

AcE-Bs2014Seoul  
Asian Conference on Environment-Behaviour Studies  
Chung-Ang University, Seoul, S. Korea, 25-27 August 2014  
*"Environmental Settings in the Era of Urban Regeneration"*

## How to Rebuild a Strong Social Network in New Communities of China?

Qing Yin<sup>\*</sup>, Ryuzo Ohnoa

*Department of Built Environment, Tokyo Institute of Technology, Midori-ku, Yokohama, Japan*

---

### Abstract

Evidences suggested social network in newly developed communities in China has become weaker than old ones. One feasible solution of this problem is promoting outdoor activities through environment modification. The relationships between environmental factors and outdoor activities are the major concerns of this research. This paper developed a basic social-ecological model to explain the mechanism of outdoor activity. An intensive survey was carried out to examine how environmental factors affect outdoor activities. Finally 7668 users' activity data were obtained by observation. The result suggested that certain physical environment factors are linked to outdoor activities in China.

© 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of Centre for Environment-Behaviour Studies (cE-Bs), Faculty of Architecture, Planning & Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Outdoor activity; physical environment; residential community; social network

---

### 1. Introduction

Until 1998, most urban residents in China lived in housing provided by the government organizations that employed them. Because workers from the same organization usually lived together in a community, social interactions were inherently strong. However, residential communities have changed drastically since the Chinese government initiated a commodity housing policy in 1998. Different with old neighborhoods, most new communities are developed by commercial companies. Although newly developed communities have improved physical attributes, such as more sophisticated building and open

---

<sup>\*</sup> Corresponding author. Tel.: +81-45-924-5613; fax: +81-45-924-5492.  
E-mail address: [iiiixiyiyi@gmail.com](mailto:iiiixiyiyi@gmail.com).

space designs, social interactions have become weaker due to increased diversity and unfamiliarity with neighbors. A famous Chinese research company named Horizon published a report that suggested social interactions among neighbors in new communities are not as strong as old ones (Yan, 2010). This problem has been widely aware by Chinese citizens. Hence, a serious issue in China is how to rebuild a strong social network in new communities.

A feasible solution is promoting people's activities through environment modification. There is increasing interest in the role that physical environment plays in promoting activities (Abd-Latif et al., 2012). Several pathways have been proposed to explain the significance of the physical environment in people's activities (Zhang & Li, 2011). For example, many researchers have argued that walkable environment supports certain outdoor activities such as walking, exercising, etc. (Alfonzo, 2005; Frank et al., 2006; Shamsuddin, Hassan, & Bilyamin, 2012). Some significant environmental factors related to walking have been discussed such as accessibility, safety, comfort, and so on (Alfonzo, 2005). However, most of the previous researches focus on certain action. Research which sees residents' activities as a whole, and link them with environmental factors through grouping similar activities still remain in the early stages.

In this paper, we analyze outdoor activities from a macro scale. A new way is proposed to categorize outdoor activities concerning environment involvement. An operational social-ecological model was developed to explain the mechanism of outdoor activity needs that synthesized what is known about the relations between environment and activity, and useful instruments such as tools of behavioral mapping, and SOPARC (System for observing play and recreation in communities, McKenzie & Cohen, 2006). Effects of environmental factors are examined based on the results of an intensive field survey in Tianjin. A total of 7668 users' activity data was obtained by observation. This paper aims to explore the relationships between significant environmental factors and outdoor activities, and point a direction for improving community social network in China.

## **2. Materials**

### *2.1. Definition of outdoor activities*

Although there is no definition of "activity" that is universally agreed upon by social scientists, several researchers defined their activities in terms of research needs. For instance, one of widely concerned activities is physical activity. Several researchers emphasized the positive action of physical activity on the health problems such as obesity, psychological illness, etc. (Carlier, Delevoye-Turrell, & Dione, 2014). They defined physical activity from the view of physical intensity, and activities such as social activities with low physical intensity have been neglected. Since our ultimate goal is improving community social network, the activities determined in this paper should be associated with community social life.

When it comes to community social life, public open space may be mentioned for its positive contribution to quality of life (Nasution, & Zahrah, 2012). Then activities occur in community's public open space may be associated with community social life. We use outdoor activities to summarize them. 1971, Jan Gehl indicated outdoor activities influence the livability of city or residential area in his book named *Life between Buildings: Using Public Space*. It suggested that outdoor activities positively affect community social life. Hence outdoor activities are determined as our object of this research, which may indicate social network. Although Jan Gehl did not give a clear statement of the definition of outdoor activity, he indicated that outdoor activities take place in the exterior environment. Most of the related studies do not mention definition of outdoor activities, they may see it as a common sense. In this paper

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1112026>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1112026>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)