

TRACK 09: Planning for Fair, Plural, and Welcoming Cities

Study on Youth Friendly Urban Renewal Strategies from an Inclusive Perspective

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Abstract: With the acceleration of global urbanisation, urban renewal has gradually received attention as a key means to improve urban quality of life and optimise spatial resource allocation. However, the traditional urban renewal model focuses more on land use, construction land development intensity, and other aspects, ignoring the needs of different groups of people. According to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2021, the domestic youth population in China is about 448 million, accounting for about one-third of the total population. This group is an important component of cities and a key part of the city's future development. Currently, youth in urban life face problems such as the lack of urban identity, undersupply of services, and poor quality of living space. Therefore, this study takes an inclusive perspective as the entry point, taking Expo A area of Pudong New Area in Shanghai, China, as an example. Firstly, a literature review, questionnaire survey, and other methods were used to investigate the full needs of young people for public spaces. The research results found that the needs of young people for urban public spaces are mainly reflected in diversity, comfort, and publicness, which mainly reflect their needs for cultural, fitness, social and other public spaces. Afterwards, targeted and actionable youth-friendly city renewal strategies are proposed in terms of spatial optimisation, facility configuration, and business upgrading in order to enhance the sense of security, belonging, and experience of young people. It is not only beneficial for solving various challenges faced by youth in urban renewal, but it also provides feasible solutions for the sustainable development of cities and provides new ideas and methods for future urban planning and urban renewal.

Keywords: Urban Renewal; Youth; Inclusive; Public Space

1. Introduction

In contemporary society, urban renewal has become a key issue in the global urbanisation process. With the rapid changes in economy, society, and technology, urban environments need to constantly adapt to new challenges and demands. Especially for young people, they play an increasingly important role in the cultural, economic, and social activities of cities. However, the traditional urban renewal model focuses more on land use, construction land development intensity, and other aspects, ignoring the needs of different groups of people. According to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2021, the domestic youth population in China is about 448 million, accounting for about one-third of the total population. This group is not only an important component of cities but also a key force for their future development. The proportion of young people in cities, their vitality, innovation ability, and other aspects provide strong support for the sustainable development of cities.

According to the definition of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, youth-friendly cities refer to cities that carefully consider the needs and rights of young people in policy formulation, planning, and service provision and support their comprehensive development. These types of cities typically have the following characteristics: providing affordable housing, abundant education and employment opportunities, broad social and cultural participation channels, and a safe and healthy living environment. Youth-friendly cities also emphasise the participation of young people in urban decision-making processes, ensuring that their voices are heard in urban development. However, young people often face various challenges in enjoying urban life, such as a low sense of urban identity, insufficient service supply, and poor quality of living space. These issues prompt us to examine urban renewal strategies from a more inclusive perspective, provide a better environment for young people, and ensure that their needs and rights are fully considered.

This study focuses on the exploration of youth-friendly city renewal strategies from an inclusive perspective. Specifically, the study will analyse how existing urban renewal strategies affect young people and explore how innovation in policies and practices can promote the comprehensive friendliness of urban environments and the comprehensive development of youth. This includes evaluating the effectiveness of existing policies, identifying existing issues, and proposing improvement strategies. Through this approach, research not only hopes to provide practical suggestions for urban planners and policymakers but also contributes new perspectives and knowledge to theoretical research. In summary, the purpose of this study is to enhance the construction of youth-friendly cities through urban renewal strategies. This research is not only innovative in theory but also has guiding significance for practice. It is expected to contribute to promoting the sustainable development of global cities.

2. Research on Youth Friendly Cities

The youth-friendly city value the special needs and potential of young people and promote their comprehensive development through a series of methods. In the context of rapid globalisation and urbanization, understanding and implementing strategies for youth-friendly cities has become an important issue in urban planning and policymaking and is conducive to enhancing

the vitality of cities (Della Spina, L., 2019). This article provides an overview of the progress, international cases, and future research directions related to youth-friendly cities.

2.1 Research Progress

Regional competitiveness has become a key factor in achieving sustainable development goals in various research contexts (Cogswell, C., 2018). Sustainable competitiveness is described as determining the productivity level of a region, and young people are the key group to enhance regional core competitiveness. From the practice of urban areas in Europe and America, it can be seen that in the process of forming youth-friendly cities, local governments pay more attention to the needs of young people (Hailu Demeke, Y., 2022), provide diverse ways of participation for young people (Rojas, 2022), accommodate youth culture and activity venues that are conducive to enhancing youth value (Carmona, 2019), provide comfortable transportation environments, and provide facilities preferred by young people (Rigolon, 2018). At the same time, some scholars believe that due to the different geographical locations and economic and cultural characteristics of different regions, the number of people attracted varies, leading to different demands and causing differences in spatial supply, transportation organization, and public facility supply in urban areas (Latham, A, 2019). Understanding the perspectives of different groups of people and finding ways to involve them in urban development is an important process of urban renewal (Konsti Laakso, 2018). Through inclusive urban renewal methods, meet the needs of young people and increase the fair utilisation of urban space (Cole, 2017).

2.2 International Cases

Different countries and cities have demonstrated diverse practices in implementing youth-friendly strategies. For example, D-Street Lawn is a temporary preparation project for the massive expansion of the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center (BCEC) by the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority (MCCA). Before the renovation, D Street was a desolate and underutilised space composed of vacant land, ageing industrial buildings, and parking lots. The Sasaki design team and representatives from the surrounding community and MCCA conceived and constructed a flexible and vibrant temporary urban space - the D Street Lawn as the leading public space for D Street. The ultimate goal of D Street Lawn is to create a vibrant and innovative urban area to support the future expansion of BCEC and the vitality of surrounding communities.

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Figure 1. Young people engage in activities during the day (left) and at night (right) on the D Street (Source:https://www.douban.com/note/700740078/?_j=5934836XNBK1vY)

Nagoya Juya Datong Park takes outdoor sports loved by young people as the starting point, upgrades the park into an urban outdoor centre, and creates a commercial complex that integrates outdoor camping, dining, indoor camping, and product exhibition and sales functions. Young people can see the application scenarios of products displayed here and experience various themed activities in the venue, including outdoor sports, picnics, camping, reading, rest, and other activities that embrace green nature. These cases provide practical experience in successfully implementing youth-friendly city renewal plans.

3. Youth-friendly Urban Renewal Strategy

3.1 Research Area

The research base is located in the northern part of Zhoujiadu Street in Pudong New Area, between the two core areas of Huangpu Riverside: the Bund Lujiazui North Bund core area and Expo Qiantan Xuhui Riverside. Formerly the A-zone of the 2010 Shanghai World Expo Park. The research base starts from the Huangpu River in the north, extends to Xueye Road in the south, faces Shangnan Road in the west, and ends at Bailianjing in the east, covering an area of 85.54 hectares. The base has high-quality riverside resources, high-level cultural facilities, high-density corporate headquarters, and a high-level youth group.

3.2 Demand for Young and Middle-Aged People in The Area

Taking Expo Area A in Pudong New Area, Shanghai, China, as an example, literature review and questionnaire surveys were first used to fully investigate the needs of young people for urban public spaces. During our on-site investigation, we found that the needs of young people for urban public spaces are mainly reflected in diversity, comfort, and publicness, which mainly reflect their needs for cultural, fitness, and social spaces(Figure 2).



Figure 2. Analysis of the proportion of youth activity groups (Source: author's elaboration)

3.3 Current Problems

Based on current research findings, most of the public core spaces within the base have problems with closed interfaces, low quality, and lack of design. The youth group stays in the public spaces for a relatively short period of time, mostly through pedestrian flow. At the same time, we have found that the space and functions of the business functional areas lack urbanity, and are not attractive to diverse pedestrian flows and activities(Figure 3).



Figure 3. Existing problems in the current situation of the base (Source: author's elaboration)

3.4 Planning Concept

3.4.1 For Public Buildings

Urban-level public facilities, World Expo cultural landmark buildings, with high venue awareness. Local external services are at the bottom level but lack display and scale effects. The main building and celebration square has a huge volume, easily creating a sense of emptiness. The comfort and environmental quality of the surrounding areas of the building need to be improved. It has the potential to initiate cultural activities continuously, and the nearly 10000 spectators attracted by large-scale events have brought evacuation "pressure" but have not played a "resource" role. Expand the influence of landmark buildings, tap into the spillover effects of localised functions, drive surrounding cultural and entertainment, youth gatherings, and catering consumption, and provide diversity in travel and stay. Optimise environmental quality, fully use the venue, and provide tourists and residents with a rich and comfortable venue experience.

Urban-level public facilities, World Expo cultural landmark buildings with a huge scale, unique design, and eye-catching colours. The service functions and spatial interfaces are closed, and there is a lack of dialogue with the surrounding urban spaces. Fully utilise the influence of landmark buildings to strengthen the World Expo's cultural characteristics and visual guidance functions. Collaborate with Meiben Center, Expo Source, and Green Valley to drive vitality in the surrounding space. Enhance the public nature of the street interface by opening up rooftop gardens and entrance squares. Expand the localisation influence of World Expo culture, extract cultural symbols, and create a cultural atmosphere for the surrounding World Expo.

The office building embodies the design concept of "small neighbourhoods and dense road networks". The environmental atmosphere is serious and dull, with homogeneous groups having a single mode of travel and activity. According to the regulations, the bottom layer is open, introducing cultural, leisure, sports, and catering functions to soften the urban interface. Enhance the fun and comfort of outdoor environments, embed unique street furniture and facilities, create relaxed and fun social and sports spaces, and attract young people.

3.4.2 For Open Spaces

A continuous negative interface has formed along Expo Avenue, lacking open space and access channels. The high-quality cycling road along the waterfront cuts through the air, lacking theme venues and necessary leisure service facilities for staying. Transform the "end space" into a "destination", open the southern interface of the riverside green space, increase the places and channels for entering the waterfront shoreline, and promote the integration of waterfront space into daily life in the urban hinterland. Utilise cultural and ecological functional nodes (Meiben Center + Wharf + Bailianjing) to create a POI with distinct functionality and theme, as well as enhance venue awareness and activity attractiveness.

Create daily leisure spaces for office workers and surrounding community residents in Area A.

Connect the development of Snow Wilderness Road Reserve with distinctive functions and environmental quality and build a belt space between Area A and Zhoujiadu Community.

Various ecological green spaces and street squares have abundant spatial resources. Based on system sorting and functional linkage, we have the conditions to shape a high-quality urban environment. Integrate open spaces at all levels and types to inject activity content and build a series of activity venues. Focus on creating the theme of "youth" and the characteristics of "sports". Collaborate with Meiben Center, Zhonghua Art Palace, Green Valley, and other social organisations to plan a series of themed activities to enhance social attention and local attractiveness. Combining the pedestrian space system to build a comfortable and diverse age-friendly open space network, providing local residents with leisure and fitness resources, and supporting the vitality of Area A with daily life activities.

3.4.3 Targeting the Travel Environment

Two high-grade urban transportation arteries have a certain barrier effect on the internal connections of the base but also provide broad pedestrian space. There is a dense flow of people and vehicles on Shangnan Road. On one side of Area A, there is a lack of vibrant places and urban interfaces. Expo Avenue has a wide view and a closed interface, but its riverside advantages have not been fully reflected. The vegetation on the street is beautiful, but the service functions along the street are insufficient.

Guozhan Road runs through Area A, with wide red lines and good greenery. The spatial scale and directional sense of the section near Expo Avenue are out of balance. There is no urban interface on the north side of Xueye Road, and the residential area on the south side is closed, resulting in a poor slow driving experience and a lack of sense of place. The belt area is a key space for two-way functional connection and vitality infiltration, and enhancing interface vitality is crucial.

The subway line along the base has a sufficient flow of office workers during peak hours in the morning and evening, as well as weekend leisure passengers. During large-scale events at Meiben Center, there is a phenomenon of crowds and queuing after the event. The bus stops within the base are mainly distributed on Shangnan Road and Expo Avenue, and there is a pendulum tidal flow of people during morning and evening peak hours. Pay attention to the passenger flow structure and activity characteristics of Meiben Center and World Expo Source, connect the open space of Meiben Center - China Art Palace, and explore opportunities for surrounding services and cultural entertainment spaces for performing arts activities. Improve the quality of public transportation surrounding the environment and the guidance system and strengthen the cultural characteristics of the World Expo. Introduce pedestrian flow and vitality to the east through themes and venues.

The Meiben Center and the Chinese Art Museum lack social parking spaces. The enterprise office building is divided into underground parking lots. Some branches park motor vehicles along the road. The possibility of opening social parking spaces in office buildings. Key

services will be provided for large-scale cultural activities at the Meiben Center, with the establishment of an intelligent indicator system that dynamically guides the flow of vehicles and people during performances.

There are non-motorized vehicle parking areas on Shangnan Road and Gaoke West Road, with no markings on other roads. The current situation is that shared bicycles and non-motorized vehicles are frequently used during peak commuting hours, and the parking methods, locations, and scale need to be organised. Considering the relationship between non-motorized vehicle parking, road walkability, and street interface openness, designate parking areas based on the entrance and exit of the building's underground garage. Strengthen patrols, standardise parking, and control the quantity.

Overall, walking accessibility is good, but comfort and quality need to be improved. The public and continuity of the road interface are insufficient and lacking attractiveness. Sidewalk materials and road facilities' quality need to be improved. The system aims to enhance the public and service-oriented nature of the Road, with a focus on supplementing youth-friendly facilities along Yuntai Road and Gaoke West Road. Focus on building trendy culture and leisure sports characteristics along the horizontal road. Improve the continuity and openness of street interfaces.

3.5 Planning and Design

The planning and design intention is to inject momentum into development, lock in potential human flow, mobilise resource endowment and flow economy, and create a youth development demonstration block. Explore the potential of open spaces and urban interfaces at all levels and types and create sports-themed and vibrant neighbourhoods that meet the needs of young people. Strengthen the World Expo's cultural memory and urban intention and create a district with distinctive World Expo cultural characteristics. By optimising the layout of building clusters, organising slow traffic systems, and opening spaces, we aim to promote the development of youth-friendly urban renewal(Figure 4).

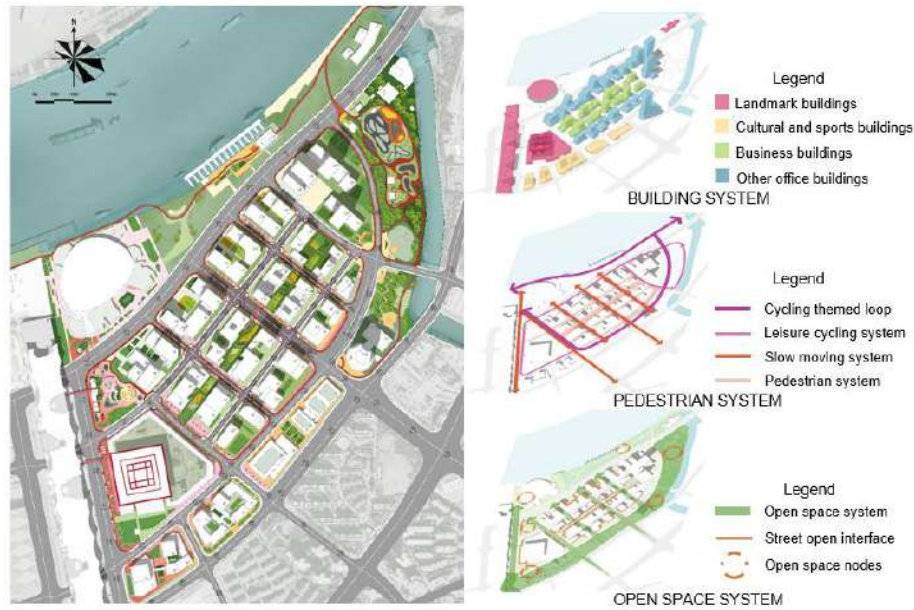


Figure 4. Space system structure (Source: author's elaboration)

In the specific planning and design, method of integrating real-life scenarios, the entrance square of the Meiben Center public building will be moderately opened, with one street square and crossing facilities set up. The celebration square will be equipped with interesting and movable facilities to improve the sense of scale and comfort(Figure 5).



Figure 5. Current situation of Meiben Center (left) and integration of real-life scenes (right) (Source: author's elaboration)

Improve the details of outdoor space and optimize the quality and fun of the neighbourhood environment. The central axis green space is equipped with rich communication and leisure facilities to promote communication and interaction among diverse groups of people. Embed outdoor art exhibitions and smart interactive installations to continue the cultural heritage of the World Expo. Utilise sound, light, electricity, and intelligent means to increase the richness

and fun of street activities, promote full-service functions, and maintain the sustained vitality of the venue. Green valley office area will add youth interactive devices and provide venues for youth activities (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Green valley current situation (left) and realistic integration (right)
(Source: author's elaboration)

4. Discussion

The study of youth-friendly cities provides effective strategies for urban planners to support youth development, helping to build a more inclusive and dynamic urban environment. This study focuses on exploring the renewal strategy of youth-friendly cities from an inclusive perspective and takes the Expo A area of Shanghai, China, as an example to plan and design, exploring the role of innovative planning schemes in the construction of youth-friendly cities. In addition to the construction of public spaces, transportation environment, and facility supply mentioned in this article, government departments around the world have also generally paid attention to the construction of youth-friendly cities in recent years and have begun to promote policies and practices for urban development. Through continuous practical innovation and improvement, the needs of young people can be better met, and their positive role in urban society can be promoted.

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