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

Rebecca. L. H. Chiu
Department of Urban Planning and Design
The University of Hong Kong
rlhchiu@hkucc.hku.hk

Aim

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

Structure of presentation

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- **The conceptual issues**
- **The scale of gated communities in Guangzhou**
- **The causes**
- **The urban sustainability implications**

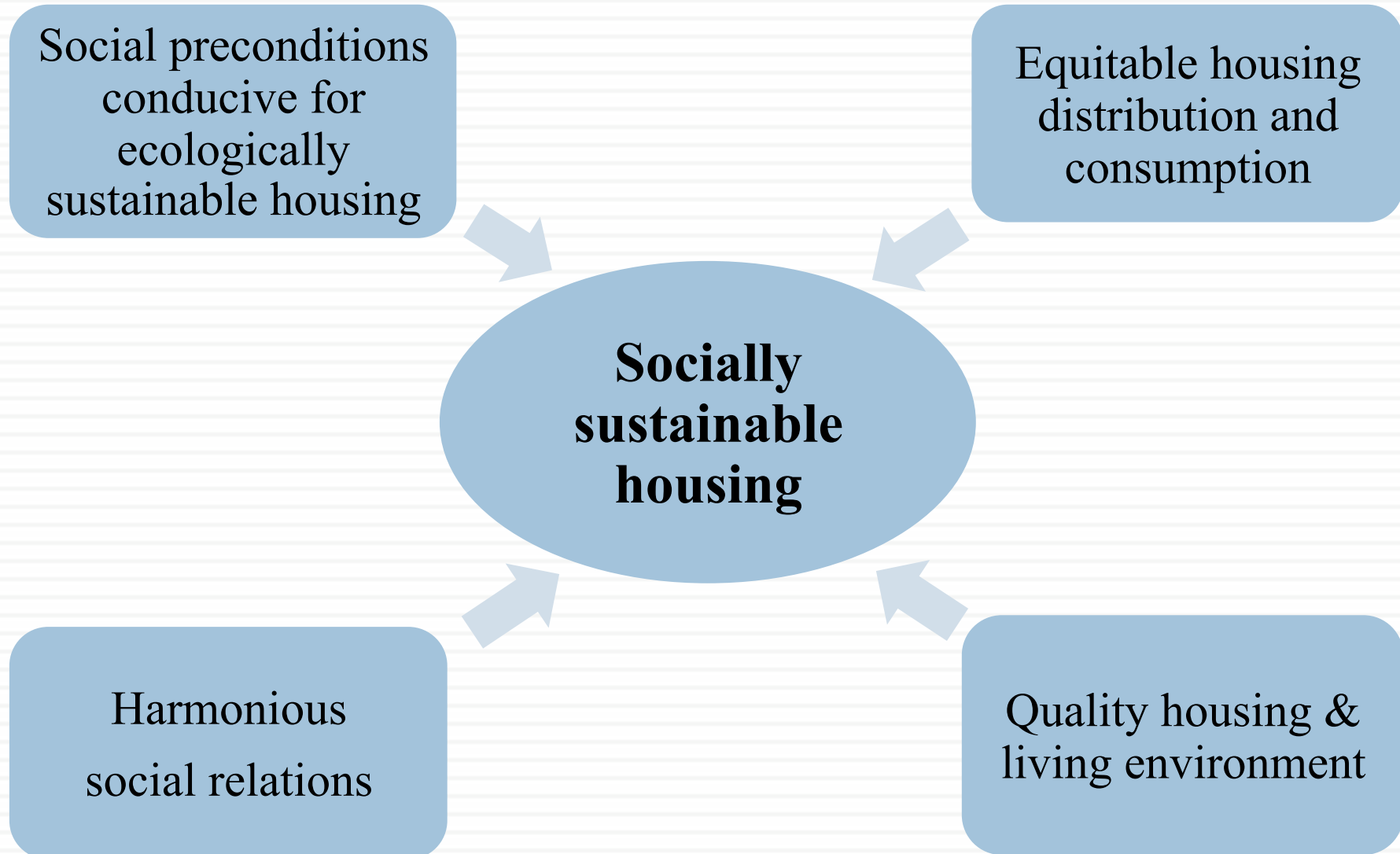
The conceptual issues

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

Figure 1. Social sustainability of housing

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The conceptual issues

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

Location of Guangzhou



Gated community development in Guangzhou

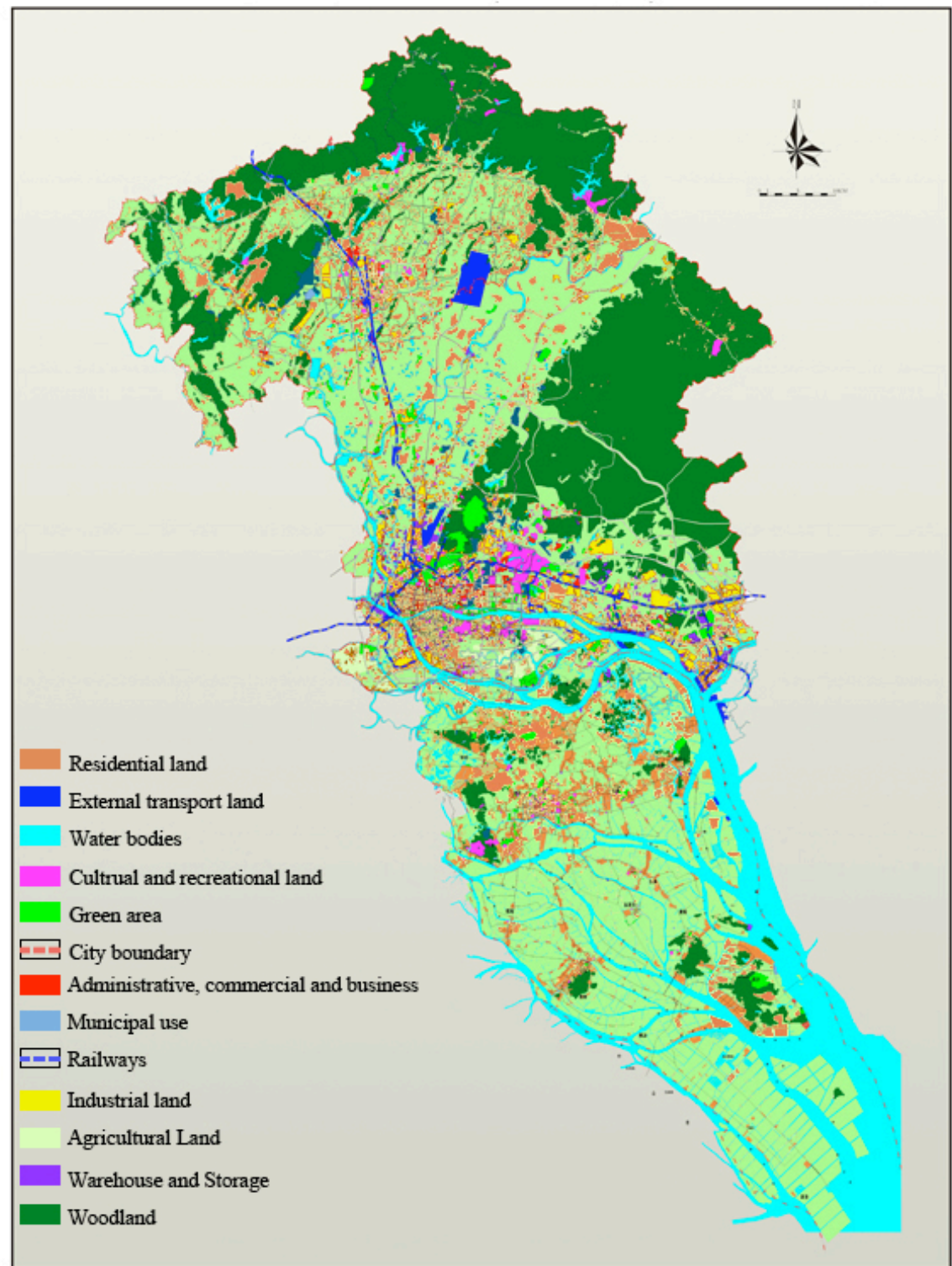
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Table 1. Housing development in Guangzhou

| | Residential floor space (1 000 sq.m) | Gross residential space/person (sq.m) | Living space/person (sq.m) |
|--------------------------|---|--|-------------------------------|
| 1990 | 39 743 | 13.7 | 8.0 |
| 2000 | 79 521 | 22.7 | 13.1 |
| 2007 | 180 295 | 35.9 | 20.0 |
| Growth rate 1990-2007 | 454% | 262% | 250% |

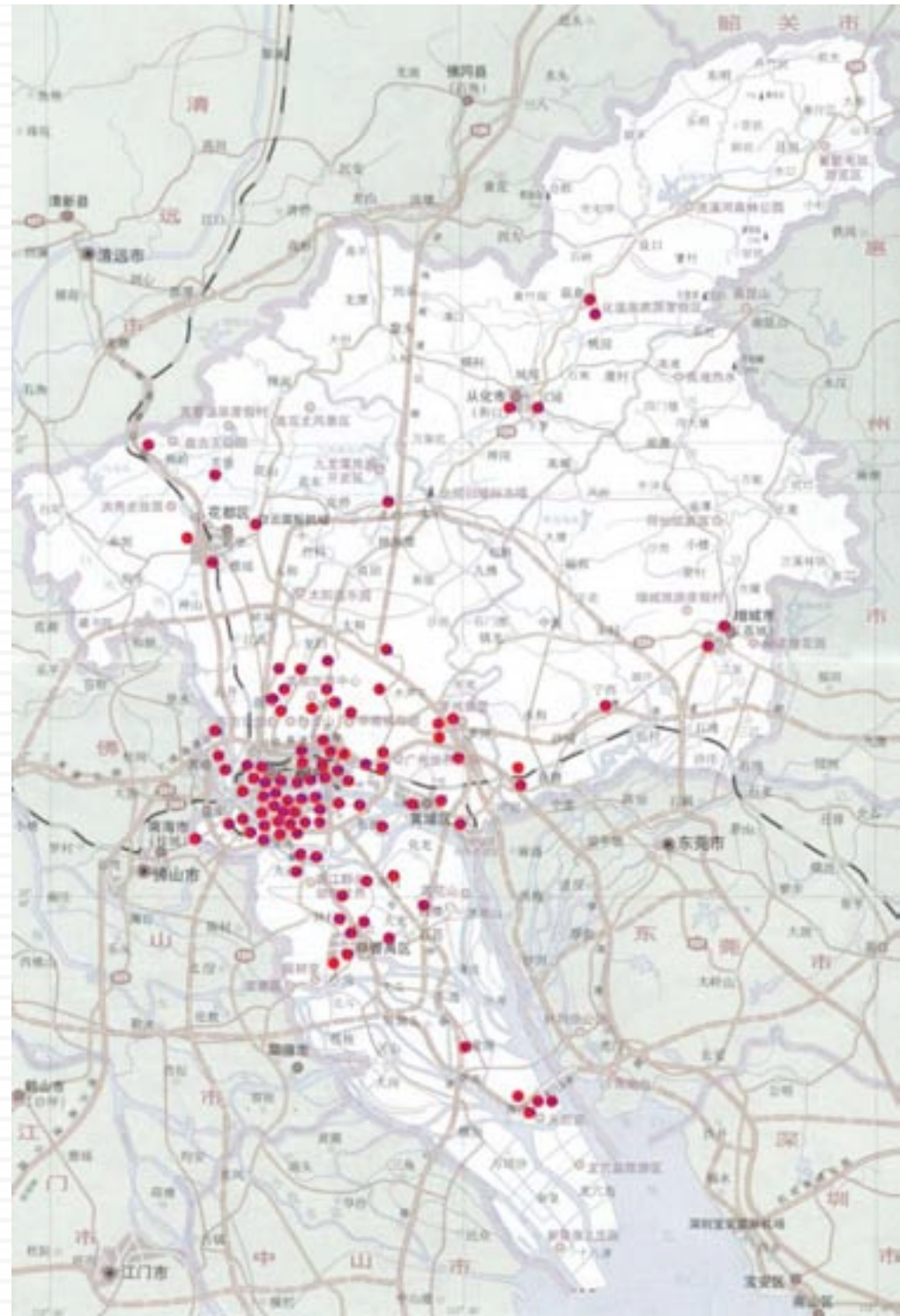
Note: Registered population was applied in calculation. Living space is equal to internal floor space.

Figure 2. Current land use in Guangzhou



Source: Bureau of Urban Planning of Guangzhou Municipality (2007).

Figure 3. 100 popular housing projects in Guangzhou



Housing development in Guangzhou

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Gated community development in Guangzhou

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Gated community development in Guangzhou

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Gated community development in Guangzhou

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Gated community development in Guangzhou

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Gated community development in Guangzhou

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Gated community development in Guangzhou

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Clifford Garden

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Why sprawling gated communities

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

Why sprawling gated communities

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

Why sprawling gated communities

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

Why sprawling gated communities

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

Why sprawling gated communities

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

Sustainability implications

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□ Choice of housing sites

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

Sustainability implications

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

Gated community in Guangzhou

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Outside Clifford Garden



Clifford Garden

Gated community in Guangzhou

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Outside Guangdi Garden



Guangdi Garden

Villages in Guangzhou

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Sustainability implications

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- **Internal planning and design**
 - **Large projects (e.g. Clifford Garden of 4.33 sq km) provide a full range of facilities – opportunities for community building**
 - **Small projects – facilities and community building are minimal**
 - **Boasting an exotic lifestyle of the upper-middle class**

Guangzhou Helen Bergh



Phoenix City Court

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Baoli City Garden

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Sustainability implications

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- **Overall, an undesirable urban development process from the sustainability perspective.**

Thank you !