncivilised and valueless friends, neighbours and relatives and retain the 'purity' of their exclusive social networks (Sibley, 1988), revealing the hostile and negative impacts of such networks (Blokland and Savage, 2008).

The interviewees' complex social networks can be divided into three categories (the local belongers, the local exiters and new elective belongers) that reflect the extent of their disaffiliation and exit from other people, groups and services outside their gated communities. While older residents (belongers) have not totally withdrawn from the wider public and often have close connections with local ordinary neighbourhoods and public services, most younger residents (exiters) have only minor connections with their neighbours and relatives apart from their parents and apply more thorough 'exit' strategies to their social networks and use of local services. Professional migrant workers - elective belongers - with more wealth and mobility than others, have actively chosen to belong to their upscale gated communities, cutting off their links with immobile and poor local residents and exiting local public spaces and services. Through the closed and disconnected social networks of these wealthy residents in

gated communities, we have seen the increasing segregated and polarised population in contemporary Zhanjiang that may lead to further social conflicts and anger toward these extravagant and revengeful affluent people in the future (Atkinson, 2021).

The second section of this chapter explored the interviewees' use/and consumption of various public/private services. The interviews describe the increasingly privatised strategies taken by these wealthy residents to escape derelict public realms and inadequate public services while distancing themselves from poor residents to create purified social environments and safe consumption experiences. One strategy used by these wealthy groups is buying into gated communities as an instrument to gain better educational resources for the next generation. The only reason they keep using public services is to search for better public resources, such as educational and medical resources, which further deteriorates the few resources available for underprivileged groups. These consumption cleavages in crucial sectors like housing, education or health that have great influence on people's life chances (Dunleavy, 1979), reveal not only the privileged groups' exit from the public realm but also indicate the increasing inequality between people with resources (here, residents of gated communities) and those without. As suggested by Angell (2000), the effective tricks to survive in the current information age are taking advantage of collective goods and private services while at the same time, not investing in or committing to local places. In this case, while poor urban residents are considered uncivilised and dangerous by wealthy residents in upscale gated communities, these emerging new rich groups are becoming powerful, mobile and rational 'new barbarians' that fly in and colonise the current urban environments while remaining partial 'exit' from the wider public.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The research presented in this thesis sought to examine the neighbourhood life, social networks, mobility patterns, activity spaces, and engagement with public spaces of affluent middle-class residents living in prime gated communities in the middle-tier Chinese city of Zhanjiang. In reporting on these areas the primary aim was to explore and understand why this kind of enclosed style of urban living has come to dominate the urban landscapes of Chinese cities by paying close attention to the social life and networks of those living in such communities. In this way, a broader perspective on the forms of social-spatial segregation, inequality and mobility in the wider city could also be engaged. This study particularly explored the kinds of social representations and cultural meanings offered by gated communities in the city of Zhanjiang and others like it, engaging with some the key academic debates that have discussed gated communities as extreme forms of residential segregation between the rich and poor or as 'containers' for emerging middle-class residents in post-reform era China (Pow, 2009). The work moved beyond these established discussions to explore the broader social impacts of gated communities, particularly in terms of dynamic patterns of social segregation and exclusion, through the social networks, mobility patterns, activity spaces and engagements with public spaces in the wider city of the affluent residents living in gated communities.

This concluding chapter focuses on the key contributions to knowledge and theory offered by the thesis regarding these gated communities and the motives for urban gating and 'escape' into these zones by wealthy households. This closing chapter also considers what the emergence of these privileged residential landscapes, private housing estates and enclosed architectural forms tell us about urban spatial and social transformation and new dynamics of social segregation and exclusion in contemporary Chinese cities more broadly. Although this study was mainly conducted in gated communities in Zhanjiang, the broader aim was to present a comparative urban analysis of gated communities in middle-tier/ordinary Chinese cities. This was seen as being particularly valuable given that most research on gated communities is currently focussed on major cities and metropolitan areas. This study also seeks to contribute

to current gated communities' literature in specific Chinese contexts where the suburbanisation process and urban fabric are quite different from western countries. The main difference is that the city centres in Chinese cities are not declining and are being redeveloped because of the increasing demand for housing estates and commercial functions while the suburban areas of lower-level cities are considered derelict and undeveloped (see Chapter 3). In the sections that follow, the key contributions of the thesis are drawn out, focusing on the most important themes that emerged from this study and the thesis' relationship to knowledge, theory and ongoing debates about gated communities and elite living are highlighted.

8.1 New urban enclaves and changing neighbourhood relationships

The most significant transformation in the built environment of many Chinese cities since the 1990s has been ubiquitous state-sponsored development of work-unit compounds and their subsequent partial supplanting by the emergence of private gated communities. Current social and urban research in China has focused on the production of these new gated residential enclaves (Miao, 2003; Wu, 2005) and, more recently, the social practices, social networks, attachments and satisfactions derived by residents in the private gated communities (Hendrikx and Wissink, 2017; S Li et al., 2012; Lu et al., 2018; Wissink et al., 2012). This study has engaged with these key academic discussions and particularly examined how the emergence of upscale gated communities has influenced social networks and neighbourhood relationships in Zhanjiang. These issues can be seen to reflect changes in the class structure and social composition of many cities and Chinese society more generally. The private residential spaces of gated communities have been mobilised by emerging affluent social groups to demonstrate their distinctive class status and cultural capital, and, more importantly, exclude and stigmatise other social groups living in ordinary neighbourhoods. This section presents two key contributions to knowledge: how the emergence of these privileged gated communities appeared to denote specific social and class meanings wielded by residents in contemporary Zhanjiang, and the way in which these emerging privileged residential landscapes transformed the local social fabric. Notable here was the way in which the new spaces were generative of new forms or modes of social exclusion and stigmatisation between different social groups,

especially between those living in the gated communities and those outside the enclave spaces. The study applied Elias's 'established-outsider' theoretical frameworks (Elias and Scotson, 1994) to examine the dynamic group-level relationships and social stigmatisation/exclusion in gated communities and sought to contribute to the understanding of this social theory in Chinese urban contexts. Going beyond the good / bad binary division between insider/outsider relationships, the study revealed the complex group dynamics between middle-class residents and other social groups.

The research indicated that the development of upscale gated communities has contributed to the formation of privileged residential spaces for middle-class residents in Zhanjiang, through which the symbolic environment of relative luxury, design elements and other features of gated communities was mobilised to cultivate a personal sense of superior social status, specific cultural practices and distinctive social and cultural forms of capital. Compared with the gates and walls in traditional Chinese cities, the gates and walls of gated communities in Zhanjiang have been imbued with new class meanings that demarcate the 'consumer clubs' of the emerging middle-class and help to reinforce the sense of spatial divisions between the rich and the less well-off groups of urban residents more generally. Living in upscale gated communities now appears to act as one of the most important social instruments through which affluent insiders are able to distinguish themselves from other urbanites, displaying forms of visible class distinction (Bourdieu, 1987), cultivating their cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), and maintaining what they identify as their place in a modern society and their civilised lifestyle within it. Residents inside gated communities were also recognised and acknowledged by local urban residents outside gated communities as competent, successful, and urbane in ways that highlight the economic growth and personal wealth accumulation of these groups.

These upscale gated communities are further promoted by local governments as being civilised residential spaces. The championing of these spaces helped to deepen the moral division between 'inside' and 'outside' residents. Thus, the physical boundaries of gated communities not only restricted the access of poor outsiders but also helped

to maintain the middle-class residents' sense of superior social status and morality. For Bourdieu (1987), cultural capital (expressed as taste, symbolic displays and knowledge of how to consume) is not simply a purity of aesthetic contemplation derived from 'moral agnosticism and disinterest' (Jenkins, 2014) but arises from struggles for social status in which people mobilise their cultural capital to compete for status, honour and distinction. In this case, the spatiality of gated communities in Zhanjiang has been mobilised by emerging middle-class residents who seek to cultivate their cultural capital and social status. This drive to 'show' status helped to further exclude apparently uncivilised 'outsiders' from the privileged residential landscapes of the gated communities. Consequently, the exclusion and segregation of poor people outside gated communities were recast by these emerging middle-class residents as having merely different kinds of lifestyle, cultural taste and morality when in reality, these differences were solidified by their divergent economic position and levels of cultural capital. This theoretical approach highlighted the underlying social and cultural meanings of gated communities in contemporary Zhanjiang and helped a better understanding of the emerging unique established/outsider figurations (Elias and Scotson, 1994) in these private gated communities. Many anthropological studies and social researches into the pre-reform era urban built environments of Chinese cities dominated by work-unit compounds indicate that social interactions, trust, and mutual support were relatively strong (Aijmer and Jankowiak, 1994; Bray, 2005; Huang, 2006; Whyte and Parish, 1985). The results of the present study have shown that the previous tight, cohesive and warm-hearted neighbourhood bonds in traditional work-unit compounds are being replaced by privatised, apathetic and weak neighbourhood relations in gated communities. Furthermore, the work presented here found that the emergence of upscale gated communities among adjacent poor neighbourhoods has helped to reinforce the social stigmatisation and exclusion of poorer residents by middle-class homeowners, issues not always given much consideration in existing research on such communities elsewhere in China (Lu et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2016). Thus, Elias' established/outsider configuration (Elias and Scotson, 1994) was applied here to deepen understanding of the nuanced and dynamic group-level neighbourhood relationships in gated communities. This study has also critically engaged with Elias' theoretical framework and adapted it to the Chinese context in new ways.

The research showed that four key groups of urban residents stand out in the established/outsider figuration of gated communities: middle-class residents inside, local residents in adjacent ordinary neighbourhoods, replacement households inside, and service staff inside. The middle-class residents inside are the established groups in this figuration with strong geographical mobility and economic, cultural and social capital (Bauman, 2007; Bourdieu, 1987). Although they are newcomers to local communities (Watt, 2010), they are not discriminated against and considered outsiders by local residents. On the contrary, the privileged residential space of gated communities has endowed them with superior social status, distinct cultural capital and group charisma, which make them the established group. In the analysis of gated communities in Shanghai by Pow (2007), the migrant workers from rural areas (*nonminggong*) and other cities (*waidiren*) are socially and ideologically constructed as uncivilised, dirty and dangerous social groups and thus excluded from the privileged landscape of the gated communities. Compared with Shanghai, representing a top-tier city context, this study found that discrimination toward migrant workers from rural areas and other cities was not generally strongly expressed by interviewees. Nevertheless, more than half of middle-class residents showed negative attitudes toward poor local residents living in ordinary neighbourhoods, who were considered by the established group almost as social 'barbarians' with low incomes, no education and low-end jobs displaying 'uncivilised' behaviours and even criminal tendencies.

Through deeper investigation of neighbourhood relationships and social interaction between different social groups, it was possible to see how established-outsider figurations and social boundaries were far more complex than some kind of binary construction of good and bad people inside and outside the gated communities (Low, 2003). Although poor local residents outside gated communities were often socially and culturally constructed as 'bad' outsiders by middle-class residents, two social groups inside were disidentified, or excluded, by them as outsiders as well: the 'inferior' replacement household and the 'dehumanised' service staff. As the study has shown, replacement households and service staff in the gated communities were discriminated against by middle-class residents as 'uncivilised', 'dirty' and 'low-quality' (*disuzhi*) neighbours and were thus excluded from normal social interactions and formal

organisations. When uncivilised behaviour occurred inside the neighbourhood, middle-class residents usually blamed the replacement households and service staff and required the management company and Homeowner Associations to inspect and punish them. Furthermore, middle-class residents often used 'blame-gossip' (Elias and Scotson, 1994) as a powerful tool to stigmatise the replacement households and restrict their and their children's social interaction with outsider groups. Through these stigmatisation and exclusion processes, the replacement households and service staff were further isolated, excluded and discriminated against by the established group.

The thesis highlighted three theoretical reflections on Elias' established/outsider figuration. The first is the importance of spatiality in influencing and forming local social relationships. In Elias' case, the two social groups (locals and newcomers) researched lived within a small local community and thus, the role of space was not prominent in influencing neighbourhood relationships. However, in the present study, the spatiality of upscale gated communities is seen as critical in cultivating the middle-class identity of residents inside and forming the opposed and confrontational group-level relationships between middle-class residents and other social groups, which are mainly neglected in Elias' figurations (Hogenstijn et al., 2008; Pratsinakis, 2018). The boundaries of the gated communities studied here were not only maintained in terms of physical barriers (gates, walls and security systems) but also through the social rhetoric of modern lifestyle, distinct cultural capital, superior group characteristics, and forms of blame-gossip mobilised against 'outsiders'.

Secondly, in Elias's established/outsider figuration, length of residence is the most crucial power in maintaining the status and social relations of established groups. However, in this thesis, local urban residents living in ordinary communities with longer lengths of residence have not yet formed strong group cohesion and group status. On the contrary, these residents are criticised by middle-class residents of gated communities as lazy and incompetent people with lower social mobility, human values, civility and higher criminality, and thus segregated and excluded by the established groups. The length of residence here has not become the power source of residents in ordinary neighbourhoods but has become the manifestation of 'outsider' status when

compared with the newcomers inside gated communities as more powerful groups. The physical and symbolic boundaries of gated communities have also helped to shape an established group identity and prevent social contact and interaction with those who have lived in the locality for a long time but are seen as dangerous and uncivilised 'barbarians' outsiders.

Thirdly, the research found that the surrounding built- and social environments have significant impacts on the local neighbourhood relationships of gated communities. In the previous research on social networks and relationships in gated communities in China (Breitung, 2012; see, for example, S Li et al., 2012; Lu et al., 2018), researchers have focused on social networks and attachments inside gated communities while paying less attention to the built and social environments outside. By comparing a gated community in the city centre with the one in suburban area, the research found that the residents of the gated community in the city centre surrounded by neighbourhoods of mixed social composition and different forms of built environment were more willing to use public services and to visit the surrounding public spaces and neighbourhoods. Whereas in the suburban gated community located in relatively old and poor ordinary neighbourhoods, the middle-class residents were highly unwilling to interact with their poorer neighbours or to use the derelict public spaces/services outside their gated community. Consequently, the everyday use of neighbourhood services/spaces inside the suburban gated community has increased residents' 'public familiarity' with each other (Blokland and Rae, 2008) but not with groups in the surrounding areas; while their participation in various types of voluntary neighbourhood organisations in their gated community has increased their mutual trust and reciprocal relations (Putnam, 1993). Thus, it could be understood that the social cohesion and attachments of residents inside the suburban gated community are enhanced due to the poor and derelict built and social environments outside their neighbourhood, which are different from the previous studies showing that most commodity gated communities lack social cohesion and social attachment (Pow, 2009; Zhang, 2012; Zhu et al., 2012).

This research indicates that the large-scale demolition of derelict neighbourhoods and construction of gated communities have significantly eroded the kind of traditional cohesive social networks found in the work-units and brought about further social segregation, exclusion, forms of social confrontation and disintegration between different social groups. These gated communities have better services and environments for affluent residents, more privacy and exclusivity, but show less openness, cosmopolitan moments, social integration and mutual trust between social groups, which may signal a less cohesive future for the gated communities in 'ordinary' Chinese cities. In this respect, local governments and urban planners will need to pay attention to the potentially negative social implications of gated communities rather than focusing solely on questions of economic growth and the continued building of upscale commodity housing estates in the pursuit of this goals.

8.2 Fear of others and the search for absolute security

The rapid growth of gated communities worldwide in the past 30 years has been seen to be connected to the fear of crime and the search for security (Atkinson and Blandy, 2005b; Blakely and Snyder, 1998; Low, 2003). In China, early research indicated that although gated neighbourhoods have existed in Chinese cities for long periods in the past (Miao, 2003), they have not been primarily built for security purposes but for political control, collective consumption and demarcating consumer clubs (Huang, 2004; Wu, 2005). However, more recent research in China shows that the crime rates in gated communities are distinctly lower than in non-gated communities, thanks to entry control (Wang et al., 2021) and physical boundaries (Sun and Webster, 2019). This study has critically engaged with these academic debates and issues related to fear of crime in gated communities and focused on these concerns have been expressed by and influenced affluent residents and has examined whether living in a gated community has reduced their fear of crime. This section focuses on two further contributions to knowledge. First, the increasing income inequality and fragmentation of urban spaces have significantly fuelled the fear of crime and social others by affluent residents in gated communities. Secondly, the lack of informal social control and imperfect trust of formal social control have increased residents' sense of *insecurity* in

gated communities and increased their desire for a kind of total security in their neighbourhood and private homes.

Interviews with residents of gated communities and key security-related informants, such as local government officials, found that, although the actual crime rate has decreased in the past ten years, increasing income inequality and fragmentation of social space in cities had contributed to affluent residents' increasing fear of crime and fear of others, including residents of gated communities. Most interviewees shared their concerns and anxieties about interacting with and encountering other, poorer local urban residents and rural migrants living in ordinary neighbourhoods. In addition, the increase in personal wealth of residents inside gated neighbourhoods appears to have enhanced their anxieties about specific criminal behaviours such as burglary and vandalism. Local housing developers and estate agents clearly appreciated affluent home buyer concerns and worries about crime, particularly property-based crime, and made use of this demand for security to promote their gated communities by installing various high-tech security equipment. The installation of these multiple forms of security services appeared to raise residents' awareness of risks in their homes and neighbourhoods (Atkinson and Blandy, 2018) rather than reduce them, by symbolically 'showing' the presence of crime risks. The construction of various defensive boundaries and spaces has given residents the impression that society and the outside world are laden with a range of risks (Baumann, 2007), strengthening their willingness to apply more advanced security apparatuses to safeguard themselves (Flusty, 1997). Compared with the motives described in previous studies, such as cultural meanings (Wu, 2004), neighbourhood services (Wu, 2010) and social status (Pow, 2009), the search for security was particularly emphasised by most interviewees as one of the most crucial motives for buying into gated communities. These widespread concerns about residents' security partly explain why current Chinese urban policies that seek to open gated communities have been opposed by many urban middle-class residents and urban planners (Liao et al., 2018; Wang and Pojani, 2019), despite a number of successful cases of the opening-up of some gated communities (Zhang and Chai, 2014).

This study also explored whether formal (private security guards and local police) (Crowe and Fennelly, 2013) and informal modes of social control (neighbourhood forms of social cohesion and willingness to intervene) influenced residents' perceptions of crime and their sense of security in the gated community case areas. Through the interviews with residents and key security officers it was possible to see how most residents felt safer in their own gated community because of the increased security apparatus and the frequent presence of security guards. However, it was also interesting to see how some interviewees did not fully trust the ability of security guards in the gated communities to deal with issues of property crime and social disorder, especially violent crimes. This understanding shaped their feelings of insecurity in their neighbourhoods. In addition, informal social control clearly played an essential role in preventing social disorder and reducing the fear of crime in the neighbourhoods (Atkinson and Flint, 2004; Sampson et al., 1997). However, more than 80 per cent of affluent residents in the gated communities valued their privacy and privatised lifestyle highly while at the same time, in many ways lacking the sense of inhabiting a socially cohesive neighbourhood. Many of those spoken to had not really formed strong social bonds with their neighbours and often did not trust them to solve particular forms of neighbourhood conflict or uncivil behaviour. Because of this lack of social connection in these areas, many residents appeared unwilling to directly confront problems with their neighbours. This fact greatly decreased their expectations of the possibility that forms of local and informal social control might help to regulate forms of anti-social behaviour or disorder. Compared with the central gated community, the suburban case appeared to show higher levels of social cohesion and neighbourhood participation. Here, some interviewees expressed their willingness to help regulate local conflicts and to deal with some forms of uncivilised behaviour. This suggests a slightly higher level of social cohesion and more developed neighbourhood networks which had a positive effect of enhancing informal social control inside neighbourhoods. However, in general, it seemed that an apathetic and disintegrated system of neighbourhood social relationships, a fortress mentality, and fear of others was a quite widespread phenomenon. If there was a way of understanding the subtle differences between the inner and outer case study areas, it perhaps lay in the even greater affluence and greater privatism of the central resident 'community' which yielded an even less socially engaged mentality.

To sum up, increasing income inequality, physical fragmentation of urban space, withdrawal of public housing provision by government and the relatively deserted streets of contemporary Zhanjiang have helped to pave the way for the forms of affluent congregation we now see in the city's gated communities and defensive private homes. The use of physical, social and financial resources to help secure absolute personal and property security in the neighbourhoods and private homes of the gated communities studied highlight increasing anxieties about security, but also aversion to surrounding derelict public spaces and poorer social groups. More broadly, this anxiety was also expressed in terms of a desire to wield place of residence as a clear marker of aspiration and achievement by gated community residents. Atkinson and Blandy (2018) have used the term 'layers of security' to describe situations in which defensive and anxious residents live in their protected homes within gated communities in segregated cities, which, as shown in this study, have become more commonly seen in the affluent residents' gated communities in contemporary Chinese cities. For these residents, escape into these 'layers of security' appeared to present them with temporary and limited security, but also to further insulate them in even more incarcerated conditions (Davis, 2006) behind gates, walls, security doors and iron grills. Through their choices to buy and live in gated communities, interviewees showed how they sought, as far as possible, absolute security but were nevertheless always overwhelmed by endless subsequent risks and fears of poor 'others' and the outside world. Through the lens of the spaces of these gated communities, we can witness wider processes of social change that include the enlarging of income inequalities, favoured strategies of wealth and capital accumulation, fear of outsiders and the drive for social prestige by affluent residents, while the poor others and 'dangerous' outside world are spatially and socially separated from these absolutely 'secure' and exclusive residential spaces. Moreover, the widespread gated mentality and fear of crime and of others among these wealthy residents have severely negative impacts on the sense of security, neighbourhood cohesion and mutual trust between urban residents.

8.3 Understanding urban segregation from multiple perspectives

Since the 1990s, the rapid increase of gated communities worldwide and the resulting concentration of wealthy groups in enclave urban spaces has drawn particular attention from urban scholars (Low, 2003; Le Goix and Webster, 2008; Borsdorf et al, 2016). For most researchers gated communities are typically considered as spatial congregations of wealthy urban groups in privately governed residential neighbourhoods which display extreme forms of social segregation between the urban rich and poor citizens (Atkinson and Blandy, 2005; Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Glasze et al., 2004). Most early research on segregation caused by gated communities mainly focused on the static residential patterns of different social groups (Van Kempen and Murie, 2009). Although residential segregation is a significant aspect of social segregation, urban researchers have also begun to pay attention to more dynamic patterns of segregation by affluent citizens in their mobility patterns and in networked urban spaces at a broader urban scale (Atkinson and Flint, 2004a; Graham and Marvin, 2002; Urry, 2012) as well as their 'exit' from urban settings (Andreotti et al., 2015; Smithsimon, 2010). In the work presented here, these themes have been pursued further through work on the mobility patterns of wealthy residents and their social networks and engagements with public spaces. It sought to better understand forms of urban segregation and social distance in modern cities from more relational and dynamic perspectives and to do so in relation to everyday or middle-tier Chinese cities. This section focuses on a discussion of three further key themes that emerged in this study: first, modes of travel and the activity spaces of residents inside/outside gated communities to understand the dynamic patterns of segregation; second, ideas of 'partial exit' developed by Andreotti (2015), applied here to examine affluent residents' engagement with local public service to understand their disconnection and 'exit' from local urban environments and society; third, the social networks of residents in gated communities seen from the perspectives of friendship, kinship and neighbourhood relationships in relation to questions of disengagement and disaffiliation (Atkinson, 2006) from the local neighbourhoods and wider cities.

With respect to their modes of transport, this study has shown that wealthy residents in gated communities highly relied on private cars, online car-hailing systems, and

exclusive highways and bus systems in their daily commuting to workplace and entertainment locations, which could be understood as the emerging 'premium networks spaces' (Graham, 2000) in Zhanjiang in recent years. They have used these forms of private transport as orchestrated and shielded modes of mobility to avoid negative things in their urban life, such as derelict areas, poor social groups and dangerous spaces, while freely engaging with more desirable public spaces and private facilities across the city. In addition, the use of everyday or unremarkable forms of attire, the use of private vehicles with fairly 'standard' brands and the use of one-way windscreen to cut visibility from outside meant that wealthy residents could be relatively invisible to other social groups by using these elaborate distancing strategies while still engaging with public spaces. Through the shielded, invisible, and networked mobility of affluent residents between their upscale gated communities and other privileged work and entertainment spaces, contemporary urbanism of Zhanjiang is in many ways no longer a 'real' city of encounters with diverse social groups or one of generally mutual trust in its traditional form. Instead that the city has been more or less replaced by one in which emerging class structures, inequalities and new built forms enable the distancing from or erasure of poor and underprivileged groups from the sight of these exclusive, networked and mobile worlds created and used by affluent urbanites. Moreover, the emergence of exclusive transport systems and private infrastructure (Graham, 2000) raises the concern that the private provision of urban infrastructure in ordinary cities like Zhanjiang may become more common and that the public provision of urban infrastructure may decline further in the future.

In terms of activity space, this study firstly focused on investigating the characteristics of the 'activity space' of affluent residents of gated communities. The research outcomes indicated that these residents are not limited to their residential spaces, and their activities, including their work and recreational spaces, are widely distributed throughout the urban and suburban area. More importantly, most of their activity spaces are private, exclusive and invisible, separating them from traditional public spaces and other social groups. These exclusive urban spaces are purposely constructed so that wealthy residents can constantly move, consume and entertain without the presence of imagined dangerous and unwanted encounters with other

social groups (Bauman, 2000). However, this further exacerbates their segregation from other poor citizens through the 'time-space trajectories' (Atkinson and Flint, 2004a) they occupy. This study then, has specifically examined the activity spaces of the residents living in adjacent poor neighbourhoods in contrast with those living inside gated communities. The results showed that, while poor residents living in the city centre have extensive activity spaces due to the well-developed bus system, poor residents living in the suburban areas had more restricted activity space due to the under-developed public transport systems. For poor people living in suburban areas, lack of access to public transportation has considerably reduced their working opportunities and limits their access to various public services, such as parks, sports facilities and libraries. The 'transport exclusion' of these poor residents has revealed the importance of public transportation in changing residents' working opportunities and life chances. These research outcomes indicated that socio-spatial segregation caused by gated communities not only exists in the gated residential spaces but also is more clearly manifested in the different broader activity spaces of rich and poor citizens in Zhanjiang.

By investigating the engagement with public spaces and services by residents of gated communities, this study sought to go beyond describing their 'activity space' to understand their detailed social interactions and opinions when using public and quasi-public spaces. This study firstly found that most of the public spaces usually used by interviewees were quasi-public spaces, such as shopping malls, restaurants, clubs and theme parks, with clear boundaries and rising levels of surveillance (Sorkin, 1992). In recent years, many vital traditional public spaces and streets in Zhanjiang have become dilapidated and are often replaced by shopping malls, office buildings and cultural complexes where public activities are divided into different mono-functional enclaves (He, 2013) under the strict surveillance of local private security forces (Yip, 2012), signalling the gradual decline of real public spaces. A recent survey in two large cities in China (Wang and Chen, 2018) argued that, although many of the new quasi-public spaces of cities have become less inclusive than before, nevertheless many such spaces rarely possess strongly excluding measures and, to some extent, increase the social interactions between citizens. However, the findings of this study

also showed that the values of middle-class residents of gated communities and their engagements with public spaces have meant they have tended to retreat from genuinely public spaces in Zhanjiang and are not generally willing to interact with other social groups. Their use of shielded mobilities and invisible presence in public spaces have further led to the 'end of public spaces' (Mitchell, 1995, 2003). Contemporary urban spaces in Zhanjiang have become increasingly secure, commodified, controllable and homogeneous (Minton, 2012) and impeded the interactions between different social groups. The increasing construction of these commercial and privileged spaces for economic growth in contemporary cities (Wu, 2015) has exacerbated the fragmentation of urban spaces and exclusion of the poor and more marginalised social groups. What is really needed now is the creation and maintenance of more genuinely public spaces for all citizens to interact across diverse social groups, contributing to building a more inclusive society.

Another contribution made by this study has been to employ the idea of 'partial exit' (Andreotti, 2015), to investigate how middle-class residents in gated communities choose to retreat from the public realms of their cities. This aspect of the research focused on the social networks and uses of vital public services by the affluent as two crucial areas through which to examine their relative disconnection from local contexts. The research outcomes indicate that although wealthy residents have dense social networks and abundant social capital both inside and outside gated communities, their social networks are restricted to wealthy residents (mainly those who also reside in upscale gated communities) and seldom overlap with other social groups. Many among this group preferred using private services and avoided using public services unless the public services showed better qualities, such as education. It was also found that the spatiality of the gated communities played a key role in shaping and influencing the formation of their exclusive social networks (Blokland and Savage, 2008). Living inside gated communities has become the key 'gating threshold' to filter out poorer friends, relatives and citizens who do not share similar socio-economic backgrounds and privileged lifestyles. Therefore, the social networks of the wealthy interviewees in gated communities were highly exclusive and showed varying levels of 'exit' (Andreotti et al., 2015) from local contexts and disaffiliation (Atkinson, 2006) from the wider urban

population. Based on these outcomes, this study proposed a typology for describing the three different types or groups of people in gated communities in relation to their disengagement and disconnection from local urban contexts: local belongers, local exiters, and new elective belongers. Except for those elderly residents (belongers) in gated communities who have not totally withdrawn from the wider public, both the young local residents (exiters) and the new migrants (elective belongers) to the city and gated community tended to have limited contact with their local contexts and largely retreated from the public realm into their upscale gated communities and other exclusive and privileged spaces, which further revealed the underlying segregation and inequality of contemporary Zhanjiang.

As recently suggested by Garrido (2021), the idea of segregation in American sociology is most often related to large-scale spatial concentrations and the isolation of poor residents or people from specific races in one or two parts of the cities. These experiences and models of urban segregation and their social implications are mainly built upon the urban and social contexts of big American cities such as New York (Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991), Chicago (Sampson, 2012) and Los Angeles (Davis, 1996). These parochial models derived from the larger American cities are often applied without sufficient consideration of local contextual features (Jacobs, 2012). Thus, standard models of urban segregation fail to explain the reality of segregation in other American cities, or in the cities of other countries, especially in the developing world (Small, 2008). This is also the case in the research field focused on gated communities. As argued by Pow (2015), current research tends to see the worldwide emergence of gated communities as a 'universally dominating urban form' originating from Los Angeles, which fails to consider the local complexities of meanings of gated communities and how they take shape in different urban contexts. As this study has shown, most of the upscale gated communities in Zhanjiang do not congregate in specific parts of the cities, and they are mixed with or inserted into previously poor or deprived neighbourhoods. In the Chinese context the suburban zones are not simply privileged spaces full of middle-class communities (Baumgartner, 1989) but contain various types of ordinary neighbourhoods. And the poor urban residents are not

concentrated in specific parts of the cities as is the case in some American cities but are widely distributed throughout the whole urban area.

In these particular Chinese urban and social contexts, the standard model of gated communities in Los Angeles cannot fully explain the kinds of urban segregation generated by gated communities in contemporary Zhanjiang. Therefore, this study has paid specific attention to the mobility patterns, activity spaces, engagement with public space and social networks of wealthy residents in gated communities to further understand forms of urban segregation from a multiple, relational and dynamic perspective. The research findings indicate that the secluded and shielded mobilities, invisible/cloaked presence in public spaces, discrimination and stigmatisation of other social groups, exclusive/exclusionary social networks and retreat from local public contexts by these elite urbanites all contribute to complex forms of social segregation and inequality in the Zhanjiang context. From a relational perspective, the congregation of the urban rich in privileged nodal points in modern cities, their exclusive social networks and absence from public and communal urban spaces appear to signify increasing forms of social inequality and segregation and the impoverishing of those without resources and power (Sayer, 2015). To counteract the continuing production of mono-functional commercial areas and spaces of consumption, privileged housing estates, and 'theme park' urban spaces (Sorkin, 1992) to attract affluent people and investment for urban growth (Wu, 2015), policy and planning need programs that might better encourage the social mixing of different income groups in both residential spaces and more cosmopolitan, public and inclusive urban spaces. By applying relational, dynamic and multiple methods for understanding urban segregation and inequality, the research presented here seeks to open up further discussions regarding the urban life of the emerging urban middle and affluent classes of modern Chinese cities.

8.4 Ordinary Chinese cities and comparative analysis

The research field of urban studies has seen a bifurcation between the first and third world cities, in which first world cities are the sites for theoretical production and the

third world are portrayed as sites for developmental intervention (Robinson 2006). This split between first and third world cities has tended to help perpetuate a colonial view in which first world cities innovate while the third world cities follow and imitate (Robinson, 2006). This role of theory has been criticised for its inability to produce an adequate theoretical model and for its influence on policy practice which tend to look West and North for guidance. Robinson (2006) highlights the importance of researching and reimagining cities through comparative urbanism, in which the analysis of third world cities can reshape and complete urban theories derived from first-world cities. These key ideas have formed the basis of the research design of this study from the outset. Contemporary research on gated communities worldwide has mainly relied on case studies from American and European cities (Blakely and Snyder, 1998; Low, 2003), although some research into gated communities has begun to draw experiences from cases from other third-world cities (Atkinson and Blandy, 2005b; Bagaeen and Uduku, 2010; Breetzke et al., 2014). In the urban contexts of China, most studies of gated communities have been conducted in megacities such as Beijing (Giroir, 2003; Wu and Webber, 2004; Zhang et al., 2020; Zhao, 2017), Shanghai (Pow, 2009; Sander, 2016; Wang and Pojani, 2019; Yip, 2012) and Guangzhou (Breitung, 2012; He, 2013; S-M Li et al., 2012). Thus, this study sought to widen the geographical reference previous research (Pow, 2015) and investigate gated communities in an economically underdeveloped middle-tier city Zhanjiang, in order to research the experience of gated communities in the historically, economically and culturally poor and backward areas of more 'ordinary' cities in the Chinese context.

Among the 1.4bn population of China, only around 80m people live in the four mega cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Guangzhou) and 180m in the 15 first-tier cities. This total accounts for less than 20% of the total population (Chinese Statistics Yearbook 2020). Even these simple statistical insights push us to realise how vital it is to offer new research and to investigate gated communities and other urban phenomena in less developed and ordinary cities where the vast majority of Chinese urban residents live. The urban and social contexts of Zhanjiang, as a middle-tier and economically less-developed city, show significant differences from other big cities in China. First, its urbanisation has been less influenced by industrialisation and

financialisation than many other big cities in China, and more than half of its urban residents are still working in primary industries. One consequence of this unique context is that the residents of larger cities' gated communities appear to show less social prejudice and exclusionary viewpoints toward migrant workers from rural areas (Pow, 2009). In present study it appears that local urban residents who live in traditional work-unit compounds and poor urban villages with less social and geographical mobility are more likely to be discriminated against and excluded by residents of gated communities, perhaps as a result of the smaller scale of the city.

Secondly, the lack of industrialisation in the urbanisation process of Zhanjiang has meant that the city's capacity to absorb a fast-growing urban population has been limited (Garrido et al. 2021) To be more specific, in this kind of context, economic growth cannot fully match the scale of urban population growth and in-migrants from rural areas, and insufficient jobs, housing, urban infrastructure and public services cannot fulfil the needs of all urban residents. In such a context the construction of a relatively few upscale gated communities with advanced neighbourhood services sited among informal and derelict urban areas of the city places a new affluent class within the existing fabric of the city. However, rather than transcending social boundaries, the new physical boundaries between different income groups highlights the emergence of successful and superior urban citizens in terms of their housing tenure, income, education and even morality and civility that are inscribed in the physical landscape of the city. Thus, the spatiality of the gated communities has become a critical criterion for distinguishing different social groups in contemporary Zhanjiang.

Thirdly, Zhanjiang is located in the southernmost part of mainland China and the western part of Guangdong Province, the most undeveloped and economically backwards areas since 1980s (Guangdong Yearbook, 2021). This is why many in-moving groups, especially professionals living in gated communities, are prejudiced against local urban residents and call them 'barbarians'. But the poor local urban residents living in the derelict neighbourhoods have played an important role in the physical, social and cultural reproduction of upscale gated communities in Zhanjiang. These three characteristics are some of the crucial differences between Zhanjiang and

other major cities in China, and it is likely that many other poor and lower-class cities also share these characteristics. Investigating and exploring gated communities in less developed and 'ordinary' cities, can further understanding of these emerging privileged urban spaces and open up discussion in broader geographical contexts.

Another key aspect of analysis in this study is the comparison between the gated community in the city centre and that of the suburban area. The discussions presented in this thesis have shown that the different social and urban environments of the city centre and suburban area have generated significant differences in residents' mobility patterns, neighbourhood relationships and motives for gated living. The work here sought to further adopt an international and comparative perspective to reveal the characteristics and uniqueness of the suburban area of Zhanjiang by investigating upscale gated communities. The research on gated communities in America and Western Europe (Blakely and Snyder, 1998; Low, 2003; Webster, 2001), shows that the suburban areas of these countries are often characterised by low-density and car-dependent lifestyles enjoyed by middle-class residents in gated communities seeking to escape from the high-density, derelict, and polluted city centres (Harris and Vorms, 2017). The investigation of newly-built gated communities in suburban areas of megacities in China revealed that many suburban areas of these developed cities had been rebuilt as better-planned and well-equipped 'new towns' (He and Wu, 2005; Ren, 2010). Some studies of the suburban areas of Chinese megacities have shown that there is an increasing preference for suburban living by relatively affluent residents, especially in major cities like Beijing, Guangzhou and Hangzhou (Feng and Zhou, 2005; Wang and Li, 2006; Wu and Webber, 2004).

However, in Zhanjiang the development trajectory in the suburban areas is quite different from that of other countries and indeed, other major cities in China itself. First of all, the suburban areas of Zhanjiang contain high-density residential populations and different types of neighbourhoods, including work-unit compounds, urban villages and newly-built commodity gated communities. The numbers of up-scale gated communities in the suburban areas are relatively small and have been inserted into the poor suburban areas. Secondly, the provision of urban infrastructure, public

services, and public transportation are extremely deficient in the suburban areas of Zhanjiang. This is because the local governments of Zhanjiang do not have the power or resources to cover all the suburban areas with the different forms of urban infrastructure and services needed, and they are now prioritising the city centre before suburban areas. Therefore, many developers of suburban gated communities provide exclusive services, infrastructure and even transportation and management for wealthy homebuyers. Thus, the community services and lifestyles inside gated communities are highly differentiated from those of adjacent neighbourhoods, creating the private and luxurious worlds of middle-class residents. Thirdly, the suburban areas of Zhanjiang are usually described and stigmatised by local residents as poor and derelict urban peripheries, which lack urban infrastructure and are inhabited by poor and uncivilised local residents (or social 'barbarians'). Thus, around 25 per cent of residents of gated communities in the suburban area expressed extremely negative, stigmatising and even antagonistic attitudes towards their poor neighbours. This situation is similar to that of many suburban areas in other underdeveloped cities in China, where the word 'suburb' (*'jiaoqu'*), always has negative connotations (Ren, 2021).

The investigation of the suburban gated community in this study showed quite different outcomes from the one in the city centre. In terms of modes of travel, most residents of the gated community in the suburban area depended more heavily on the use of private cars and the use of other 'premium networks spaces' (Graham and Marvin, 2002) such as private highways and expensive car-hailing services, which exacerbated the social segregation based on the modes of travel. In terms of activity space, most residents of the suburban gated community seldom used public services, infrastructure or spaces outside their neighbourhood and were unwilling to send their children to what they saw as local low-quality schools and hospitals. These wealthy groups also prevented interactions and encounters with residents in poorer areas outside the community, because the residents of these 'other' neighbourhoods were considered poor, lazy, uncivilised and even dangerous. The provision of exclusive and private services, governance, residential environments and even transport systems in the suburban gated community have created a kind of privatopia in which aspirations for social status and ideas of the good life coincide in a specific space (McKenzie, 1994).

The retreat of the in-moving middle classes into privileged and enclosed gated communities has worsened existing forms of social segregation, creating clearly-demarcated class divisions in the suburban areas of Zhanjiang. The spatial proximity of these wealthy groups to other local residents did not bring about social interaction, forms of inter-group neighbouring (Wang et al., 2016) or social cohesion: rather they highlighted the severity of the socio-spatial inequality and segregation of the contemporary 'dual suburb' of Zhanjiang.

Through these developments in suburban areas, as well as in the city centre of Zhanjiang, and in the routines, values and landscapes of the new middle-class residents, the city has been made more enjoyable and suitable for an emerging new class of the affluent during the recent transitions and economic expansion experienced by Chinese society. Here middle-class groups can carefully orchestrate their contacts with others, retreat into fortified and privileged enclaves and invisibility in public spaces unfettered by traditional social conventions and built environments. The increasing construction and provision of premium infrastructure, the upscale residential landscapes of gated communities, and other privileged enclaves like hotels, restaurants, theme parks and shopping malls, all pave the way for the self-protection, disaffiliation and segregation of the emerging urban rich from other social groups and enables their colonisation of the city (Atkinson, 2006; Butler, 2007). Wu (2015), The rationale of urban planning in post-reform China, including Zhanjiang in this case, is for growth (Wu, 2015), in which place-branding, enhancing economic competitiveness and attracting capital investment are the prime objectives. Under these entrepreneurial transformations of urban planning and development (Shen and Wu, 2012; Wu, 2003), the social needs, such as housing, transport and working opportunities of poor urbanites are further eclipsed by the economic growth, construction of up-scale gated communities and redevelopment of new CBDs and shopping complex. In this sense, Zhanjiang, even as an ordinary city in China, shares many similarities with major economic centres in which design and development features are socially and spatially structured to cater for urban elites with privileged status, and economic and political power (Atkinson, 2021). Atkinson (2021) A 'Faustian pact' (Atkinson, 2021) describes the urban circumstances in which the success of these wealthy groups and their capital

investment is bought at the price of the exclusion and exploitation of the urban poor more generally. In the present study, these conditions are reflected in the social lives, spaces, and existence of struggling poor urban residents who are increasingly stigmatised, segregated and excluded from the lives of wealthier groups in urban gated communities. In the future, more open, just, and inclusive modes of urban planning and development will be needed to bring greater equality, cohesion and co-presence for all citizens.

8.5 Limitations and further research

Arguably a key limitation of this study relates to data resources. The time spent in the research fieldwork was intensive, for around six months, but was then followed by the Covid-19 pandemic breaking out in China. During the periods of fieldwork, more than 60 interviews were conducted with residents of the two selected gated communities and adjacent poor neighbourhoods, as well as other key informants. The over 30 interviews with residents of the gated communities collected sufficient information for this study, but the interviews with other types of interviewees, such as local officials, security guards and taxi drivers could perhaps have been further expanded to gain more data.

The comparison of the activity spaces of residents inside gated communities and those in adjacent ordinary neighbourhoods involved interviewing about ten residents from the adjacent ordinary neighbourhoods, which might be considered to represent only a limited picture of their activity spaces and engagements. However, news reports in China about the mobility trajectories of residents infected with Covid-19, provided additional details and highlighted the difficulties of creating activity spaces, especially for poorer and underprivileged citizens, which helped me to understand the economic, social and institutional constraints faced by them. This comparison of mobility patterns between rich and poor people living in the same regions and their distinct engagements with public spaces could be further explored and expanded in the future.

The second key limitation of the work is in regard to methodological issues encountered during the data collection stage. In the research design stage, the study prepared to use 'time-space diaries' (Sheller and Urry, 2006) and 'walking interviews' (Jones et al., 2008) to find out more about interviewees' mobilities in the city and how they engaged with public spaces and built up their sense of the place at the urban scale. These detailed records of people's movements and practices provide better understanding of their inclusion and exclusion, mobility and immobility in their daily lives. In addition, 'walking interviews' can take interviewees out of the 'safe' environment of the interview room to allow the spaces and act of walking to provide data in productive and unexpected ways (Jones et al., 2008). However, when conducting interviews during the fieldwork, only a small section of the interviewees accepted or allowed the use of this technique. One reason for this is that these methods may take more time and effort than the formal interview. The other reason may be that people are unwilling to reveal too much private information to others, in line with their motives for the private lifestyle in gated communities. From the limited data from the 'time-space diaries' and 'walking interviews', residents presented emotional and personal feelings and explanations about the urban spaces and their activities. Thus, future research on mobility and activity spaces could pay more attention to these innovative approaches for understanding engagement with urban spaces and underlying socio-spatial inequalities from different perspectives.

Lastly, this study has investigated emerging urban elites living in upscale gated communities in terms of their mobility, social networks and wider engagements with public spaces at the urban scale. Instead of researching all types of neighbourhoods with physical gates and walls in Chinese cities, this research mainly focused on elite communities where lifestyle, prestige and security rank paramount in these privileged residential landscapes (Pow, 2009), responding to the global literature which sees gated communities as the congregation of emerging wealthy groups. This is only the starting point of researching these wealthy groups in the Chinese society and understanding the underlying social segregation and inequality, because there are members of the urban rich and super-rich who live in other forms of housing estates, such as villas and single-house buildings, or city high-rise penthouses(Forrest et al.,

2017) who were not fully encompassed by this study. Increasingly, traditional common notions of poverty, exclusion, stigmatisation and concentration in urban studies are being reassessed in the light of new forms of the social liberation, shielded mobility, social prestige and disaffiliation of wealthy groups attached through their consumption of privileged housing, nodal neighbourhood spaces and exclusive networks (Atkinson and Ho, 2020). Research on the concealment and segregation of these rich urban residents is pressing and urgent because they have the power and resources to shape the development and destiny of cities and, therefore, significantly influence other members of society in terms of aspiration as well as feelings of injustice and resentment (Atkinson, 2022). With the introduction of various neoliberal and market-oriented economic and political changes (He and Wu, 2009) and the rapid increase of income inequality in Chinese cities (Wang et al., 2020), more research on wealthy urban groups, such as middle- and upper-middle class, super-rich, and political elites, is necessary to understand their impacts and influences on society. Such influences include socio-spatial segregation and inequality; colonisation of land and resources in the cities; place attachments (Lu et al., 2018); services provision (Hendrikx and Wissink, 2017); suburban land development (Zhao and Zhang, 2018); adjacent public spaces (Kostenwein, 2021); and gentrification and redevelopment projects (He and Wu, 2009) in future research devoted to the Chinese urban context.

8.6 Conclusion

At the time of writing this dissertation (in 2022), the Covid-19 pandemic has become resurgent in many cities in China, and the large-scale lockdowns in cities such as Zhanjiang, Shanghai and Beijing have had profound impacts on all urbanites, from entrepreneurs to labourers, from governmental personnel to ordinary citizens and from the rich to poor. During this difficult period, unemployed citizens, renters, migrant workers and other poor social groups are bearing the brunt of the economic impact and social cost of the pandemic. Compared with residents in gated communities, those living in poor, crowded and derelict rental housing without proper community management or social resources are more vulnerable to virus infection and have more difficulty accessing material support from local governments. It is exactly these people without stable jobs, wealth accumulation or resources who are least able to bear the

social and economic cost of the epidemic: exclusion and inequality have increased their suffering. This pandemic has unveiled and highlighted the deep-rooted social inequality and precarity in all affected societies, which has been largely ignored in the rapid economic expansion experienced in Chinese cities over the past 30 years. This research was conducted in the midst of this upheaval to reveal and call for the restoration and reduction of social harms, division, segregation and inequality in contemporary Chinese cities. During the economic, social and urban transition in Chinese cities and societies, what we require is a more critical urban sociology capable of investigating and resolving the existence and root causes of various forms of segregation and inequality in city settings. As a Chinese social and urban researcher, I hope to use this work as a starting point to refine my skills and methods in understanding and revealing this increasingly unequal and divided world and contributing to building a more just and harmonious society for all.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Details of research participants

Number	Gender	Surname	Age	Occupation	Notes
01	M	Lin	30-40	Bank manager	Resident in the Central GC
02	F	Liu	20-30	Doctor	Resident in the Central GC
03	F	Yuan	20-30	Accountant	Resident in the Central GC
04	F	Lin	30-40	Manual worker	Resident in work-unit compound
05	F	Zhu	40-50	Retiree	Resident in work-unit compound
06	F	Wang	40-50	International trader	Resident in Central GC, own multiple houses in Zhanjiang, Guangzhou and London
07	F	Li	40-50	Retiree	Resident in the Central GC
08	M	Zhao	50-60	Retiree	Resident in the Central GC
09	F	Chen	30-40	Manual worker	Resident in work-unit compound
10	M	Zhang	40-50	Government official	A government official of the security Department in the Street Office

11	M	Gao	20-30	Programmer	Resident in Central GC
12	F	Wang	20-30	Manager	A young manager in the management company of Central GC
13	M	Li	30-40	Chairman of a real estate company	A rich businessman with multiple houses and villas in Zhanjiang
14	M	Wang	30-40	Manager in a real estate company	His company is a state-own real estate company
15	M	Chen	30-40	Manager in a biscuit factory	Resident in the Suburban GC
16	M	Chen	30-40	Waiter in a restaurant	Resident in the urban village
17	M	Li	30-40	Owner of a car repairing company	Resident in the Suburban GC
18	M	Chen	20-30	Teacher	Resident in the Suburban GC
19	F	Tang	50-60	Retiree	Resident in the Central GC
20	M	Zhang	20-30	Teacher	Resident in the Suburban GC
21	F	Zhang	40-50	Retiree	Resident in the Central GC, a representative of the HOA
22	F	Wu	50-60	Retiree	Resident in the Central GC

23	F	Xie	20-30	Manager	Resident in the Central GC
24	M	Huang	20-30	Staff in management company	Resident in work-unit compound
25	M	Tong	50-60	Retiree	Resident in the Central GC
26	M	Zhai	40-50	unemployed	Resident in the Central GC, replacement household
27	M	Chen	40-50	unemployed	Resident in the Central GC, replacement household
28	M	Tan	30-40	Taxi driver	Have been driving taxi for 5 years
29	M	Li	20-30	Salesman	Salesman in a newly-built gated community
30	M	Zhen	20-30	Salesman	Salesman in a gated community near seaside
31	F	Deng	40-50	Manager of car company	Resident in the Suburban GC
32	M	Dong	30-40	Driver	An online car-hailing driver
33	F	Yang	20-30	Teacher	Teacher in a private nursery
34	M	Liang	30-40	Security guard	The manager of the security personnel in the Central GC

35	F	Chen	20-30	Businesswomen	Resident in the Central GC
36	M	Long	20-30	Governmental official	Resident in the Central GC
37	M	Zhao	30-40	Sales manager	Resident in the Central GC
38	F	Lin	20-30	Teacher	Resident in the Suburban GC
39	M	Peng	30-40	Governmental official	Resident in the Central GC
40	F	Yu	30-40	Teacher	Resident in the Suburban GC
41	M	Lao	30-40	Doctor	Resident in the Suburban GC
42	M	Wu	20-30	Governmental official	Resident in the Suburban GC, working in the Land Management office
43	M	Zhang	50-60	Retiree	Resident in the Suburban GC
44	M	Chen	30-40	Taxi driver	Have been driving taxi for over 10 years
45	M	Huang	30-40	Businessman	Resident in the Central GC
46	F	Chen	40-50	Retiree	Resident in the Suburban GC, who likes traveling around the city
47	F	Pan	50-60	Dancing teacher	Resident in the Central GC

48	M	Zheng	60-70	Retiree	Resident in the Central GC
49	M	Wu	20-30	Security guard	Resident in an urban village
50	M	Zhou	50-60	Retiree	Resident in a work-unit compound
51	F	Huang	30-40	Governmental official	Director in the Residential Committee
52	F	Tong	30-40	Teacher	Resident in the Suburban GC, initiator of the Reading Club
53	M	Liang	20-30	Governmental official	Resident in the Suburban GC
54	F	Zhang	40-50	Manager	Resident in the Central GC
55	F	Li	30-40	Accountant	Resident in the Central GC
56	M	Wang	20-30	Governmental official	Resident in the Suburban GC

Appendix 2: Participant information sheet

1. Research Project Title:

Gated communities in China.

2. Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

3. What is the project's purpose?

This is my 4-year PhD project in University of Sheffield. Significant economic reforms and social change in China over the last few decades have been accompanied by striking transformations in the urban environment. The emergence of Gated communities (GCs), or 'enclosed residential enclaves', has been a key element of such changes. Many GCs have proliferated at an astonishing rate and now dominate in many cities across the country. This research seeks to explore this changing urban context in which income and class, built form and changing social aspirations are re-shaping city life in China today.

This work seeks to engage residents in gated residential developments in a particular Chinese city. Its primary aim is to explore and understand the question of why this kind of fortified urban space has come to dominate new urban landscapes, how these physical housing forms come to influence distinctive social-spatial relationships in cities and what these say about desires for safety and status in Chinese urban society today.

4. Why have I been chosen?

30 residents who live inside/outside these two chosen gated communities will be the participants in this research.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. You do not have to give a reason. If you wish to withdraw from the research, please contact Yixin Liu at any time by email 464971629@qq.com.

6. What will happen to me if I take part? What do I have to do?

If you take part in this research, you will be interviewed by the researcher and recorded with your permission. You need to answer questions related to your motives for living in gated communities, your life experience and relationships inside and outside gated communities.

7. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

When talking about the safety issues, you can choose to stop if there is psychological harm occur in the interview process. You can also choose to reject those questions that may reveal your privacy.

8. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There is no intended benefit to the participant from taking part in the project.

9. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that we collect about you during the research will be kept strictly confidential and will only be accessible to members of the research team. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications unless you have given your explicit consent for this.

10. What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?

According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis we are applying in order to process your personal data is that 'processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest' (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the University's Privacy Notice, see website here: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general>.

11. What will happen to the data collected, and the results of the research project?

Your personal data will be collected by the researcher and shared with his supervisor team and all the data will be anonymous. Due to the nature of this research, it is very likely that other researchers may find the data collected to be useful in answering future

research questions. We will ask for your explicit consent for your data to be shared in this way.

12. Who is organising and funding the research?

The University of Sheffield is organising this research.

13. Who is the Data Controller?

The Data Controller is University of Sheffield.

14. Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield's Ethics Review Procedure, as administered by Urban Studies and Planning department.

15. What if something goes wrong and I wish to complain about the research?

If you wish to complain about the research, you can contact my supervisor Rowland Atkinson by email rowland.atkinson@sheffield.ac.uk.

16. Contact for further information

The email of Yixin Liu and Rowland Atkinson is mentioned above, and you can also contact Yixin Liu by Mobile Phone 18475904270.

You will be given a copy of the information sheet and a signed consent form to keep.

Thank you for your participation in this research

Appendix 3: NVivo node list

Motives for gated living

Neighbourhood services

Investment values

Lifestyle and social status

privacy

Security and safety

Investment for children

Neighbourhood life

Neighbourhood relationships

Neighbourhood activities/participation

Neighbourhood services

Neighbourhood life changes after moving in

Attitudes toward other social groups

Neighbourhood governance

Homeowner Association

Management company

Residential committee

Street Office

Third party's involvement

Social control in neighbourhood

Mobility and activity space

Mode of travel

Activity space

Transport exclusion in the city

Emotional geographies of the city

Engagement with/interactions in public space

Attitudes toward Zhanjiang city

Attitudes toward public life and other citizens

Social networks inside/outside gated communities

Relationships with other neighbours (inside/outside)

Relationships with family members (inside/outside)

Relationships with friends (inside/outside)

Use of public services

Use of public services in the city

Use of private services in the city

Preferences for using public/private services