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*The Impact of Urban Fabric and Ownership on Urban Life in Retail Areas: The  
Everyday (Urban) Life in Yongqing Fang, China*

Modern large-scale urban fabric and privatisation have often been attributed to the decline of public life, prompting calls for protecting traditional small-scale fabrics and opposing privatisation. However, literature review and fieldtrips in Asian cities raise two concerns: 1) urban life in different urban fabrics may not always align with existing claims, 2) the role of ownership is somehow overlooked and misinterpreted in the relevant literature. Therefore, this study re-examines how urban fabric and ownership impact urban life, building on an ethnography conducted in Yongqing Fang, Guangzhou, China, where small-scale urban fabric is preserved while ownership has been reformed during urban renewal.

Employing a qualitative and triangulated approach combining archival research, observations, interviews, process typology, grounded theory and narrative, this study finds that the impact of urban fabric and ownership on urban life is rooted in both history and everyday life: historically, 1) ownership shaped urban fabric, laying the foundation for the urban life today; in everyday life 2) urban fabric affects users differently depending on ownership types; 3) the compactness of urban fabric affects the degree of juxtaposition; 4) different ownership types lead to different perceptions and behaviours. Together, the heterogeneity of ownership structure and the juxtaposition brought about by urban fabric stimulate both conflict and cooperation, contributing to coexistence in everyday urban life.

This study provides a conceptual framework for understanding the roles of urban fabric and ownership in urban life, and highlights the significance of complexity in maintaining urban vibrancy. It hopes to better inform policymakers, planners, developers and all concerned in shaping contentious yet vibrant cities.