AN ANALYSE OF CHINESE URBAN PUBLIC SPACE
–Beijing as an Example

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ABSTRACT

Urban public space is one of the main components in urban planning because it emphasizes the interaction between people and the city itself. Public space often refers to a place that is open and accessible to all citizens but the idea of public space has changed during time and different cultures.

This thesis is an analyse of urban public space in a large scale city, Beijing. The historic capital of China is right now in an intensive development phase where the urban public space is transforming. Although Beijing is more and more influenced by Western urban planning, the city still retains the traditions and symbols of ancient imperial times mixed with communist planning ideals.

The analyse focused on three different categories: Form, Activities and Image/Symbols and were done through a field study of four different public spaces. These observations were also combined with literature studies and interviews with Chinese planners.

The main questions were:

- What perceptions does planners in Beijing hold of the idea of public space?
- How is the urban public space in Beijing organized and shaped?
- What kinds of activities do the residents of Beijing pursue in the use of urban public space
- How is symbolism used in Chinese planning of the urban public space, and what role does it have?

It was found that Beijing has a top-down urban planning system which seems to carry on short-term goals where citizen participation is absent. Because of the rapid development, the relation to the urban context and the design quality is often poor. Chinese public space are generally of large scale, many of them expressing the power of the regime.

Another conclusion was that the shape of the space is very different from Europe. Chinese public space can generally be divided into two different categories; spaces of spatiality -rooms within rooms or monumental spaces of symmetry. There is an obvious connection between outdoor quality and outdoor activities. A hypothetical conclusion is that well-defined human scale spaces results in spaces of vitality that encourages people to take part in social activities.

It was also found that symbolism is an important part of Chinese culture and urban community. Feng shui is important in the way of avoiding bad elements. Colours, orientation, hierarchy and shape are important factors to consider when planning Chinese urban public spaces.
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INTRODUCTION
BACKGROUND

THE MEANING AND VALUE OF PUBLIC SPACE
A common definition of public space is that it is a social area or place that is open and accessible to all citizens, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age or socio-economic level (Wikipedia 2010, October 11). When you ask people to define a public space, words like open, free and everyone is frequently used (Interview A, 2010; Interview B, 2010; Interview C, 2010)

Public space, such as parks, side walks, plazas and town squares, is often seen as a place that provides the common ground where the inhabitants of a city could meet, exchange ideas and engage in different culture performances. Public space could be seen as one of the main components in urban planning because it emphasizes the interaction between people and the city. Ultimately, public space are about people, it is the scene where public life and public activities takes place (Shaftoe 2008, p.9), a space that allows people to interact. Urban public space is dynamic and could be seen as nodes of communication and are an essential counterpart to the more settled places and routines of work and home life (Carr, Francis, Rivlin & Stone 1992, p.3).

A public space does not have to be a formal meeting place, like a meeting hall or square. A street corner, a bar, a café, a park bench or even internet could be a public space (Derienzo 2008, p.228). The concept of public space is hard to describe and the meaning of the space has changed through time and different cultures. Different cultures also place different emphases on public space (Carr et al. 1992, p.3).

CHINA AND BEIJING CITY
China is a country with an interesting and different culture and history from Sweden and Europe, right now in an intensive economic development phase. More than two-thirds of the country is mountains or desert, resulting the concentration of population in the towns and cities along the east coast. Among the thirty-one cities with a population of over one million, thirty are in the eastern part (Xue 2006, p.8).

During the last 20 years, China has experienced a period of extraordinary growth and change (Yu & Padua 2007, p.255). The country has nowadays become one of the major economic powers in the world (Orum 2009, p.370) and the expansion is most visible in large cities like Beijing and Shanghai.

Beijing is located in the north east of China and has a total area of 16400 square kilometres (Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics 2005), which is approximately three times larger than Stockholm (Wikipedia 2011, January 21). Beijing is the capital of China and has 15,4 million inhabitants, an estimated 7,6 million lives in the city centre1 (Utrikespolitiska Institutet 2010). Beijing is a famous ancient city that has served as the national capital for over 850 years (Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics 2005) and it has been a major regional political

1. Estimated year 2006
centre from as early as the Warring States period\(^2\) (Gaubatz 1995, p.79). During the two past decades, mostly since Beijing was awarded the 2008 Summer Olympics, the city has undergone a construction boom on a massive scale, primarily funded by the private sector (Visser 2004, p.277). The number of Beijing hutongs\(^3\) has dropped dramatically as they are demolished to make way for new roads and buildings. To give an idea of the scale of redevelopment, one third of the old city had been destroyed and rebuilt by 2000 (Ramish 2010, p.39). Beijing is rapidly transforming from a low-rise city to an increasingly high-rise metropolis.

**TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE AND SYMBOLISM**

In ancient times, Europeans believed in God and religious authority. The Chinese, on the other hand, placed humankind at the centre and honoured both ancestors and heaven (Dutton 1998, p.196). In European cities, urban design focused on the church and the form of that structure reflected its dignity and status. China was different, it was the emperor who represented heaven on earth and the most important architecture were the imperial palaces. All forms of temples were treated as secondary (Dutton 1998, p.196). The hierarchy was important and building regulations existed for various classes, ranging from the imperial house to the common people. For example, colours rested upon social rank, in the Ming and Qing Dynasties\(^4\), it was only the imperial households that was permitted to use yellow glazing on roofs (Dutton 1998, p.197).

Imperial capitals were often designed to bring cosmos and society into perfect harmony to justify the ruler’s absolutely authoritative position. These cities were full of symbols that identified them as the centre of the world, the seat of the government (Chang 1998, p.14).

The Chinese cities were traditionally surrounded by a city wall, sometimes also with an inner and outer city wall. The shape of the walls were often rectangular or square instead of being constrained by geography. This was because Chinese geomancy, feng shui, considerations were adopted. Walls were not only used to protect the cities, it was also a way of order those people within (Dutton 1998, p.193).

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\(^2\) 453-221 B.C

\(^3\) Hutongs are a type of narrow streets or alleys, Beijing’s old neighbourhoods.

\(^4\) Ming Dynasty: 1368-1644 Qing Dynasty: 1644-1911
URBAN PLANNING IN BEIJING

Beijing city is influenced by imperial traditions with the ceremonial axis and importance of centre (Gaubatz 1995, p.95). The plan of Beijing is known for its regularity and harmony (Chang 1998, p.14) and the street network is aligned with the cardinal directions to correspond with Chinese geomancy (Gaubatz 1995, p.79).

During Ming and Qing dynasties the planning concept was focused on the imperial authority (Meriggi & Linfei 2008, p.46). Beijing had three tiers of walls. At the city centre was the Forbidden City that occupied the entire central city space. The second tier was made up by the imperial city. This area was an administrative district with government buildings and residents for court officials. The outermost part of the city took up an area of 23 square kilometres and was surrounded by a twelve meter high wall with ten gates. This area consisted of narrow constricted alleyways, hutongs and inner courtyards of traditional Chinese homes, siheyuan(Shi 1998, p.220).

The outer city wall was built in 1553. It was supposed to surround the inner city wall but only the southern section of the wall was built (Dutton 1998, p.197). The outer city contained commercial and common residential districts (Gaubatz 1995, p.79). The most characteristic feature of the Ming and Qing dynasties is the 8 kilometres long axis from the gate Yongding in the south to the drum and bell tower in the north (Meriggi & Linfei 2008, p.47).

THE PRE-1949 CITY

Beijing had a spatial organization of functional differentiation and specialised neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods were components of a clearly defined urban structure with a complex social hierarchy. The whole city, except the most monumental structures, were built low in one- and two-storey structures (Gaubatz 1999, p.1496-1497). From the early 20th century, modern architecture were constructed. Places that had been prohibited during imperial times were opened to the public and some embassies and colonial style architecture were built (Meriggi & Linfei 2008, p.47).

THE MAOIST CITY, 1949-1978

After the founding of People's Republic of China, PRC, 1949, the Chinese communist party reshaped the city (Koolhaas 2001, p.49). The urban patterns of the imperial era had become overcrowded slums and the newly

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5. Siheyuan is a historical type of residence, generally a courtyard surrounded by four buildings.
The new development was focused on rapid industrial development (Gaubatz 1999, p.1497) and structured as production centres around large walled work-unit compounds, danwei's. The compounds were small self-sufficient communities within the city that provided work, housing, health care and other basic social services so that people rarely had to travel beyond the walls of their work unit (Gaubatz 1999, p.1497).

The City Planning Commission was founded in 1953 and invited experts from the Soviet Union (Yutaka, Dorje, Alexander & Azevedo 2002, p.18). The first edition of Beijing's comprehensive plan was finished 1954 (Meriggi & Linfei 2008, p.54) and was inspired by Soviet, with wide monumental avenues combined with four ring roads around the city (Gaubatz 1999, p.1497) and the development was supposed to start from the old city centre radial to the suburbs (Meriggi & Linfei 2008, p.54). Other suggestions were that the population of the city centre should be controlled not to exceed 4 million and that Beijing should develop not only as the political capital of China, but also as an industrial, cultural and artistic centre (Yutaka, Dorje, Alexander & Azevedo 2002, p.18).

From 1966 to 1976, during the Cultural Revolution, Beijing experienced a major change and many of the city's ancient structures were damaged. The Beijing City Planning Office was closed down, which resulted in uncontrolled development of land (Yutaka, Dorje, Alexander & Azevedo 2002, p.18).

When Mao Zedong died and Deng Xiaoping became the leader of the People's Republic of China 1978, the political and economical situation improved rapidly with fundamental changes in reforms such as privatisation and foreign investment. This was the beginning towards a market economy and led to a transformation of the urban form and skyline of the city (Gaubatz 1999, p.1495-1496).

TODAY'S BEIJING
As mentioned before, China began to open up to foreign business after 1979 (Gaubatz 1995, p.91) and the commercial activity raised in Beijing. China transformed from a planned to a market economy system (Yutaka, Dorje, Alexander & Azevedo 2002, p.19) and the Chinese urban planning became influenced by Western models (Gaubatz 1995, p.81). Since 1990s, Beijing has experienced a rapid growth in economic development and a large-scale urban construction which attracts architects and planners worldwide (Meriggi & Linfei 2008, p.59). Although Beijing is more and more influenced by Western urban planning, the city still retains the traditions and symbols of ancient times. The contemporary city is focused on the ceremonial axis, the centre, and symmetry is still important in Beijing's city planning (Meriggi & Linfei 2008, p.64; Gaubatz 1995, p.95).

CHINESE PUBLIC SPACE
The Chinese urban public space is a modern innovation of city planning (Nas 1993, p.2), the historic traditions from imperial times and communism is still influencing present China. Beijing, the capital of many dynasties, was the physical and material embodiment of imperial power (Shi 1998, p.219). It was only the imperial society and the richest class that had access to places like squares, gardens and parks.

In early twentieth century, many European cities had broad avenues, parks and public squares opened up for the mass assemblies essential to modern commerce, culture and politics. However, Beijing remained a city defined by walls, walled-enclosures, and gates (Visser 2004 p.282). Most arranged open spaces were reserved for the elite (Shi 1998, p.223). For the common people, the street served as an important neighbourhood community with social and economic activities (Wang 2003, p.23) but there was also other forms of public life. In late imperial times, many common Beijing residents visited fairs held on the grounds of temples or other places of worship. Here, people would come to
shop, exchange goods, meet friends and watch shows and traditional operas (Shi 1998, p.223). There was also some smaller places, pavilions for example, for people that did not like crowds and the bustle of commercial temple fairs (Shi 1998, p.224).

The concept of the public park is a Western and modern presence. Public parks in the West are for recreation and relaxation and usually created and administered by the city, state or the national government (Shi 1998, p.225). As in China, most parks were originally reserved for royalty but in the 1840s, many parks were opened up for the ordinary citizens (Shi 1998, p.226).

In 1914, influenced by Western experience, the government founded the Municipal Council of Beijing, which put an effort on improving the city's physical environment. Building public parks became one of the top priorities (Shi 1998, p.230-231). Since public parks were something modern Western cities had, Beijing should also have them. The government had responsibility for the people's health and the creation of public parks was one way to reform the urban residents lifestyles (Shi 1998, p.232). By transforming the private imperial gardens into public space, the government broke the old imperial traditions and demonstrated their concern in people's right and public interest (Shi 1998, p.233). In October 1914, Zhongshan Park⁶ was opened to the public. It became the first modern park in Beijing (Shi 1998, p.235-236).

While in the West almost all parks were funded by the government, Chinese parks during this period was primarily founded by donations and relied on income from rent and admissions. It was primarily the middle-class that could afford the admission charges and the park administrators wanted to avoid beggars, homeless and other undesirables to not lose the middle-class visitors (Shi 1998, p.245-246). Although the parks were not administrated by the government, they were frequently used as a means of social control. The government used the newly open public spaces to promote its reformist agenda and many governmental agencies maintained a highly visible presence (Shi 1998, p.246).

The new public spaces provided not only a place for recreation but also places for citizens to gather and express their idea of democracy (Shi 1998, p.242).

The new enlarged Tian'anmen Square became a focal point for political actions during the famous May Fourth Movement that began in 1919 (Shi 1998, p.242). Since then, the square has been the site of a number of political events and student protests. Among others are the May Thirtieth Movement, the December Ninth Movement, the proclamation of the People's Republic of China 1949 and the Tiananmen Square Protests of 1989 (Shi 1998, p.242; Wikipedia 2011, January 06).

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⁶ Central Park, next to the Forbidden City.
Squares built after 1949 were very similar to those of the Soviet Union; large squares with hard surface, strictly symmetrical and mainly built for political purposes. Most of them were located in the central part of the city (Li 2003, p.15). In the 1980s, the Chinese government began to build and rebuild many squares. These squares were mostly built to be a symbol of the city and were often surrounded by commercial and cultural facilities. Some of these squares were built to commemorate a person or an important event and they later became tourist attractions (Li 2003, p.15).

Today, many of the large public open space projects are built very quickly, often in less than a year, and the quality can therefore be criticised (Yu & Padua 2007, p.259). There is also a lot of public squares that have been re-designed and enlarged. New squares are built at a monumental scale with very little vegetation and often dominated by paving (Yu & Padua 2007, p.268) and are often situated in front of civic buildings like local party offices. The design intentions are demonstration of power and these squares could be seen as symbols of status for the local government with people being treated as spectators instead of users of the spaces (Yu & Padua 2007, p.263).

Another trend is to establish new parks as symbols of political achievement and representative of the city’s status and wealth. The natural terrain is often replaced by man-made features and exotic species and the parks often becomes tourist attractions instead of an integral part of the urban landscape (Yu & Padua 2007, p.264-265).

Tiananmen Square, located in the centre of Beijing, is the largest city square in the world. The square has been re-designed and enlarged many times.
Public space is one of the main contents of urban planning. The general perception is that all citizens are free to occupy these spaces and express their opinions, and if they are not, they are deprived of something fundamental to their own human rights (Orum 2009, p.370).

The public space has become spaces where surveillance by local authorities is routine. Surveillance cameras, guards and policemen effectively deprive people of their rights to socialize with each other (Orum 2009, p.371). More than anywhere else, this is remarkably obvious in the Chinese public spaces which are full of prohibitory signs, patrolling policemen and guards. Not everyone are allowed in the public spaces. A space that is public for citizen A may not be public for citizen B.

China is practically an one-party state with an authoritarian political system where the party and government exercise strict control over the population (Orum 2009, p.370). Who has the power and how the power is exercised in urban public space is a sensitive issue in China. The Chinese state is much interested in controlling the economy and the society and the urban planning is one way to gain control over the development (Tang 2000, p.356).

Shaftoe (2008, p.15) claims that public space in non-democratic states like China tend to be huge and intimidating, expressing the power of the regime and the insignificance of the individual citizens. An example of such a place is Tian'anmen Square which is the largest city square in the world. The square is located in the centre of Beijing and has been rebuilt and enlarged many times (Hung 1991, p.91). In 1950's, Mao Zedong decided to make the square the largest and most spectacular in the world and it was enlarged four times its original size.
China is a country with a rapid economic development and expansion, which is most visible in large cities like Beijing. The urban public space is transforming and is often constructed directly from international models, instead of devising its own rules. The Chinese urban planning seems to carry on short-term goals and rush for quick profits, the most important thing is the speed of development (Xue 2006, p.13). Many of the large-scale public space projects are built very quickly, often in less than a year, and the quality can be criticised (Yu & Padua 2007, p.259). Many of the public squares are also re-built and enlarged at a monumental scale, often dominated by hard surface (Yu & Padua 2007, p.268). The design intentions are demonstration of power and these squares could be seen as symbols of status for the local government where the use of the citizens are secondary (Yu & Padua 2007, p.263). New parks are established as symbols of political achievement and representative of status and wealth. The natural terrain is often desolated and replaced by artificial features and the parks often becomes tourist attractions instead of an integral part of the urban landscape (Yu & Padua 2007, p.264-265).

To analyse the Chinese public space, or the urban public space in a large scale city, Beijing is a complex and difficult task and a delimitation is necessary to consider. The urban public space comprise of a complex net of systems, social mechanisms, symbols, cultural identities and functions. Because of the globalisation, Chinese urban public spaces often becomes a mixture of influences from both Western architecture and local Chinese culture, which results in new urban forms and expressions. My expectation is that this thesis will open up for further discussions about urban public space.
AIM

This is a study of urban public space in Beijing, China. The aim of the thesis is to analyse urban public space in a large scale city, Beijing; how the space is used, the form and how symbolism is used in Chinese planning in the contemporary city.

DELIMITATION

The analyse of the urban public space in Beijing were done through a field study of four different spaces. Initially, the field study was delimited to the newly established squares and plazas. Gradually, I realised that to get a good overview of the urban public space in Beijing, I also needed to include other public spaces.

Therefore, the delimitation was changed to four totally different urban public spaces;

- **Tian'anmen Square** which is a historic place with strong symbolism and many tourist visitors.
- **Central Plaza Financial Street** which is a newly established plaza right in the middle of Beijing's centre for business and finance.
- **Yingtao Byway** which is a lively small-scale space in the middle of a hutong area.
- **Zizhuyuan Park** which is a popular large-scale park with a lot of different functions.

These spaces were analysed through three different categories: Form, Activities and Image/Symbols. The observations were combined with literature studies and interviews with Chinese architects.

MAIN QUESTIONS

- What perceptions does planners in Beijing hold of the idea of public space?
- How is the urban public space in Beijing organised and shaped?
- What kinds of activities do the residents of Beijing pursue in the use of urban public space?
- How is symbolism used in Chinese planning of the urban public space, and what role does it have?
LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout the research, I used a variety of literature about public space in general, Chinese urban space, Chinese traditions and symbolism, the form and activities of urban public space. To create an understanding of the Chinese urban public space and get a background, I also read literature about Beijing’s history. The literature studies served as a theoretical base for the analyse of the urban public space.

There is a lot of literature about Beijing’s history and Chinese urban planning in general. Among the most useful articles were P. Gaubatz (1995; 1999) who describes Beijing’s development from imperial times to present time. Also W.S. Tang’s article Chinese Urban Planning at Fifty: An Assessment of the Planning Theory Literature (2000) served as a good complement for the background. My contact in Beijing, Prof. Han, Doctor of Architecture and Urban Economic, has written a book together with M. Meriggi, Doctor of Architecture, Beijing- Milan Territories of discomfort in the contemporary city (2008) that also describes the development of Beijing city.

In English or Swedish, there are many books and articles about glorious Chinese ancient cities and buildings, but very little touching the essence of contemporary China and Chinese public space. M. Dutton's book Streetlife China (1998) became my best companion throughout my work. The book contains a series of articles on China and offers some insight into everyday life as well. Chinese traditions, government strategies, the city space, Beijing’s hierarchy and social relations are all described in detail.


To get an overview of the theories about urban public space, M. Carmona, S. Tiesdell, T. Heath & T. Oc’s book Public Places Urban Spaces, the Dimensions of Urban Design (2010) served as an important reference book. The book looks at different theories of urban design and describes six key dimensions of urban design; the social, visual, functional, temporal, morphological and perceptual. It was in this book I found J. Montgomery’s figure of Sense of place that served as inspiration for my own analyse method. The original figure is from J. Montgomery’s article Making a City: Urbanity, Vitality and Urban Design (1998). The article consists of a description of principles of a good city form, activity, street life and urban culture.

My own analyse of the urban public space is based on a descriptive list of three main categories; Form, Activity and Image/Symbols. These will be described more specifically in the following Method chapter. The theories of activities and usage of the urban public space are mainly from J. Gehl's book Life between buildings (2001) and the theories about form are primarily based on F. D. K. Ching’s book Architecture Form, Space, and Order (2007). To find suitable factors of Image/Symbols was the most difficult part of the descriptive list. These factors are from different books and articles about Chinese symbolism, such as L. Chang (2009) and E. Lip (2009) but also drawn up from interviews with Chinese architects.

During my research, I have also found inspiration from M. Li’s thesis in Geography, Urban Regeneration Through Public Space: A Case Study in Squares in Dalian, China (2003) and A.M. Orum’s article Public Man and Public Space in Shanghai Today (2009). Both of them deals with similar topics to my thesis.
METHOD

STUDY PROCESS
The research was carried out in four stages: preparation, collection of background material, field study and analysis.

The first stage was carried out at Blekinge Institute of Technology, Karlskrona from April to June 2010. The major tasks in this stage were to find contacts, write a programme for the thesis, apply for SIDA/MFS scholarship and to narrow the research topic. The second stage was carried out in Skellefteå/Kalmar from June to September 2010 and focused on reading relevant background material and select appropriate methodologies. The third stage was carried out in Beijing, China, from September to December 2010. A field study was conducted in this stage where four different urban public spaces were observed. This stage also contained interviews and collection of more background material. The work undertaken in this stage will be described more specifically in the following sections. The last stage was conducted in Kalmar from December to March 2010/2011. The major tasks in this stage were to analyse the background material, the field work material and to write the thesis.

ANALYSIS METHOD
The literature studies served as a theoretical base for my analyse of the urban public space. From the literature I read, I started working on my own idea of describing the urban public space, the sense of the place. I made out a descriptive list of three main categories; Form, Activity and Image/Symbols. The three main categories has in turn five sub-categories with factors to observe in the urban public space. This figure was used as my own tool kit, or check list, during the analyse of the urban public space.

The descriptive list is mainly based on J. Montgomery’s figure from the article Making a City: Urbanity, Vitality and Urban Design (1998, p.97). The factors were adapted and changed during time to suit my analysis. The theories of activities and usage of the urban public space are mainly from J. Gehl’s book Life between buildings (2001) and the theories about form are primarily based on F. D. K. Ching’s book Architecture Form, Space, and Order (2007). To find suitable factors of Image/Symbols was the most difficult part of the descriptive list. These factors are from different literature about Chinese symbolism. The factors based on feng shui is mainly based on E. Lip’s book Feng Shui for success in Business (2009) but also drawn up from discussions and interviews with Chinese architects.
DEFINITION OF TERMS

ACTIVITY
Activities play an important role in defining an urban public space. A space with high quality is more attractive to people, and a space where multiple activities take place brings vitality and diversity to the space. Mixtures of activities, not separate uses, are the key to successful urban places (Montgomery 1998, p.98). Urban public spaces are inconstant, the actual use of the space does not definitely have to be the same as the function it was once planned for.

For this category, I have chosen to use Montgomery’s terms vitality and diversity, which are two separate but related concepts. I have also chosen to observe Gehl’s three different terms of activities; necessary, optional and social.

Vitality
Vitality refers to the numbers of people in and around the space, the pedestrian flows across different times and days (Montgomery 1998, p.97). If there is a lot of things to do in the space, there is a strong vitality. A successful place appears to have its own pulse or rhythm, a life force.

Diversity
As Montgomery (1998, p.98) explains, there has to be a complex diversity of functions and activities to create a successful place. The more mixture of functions, such as residential, shops, restaurants and cafés, the more people attracts to the place. To achieve a strong diversity, the functions has to exists during different times, including the existence of evening and night-time activity.

Necessary Activities
Waiting for a bus or walking to the school are more or less compulsory activities for people throughout the year, during any weather conditions. Necessary activities take place regardless of the quality of the physical environment. Necessary activities could be seen as activities where people are required to participate, things you have to do, such as shopping or go to work (Gehl 2001, p.11).

Optional Activities
In contrast to necessary activities, optional activities occur during suitable conditions. They are activities that are only carried out by wish, not forced activities. Time and place need to be suitable and also the weather. Some of these activities include taking a walk, sitting and sunbathing, standing and enjoying the view. The physical environment play a major role in determining whether such activities could be carried out or not. (Gehl 2001, p.11-13)

Social Activities
Social activities depends on the participation of others in public spaces, examples: children at play, greetings, conversations but also passive contacts like seeing and hearing other people. Social activities are related to both necessary and optional activities because it occurs spontaneously when people meet in a particular place. Social activities are therefore dependent on the quality of outdoor space. (Gehl 2001, p.14)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of the physical environment</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Good</th>
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<tr>
<td>Necessary Activities</td>
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<td>Optional Activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Activities</td>
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FORM
Form is a three-dimensional mass or volume. The term could have several meanings, both internal structure and external outline or the whole unity together (Ching 2007, p.34). Form is established by the shapes and interrelationships of the planes that describe the boundaries of the volume (Ching 2007, p.28). Form is one essential part of architectural meaning and that meaning is conveyed by the human senses. I have primarily based this category on terms of Ching’s book Architecture Form, Space and Order.

Scale
Scale is the size of something compared to a reference standard or to the size of something else. It depends on how we perceive or judge the size (Ching 2007, p.294). The experienced scale, or the visible scale, could be different to the actual dimensions of things. When judging a building it is in comparison to its surroundings, a street scale for example; you note the relative sizes of elements fronting the street, the sense of grandeur or intimacy of space (Ching 2007, p.330).

When measuring scale, we often refer to the human body. Human scale in architecture is based on the dimensions and proportions of the human body. The opposite of human scale is monumental scale which makes us feel small in comparison. A space that has an intimate scale is an environment we feel comfortable and in control of (Ching 2007, p.332). The human eye can see other people and activities within a distance of 100 meters (Gehl, Gemzoe, Kirknaes & Sternhagen 2006, p.107). Rubenstein (1992, p.50) claims that a space of 25x25 meters is an intimate space where people can identify each other. If the space is beyond 60 meters wide, it is hard to retain the feeling of intimacy.

Symmetry
Symmetry is fulfilled when equal forms and spaces are arranged on opposite sides of a dividing line, plane or axis (Ching 2007, p.339). There are two types of symmetry; bilateral or radial. Bilateral symmetry refers to an arrangement of similar or equivalent elements on opposite sides of a median axis so that plane can divide the whole into similar halves. Bilateral Symmetry and the articulation of buildings are found everywhere in Chinese architecture, from palace complexes to farmhouses. Radial symmetry refers to the balanced arrangement of similar, radiating elements so that the composition can be divided into similar halves by passing a plane at any angle around a centre point or along a central axis (Ching 2007, p.348). A symmetrical condition can also occur in only a section of the building and organize an irregular pattern of forms and spaces about itself, which is called local symmetry (Ching 2007, p.348). Symmetry is important in Chinese culture to create a sense of regularity, the balance between yin and yang.
**Boundaries**
To define a space, there has to be bounding lines, edges. Boundaries are the limits that indicates the extent of something. These boundaries can be both visual and physical.

**Materials**
The choice of materials, colours and texture is a significance part of the composition of the space. Materials helps to establish a local distinctiveness and creates a visual interest (Carmona et al. 2010, p.190). Floor scape is an important part of making harmony and to create a completeness in an urban public space. In general, there are two types of flooring within urban areas; hard pavement and soft landscaped areas. It is important to consider how the materials are used, arranged but also how they interrelate with other materials and landscape features (Carmona et al. 2010, p.193-194). In my analyse, I have focused on facades, textures, surfaces and floor scape.

**Direction**
A cube is a static form that lacks movement or direction. However, if a cube is a component of an architectural composition, it can be directed. The sense of direction of a place can appear in various different ways and levels of ‘directedness’ and can be different from different angles and positions. Direction is a line along which components lie or a reference toward a point or area that gives order to elements (Rubenstein 1992, p.54).

**IMAGE/SYMBOLS**
All urban environments contains symbols, meaning and values. Our environment is loaded with signs which can be interpreted and understood as a function of a society, culture and ideology (Carmona, Tiesdell, Heath & Oc 2010, p.117). There are different types of signs that Carmona et al. (2010, p. 117) divides into three different categories;

- Iconic signs -have a direct similarity with the object, e.g. a painting.
- Indexical signs -have a material relationship with the object, e.g. smoke signifying fire.
- Symbolic signs -have a more arbitrary relationship with the object and are essentially constructed through social and cultural systems, e.g. classical columns representing grandeur.

In my analysis I focus on the third category, Symbolic signs, which I have named Image/Symbols. These symbols and images relates to the constructed environment, in this case; the urban public space. As in language, architectural forms and spaces have connotative meanings that can change over time (Ching 2007, p.406). Architecture often carries a fixed message determined by the architect or the constituent but the reader of the environment can construct a different meaning (Carmona et al. 2010, p.118).

**Monuments**
A monument is something of extraordinary size and power, frequently used to improve the appearance of a city or location. It is usually a type of structure created to commemorate a person or an important event (Nationalencyklopedin 2010, November 08), or as Wulz (1991, p.47) describes, there are three different significations of monuments; to glory, to remember or to exhort.

**Place Identity**
Place Identity refers to a cluster of ideas about a place and identity which can be a part of personal identity, how people describe themselves in terms of belonging to a specific place (Hernandez, Hildalgo, Salzar-Laplace & Hess 2007, p.310). Place Identity concerns the physical setting, the meaning and significance of places for their inhabitants and users, the local character. Because my Chinese is limited, I did not have the possibility to interview any of the users of the public spaces. Therefore, this term refers to my own feeling and understanding of the place but it is also based on interviews with architects.
Hierarchy

All architectural compositions differ among their forms and spaces and these differences reflect the degree of importance, their hierarchy (Ching 2007, p.358). For a form or space to be articulated as important or significant to an organisation, it must be made uniquely visible, an exception to the norm. This visual importance can be achieved by a form or shape with; exceptional size, a unique shape or a strategic location (Ching 2007, p.358).

**Hierarchy by size** - by distinguish in size, a form or space may dominate an architectural composition. Normally, this dominance is made visible by the sheer size of an element. In some cases, an element can be dominant by being significantly smaller than the other elements in the organization (Ching 2007, p.359).

![Hierarchy by size](image)

**Hierarchy by shape** - a form or space can be made visually dominant by clearly differentiating its shape from the other elements in the composition. A distinct contrast in shape is critical, whether the differentiation is based on a change in geometry or regularity (Chings 2007, p.359).

![Hierarchy by shape](image)

**Hierarchy by placement** - a form or space may be strategically placed to become the most important element in a composition. Examples of hierarchically important locations for a form or space could be the termination of a linear sequence, the midpoint of a symmetrical organization or in the foreground of a composition (Ching 2007, p.359).

![Hierarchy by placement](image)

Shape and colour

In contrast to form which is three dimensional, shape refers to lines. The lines are the essential part of a form that governs its appearance. Shape is about the disposition of these lines or contours that delimit a figure or form (Ching 2007, p.34).

As indicated by Interview person A (2010), feng shui is important in the way of avoiding some bad elements. One of the main rules about shape within feng shui is to avoid sharp angles, designs that destroys the balance of surrounding chi (Chang 2009, p.49). Interview person A (2010) explains that nobody want a sharp knife-like design pointing at you.

According to Lip (2009, p.62) there are some specific plan shapes that need to be avoided to achieve good feng shui:

- Resembles a butterfly, which has short life.
- Feels incomplete.
Triangular. Resembles the Chinese character for downward, xia, 下.

Square A is affected by square B. A T-junction that confronts the main entrance allow qi that is to vibrant to penetrate the building and this causes an undesirable influence on the building.

Examples of favourable shapes are:

- Represents mouth, kou, 口 and symbolises prosperity.
- Symbol of heavenly blessing.
- The circle represents heaven and the square, earth.
- Resembles the Chinese character for luck, ji, 吉.
- Resembles the Chinese character for king, wang, 王.

Colour is a major component in sensory perception that affects us visually and emotionally (Yau 1994, p.151). Colours have different meanings in various cultures. In ancient times in China, colours had different meaning and was used politically to distinguish rank, title and status (Yau 1994, p.151). For instance, royalty was represented by yellow, red, purple and royal blue and these colours were forbidden to ordinary citizens (Yau 1994, p.155).
In Chinese culture, colours are associated with the five elements of life. While Westerners use colour to symbolize feelings, the Chinese use it to represent elements, locations and seasons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metal</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Autumn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>All seasons (Yau 1994, p.157)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each colour has its significance:

**Red** has always been a favourite colour nationally and a colour that brings fortune, good luck, happiness and joy in Chinese culture (Yau 1994, p.153). Red envelopes filled with money are given as presents for bridal couples and for children for the new year. Red is the most important colour in China (Chai & Chai 2007, p.38) and it is considered as an auspicious colour (Lip 2009, p.65). Red is related with fire elements and it is regarded as energy.

**Yellow** is an important colour that represents the centre of the earth and supreme power (Yau 1994, p.157). Yellow was the colour of five legendary emperors, who personified the centre of the earth and ruled the middle kingdom. Yellow is used for decorating royal palaces, temples, altars and all sacred places in Chinese culture (Ebernhard 1986, p.322).

**Black** is regarded as the king of colours, it is a symbol for darkness, death and honour (Ebernhard 1986, p.42)

**Blue** stands for heavenly blessings (Lip 2009, p.65).

**White** is symbolized with brightness, purity and fulfilment (Lip 2009, p.65).

**Orientation**

Orientation is “the direction of a form relative to the ground plane, the compass points, other forms, or to the person viewing the form.” (Ching 2007, p.35). According to Chinese feng shui, the cardinal directions are important. One traditionally feature is south-facing orientation of buildings because of the sunlight and prevailing cold winds. The ideal location of a building would be in a place with mountains in north and water in south. Buildings should also be in harmony with other buildings that surround them, as well as with the environment and natural landscape. (Lip 2009, p.38)

According to feng shui principles, buildings should be lower in south and high raising in north (Interview A, 2010).

**OBSERVATIONS**

To examine and analyse the urban public space; the activities, form and image/symbols, I studied four different public spaces in Beijing.

I chose these public spaces because they differ from each other and they seemed to be representative of other Chinese public spaces that I have seen. My contact in Beijing, Prof. Han, helped me to provide suggestions of places to observe.

In my set of public spaces that I observed, I included parks and squares/plazas but also street scenes. These are spaces where people conceivably could gather, and where people pass one another on regular basis. The definition of public space is much more wider but I decided to delimit my observations to these kind of places. In addition to those sites that I systematically observed, I also drew upon less
systematic observations on other public space in Beijing and cities like Shanghai, Xian and Nanjing. The spring of 2009 I was an exchange student in Nanjing and of course, these months is also a part of my experience of Chinese public space. The four places I observed during field study were:

- **Tian'anmen Square**, the largest city square in the world, the site of many political events and protests. A strictly controlled symbolic place with a strong hierarchy and symmetry.

- **Central Plaza Financial Street**, a newly established plaza right in the middle of Beijing's centre of business and finance.

- **Yingtao Byway**, a lively small-scale space in the middle of a historic hutong area

- **Zizhuyuan Park**, a popular large-scale park for the locals with a lot of different functions.

My observations were made in Beijing during three months; October to December 2010, and during different days and time. To analyse the urban public space I used my own tool kit, a check list with factors to observe. The public spaces were inventoried through visits and documentation. Besides recording the appearance and activities of people in the public spaces in form of my own notes and maps of pedestrian flows, I also took photographs of the places and activities in which people were engaged. The functions of the buildings around the spaces, the relations between elements and use patterns were all recorded trough sketches.

Mostly, I stayed in the background but it was hard sometimes because people were interested in my presence, curious and tried to talk to me. Sometimes I also felt that people were disturbed. It was quite frustrating for me since I could not explain why I was there and what the pictures and sketches were for. Not many people spoke English and my Chinese is limited. Another problem was to get appropriate maps over the four observation places. I used Google Maps, Google Earth and the Chinese equivalent map service Baidu. From these maps I drew up my own maps, using Adobe Illustrator.

**INTERVIEWS**

To broadening my view, get input on my study and gain additional information that could not be found in the literature, I had several discussions with architects and friends. I also arranged a depth interview with an experienced middle-aged Chinese architect (Interview A, 2010) that has an excellent reputation based on projects that show great sensitivity to the physical and cultural context. For this interview I prepared a formal question list. The question list can be divided into four parts: 1. general questions about definition of public space 2. questions about Chinese urban public space 3. questions about urban public space in Beijing 4. questions about Chinese symbolism. The interview was supposed to be held with one person but it turned out that three people were participating as translators or help. Mostly, it was the intended architect that answered the questions but sometimes her colleagues cut in. During the interview I found out that the questions were answered in a comprehensive way and several questions were answered simultaneously.

To get a more quantitative study, another architect helped me to send out an email questionnaire to five architects. This questionnaire was a shortened version of the formal question list from the interview. Together with the questionnaire I also sent an information letter about my study. It turned out that only three people answered this questionnaire, whereof two (Interview B, 2010; Interview C, 2010) agreed on being quoted from. Interview Person B is a young Japanese landscape designer and Interview Person C is a Japanese architect that has worked in Beijing several years. To show respect to those interviewed, I have chosen not to identify the people.

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7. See analyse method and definitions above.
8. See Appendix A for a detailed list of questions.
9. See Appendix B for a detailed list of questions.
ANALYSIS
Urban public space is described as an open space which is free for everyone to use (Interview A, 2010; Interview C, 2010) which correspond with the ‘common’ definition (see for example Orum 2009, p.370; Carr, Francis, Rivlin & Stone 1992, p.3). Although, the truth is another. Public space has become spaces where surveillance by local authorities is routine (Orum 2009, p.371). More than anywhere else, this is remarkably obvious in the Chinese public spaces which are full of prohibitory signs, patrolling policemen and guards. Not everyone are allowed in the public spaces. Interestingly, Interview Person B (2010) describes a public space as a limited space that is open to people of a certain group.

Many public spaces in Beijing are surrounded by fences. Some of them has entrance fees and are closed at nights, but the fences are often only symbolic demarcations. Fences marks a place where a particular use and behaviour is expected and where formulated rules apply. It can be discussed whether a space with an entrance fee is public or not. Interview Person A (2010) claims that a public park with an entrance fee is not a public space because it can not be used by everyone.

To analyse the Chinese public space is a complex and difficult task because cultures differs from each other. The urban public space consists of a complex net of systems, social mechanisms, symbols, cultural identities and functions.

Chinese public space is different from European. Generally, Chinese spaces tend to be huge (Interview C, 2010) and intimidating, expressing the power of the regime and the insignificance of the individual citizen. An example of such space is Tiananmen Square (Shaftoe 2008, p.15). It is nothing but a symbol of the government, a space that lacks humanity (Interview C, 2010).

Interview person A (2010) also describes the difference of Chinese and European public parks. An European park often consists of large open space where you can see all the way through it. In contrary, a traditional Chinese park consists of several closed spaces, small-scale rooms within the large public space. The activities are also different. Chinese people likes to activate and exercise in public, European people like to sit down, sunbathing and socialize with each other (Interview A, 2010).

Beijing is rapidly developing and the urban public space is changing. Generally, projects are of large-scale (Interview A, 2010) and built very quickly, often less than a year, which makes the quality poor (Yu & Padua 2007, p.259). Since Beijing opened up to foreign business, the commercial activity has raised and the urban planning has been influenced by Western developers. The public

Since Beijing opened up to foreign business, the urban planning has been influenced by Western developers. Luodian town, Shanghai is an example of a suburbia inspired by urban planning traditions in Swedish towns.
space is getting more commercialized since the private sector takes initiative in urban projects (Interview C, 2010). Interview Person A (2010) describes the new urban public space as large-scale empty space that not many people enjoy.

Great public spaces are where the public life and public activities takes place, where the citizens can meet, exchange ideas and engage in different culture performances (Shaftoe 2008, p.9). Areas for activities are important (Interview A, 2010) but also an intimate human scale (Interview B, 2010) where people can identify each other (Rubenstein 1992, p.50) and feel comfortable in (Ching 2007, p.332). It is also important that the space is carefully designed, that it reflects the local culture and history and harmonise with the surroundings (Interview C, 2010; Lip 2009, p.38).

Large-scale public spaces such as Tian'anmen Square and Chaoyang Park, Beijing's largest park that consists of 290 hectares10, are bad examples of public spaces in Beijing (Interview A, 2010). When the design quality and the relation to the urban context is poor, places become deserted (Interview C, 2010).

As in all other cities in China, Beijing has a top-down urban planning system where the government plays a crucial role in decision making. Because of the rapid economic development and expansion, Beijing's urban planning system seems to carry on short-term goals and rush for quick profits. The speed of the development is the most important thing (Xue 2006, p.13), city plans are not transparent (Yutaka, Dorje, Alexander & Azevedo 2002, p.40) and citizen participation in urban planning projects is absent (Interview A, 2010).

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10. Can be compared to Zizhuyuan Park that is perceived as a large scale space and consists of 46 hectares.
ANALYSIS ZIZHUYUAN PARK 紫竹院公园

INTRODUCTION
Zizhuyuan Park\(^{11}\) was built in 1953 and got its name from an old temple, Fuyin Zizhuyuan, in its north-west. The park consists of three connected lakes, two islets and a lot of greenery and walking lines. One-third of the park's 46 hectares is covered by water (Zizhuyuan Park Administration Office 2010). The three lakes were once created as reservoirs during the Yuan Dynasty\(^{12}\). Zizhuyuan Park is located in the north-west area of Beijing, next to the Beijing Zoo and the National Library. In north, the park is surrounded by high-rise residents. South of the park is a heavily trafficked road.

The park is a traditionally landscaped garden that is famous for its 'natural scenery' and large variety of bamboo. Bamboo is a strong symbolism in Chinese tradition. Because of its long life, it makes a symbol of longevity (Email correspondence A, 2010). A Chinese park is different from a European in that way that the Chinese Park consists of a lot of different combined rooms, 'rooms within the room'. The rooms are small closed spaces where you have to walk indirect ways to get around. A Chinese park is a perfect example of a serial vision, a place where you are constantly faced with different visual effects (Cullen 1996, p.17). An European park, on the contrary, often consists of an open green space and you can see all the way through it (Interview A, 2010).

All these rooms consists of different elements, both natural and architectural. There are a lot of pavilions, small hills, lotus flowers, bridges, corridors, stones and rock gardens in the park. The rocks, stones and water are important design elements in a Chinese classical garden.

Zizhuyuan Park is a popular place for local residents, it is a place that offers citizens a respite from the commotions and chaos of everyday life. In the morning, when Beijing’s air is remarkably fresher, the park is full of elderly people doing their morning exercise; walking backwards, tai chi, qi gong, meditation, fan dancing, playing badminton or jogging. Another common sight are elderly men passing by with their bird cages.

Later in the day brings families with children flying kites, old men practising calligraphy or playing chess, couples dancing and groups of people playing music together. Besides the social activities, the park also features more organized activities like boating, playgrounds, an amusement park, tea houses, restaurants and cafes.

The lake is a popular spot, the people that takes a stroll in the park often choose the paths around the lake. There are many benches and other seatings around the lake and this is also the place where you find the most restaurants and cafes. Local men often gather at the lake edge, especially in north, to try their fishing luck.

The park is free to enter but closes in the evenings. The opening times are: Summer, 1st April-31st October: 6.00-21.00 Winter, 1st November-31st March: 6.00-20.00\(^{13}\)

There is a different use pattern in the weekends. The most significant difference is the use density. More people come to the park at weekends, especially Sundays. Many of the users are young parents with their children, while on weekdays, the users are senior citizens. Over all, the most popular time to visit the park seems to be at mornings.

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\(^{11}\) Also called Black Bamboo Park or Purple Bamboo Park.

\(^{12}\) 1271-1368

\(^{13}\) According to a sign at the east gate.
An overview of Zizhuyuan Park.
ACTIVITY

Vitality
The park is of large-scale but you are almost never lonely in this park. At mornings, there is a large movement in the park. Many people are exercising, both in groups or individually, and jogging around the lake. At afternoons, you can see many couples walking around the lake but also senior citizens playing chess, mah-jong or kicking shuttlecock. The pedestrian flow is mainly focused to the paths around the biggest lake.

Diversity
There are a lot of functions in this park, both arranged and not arranged; amusement park for children, restaurants, shops, dancing area, pavilions for meditation, public exercise machines, boats for hire during summer and skating during winter.

The dancing area is an example of a place that was probably not planned to be a dance area from the beginning. The people has annexed the area and changed the usage.

Necessary Activities
There are no necessary activities in Zizhuyuan Park.

Optional Activities
The park is full of optional activities that are recreational and fun. The optional activities occurs mainly at mornings when there are a lot of people, most elderly, that do their morning exercise in the park. Examples of morning exercises are tai chi, dancing, jogging, meditation and badminton. Later in daytime, you find many people that plays chess, takes a stroll in the sun, and plays instruments.
Activities in Zizhuyuan Park.
**Social Activities**

The area in south is a popular spot for social activities. Many people come here to dance or meet people. In the morning, this is the spot for tai chi classes or group meditation. The choice of the location is probably due to the favourable cardinal direction and the paved ground. To play chess is a common social activity where you see crowds of middle-aged and elderly men assemble around opponents, offering their advice. Other social activities includes playing music together, playing badminton, kicking shuttlecock etc.

**Ballroom dancing is a popular social activity in the southern part of the park.**

**Movement pattern in Zizhuyuan Park. The pedestrian flow is mainly around the lake.**

**FORM**

**Scale**

The park as a room is in a large scale, but the park consists of many small different rooms, 'rooms within the room.' The rooms have to be discovered gradually as you stroll through pathways, corridors, bridges and reaches pavilions from which a fascinating view unfolds. The lake is in large scale but the buildings...
in the park; restaurants, pavilions, cafés and shops are in smaller scale, like the walking lanes, the greenery and the furnishings. This gives a consistent impression of the scale. There are some tall-rise residential outside the park.

Symmetry
The park is known for its ‘natural beauty’ (Zizhuyuan Park Administration Office 2010) and does not have any symmetry besides the pavilion buildings themselves. Pavilions are always symmetrical in shape, usually built of wood or bamboo. Pavilions are supported by columns and have no walls. In contrast to symmetrical architecture, Chinese gardens and parks tend to be asymmetrical to create an enduring flow.

Boundaries
The park is surrounded by a 2.5 metres high wall and the lakes serve as boundaries, you have to walk indirect ways to get around. There is also a lot of smaller visual barriers, in the shape of fences, especially around green areas which seems forbidden to enter.

Materials
Much of the floor scape consists of greenery, high-growing grass or bamboo plantations. The walking lanes are of grey scale paving stones in different patterns and some parts are of wooden decks. An ambition seems to be to emphasize the name of the park, therefore all benches, bins, signs and other furnishing are made of green-painted bamboo-like material.

Rooms within rooms.

The benches and fences are made of bamboo-like material.
**Direction**
The space is not directed because of the park's organic form.

**IMAGE/SYMBOLS**

**Monuments**
There are a lot of small statues, stones and pavilions in the park which can be seen as small-scale monuments. One example of this is Bayi Pavilion which is located on Qinglian Islet, Blue Lotus Islet. On Mingyue Islet, Moon Islet, there is a jade statue of a flute playing woman. None of these monuments are of extra ordinary size or power.

**Place Identity**
The park is a popular place for local residents. One sunny day (14th November 2010), I met an old Chinese gentleman that spoke quite good English. He told me that he lived nearby and visited the park every single day. According to him, this is a place for locals to meet, to get together and escape from the hectic everyday life. The park is a recreational and social urban public space.

**Hierarchy**
The park consists of several pavilions that are located on hills or strategically placed to offer a nice view. The pavilions distinguishes in hierarchy by both placement and shape.
Shape and Colour
The park has an organic form, therefore it is not possible to determine the shape. According to feng shui principles, the park has a favourable shape because it lacks sharp angles that destroys the balance of chi. The west gate has the shape of the Chinese character for king, 王, and is a favourable shape according to feng shui. The park consists of a lot of greenery and the buildings are in a light warm scale of colours except the pavilions. The pavilions are very attractive colourful structures that provides shade and a place to rest and enjoy the scenery. According to Chinese symbolism, these are symbols of 'life in nature' (Email correspondence A, 2010).

Orientation
According to feng shui, the park has a prosperous location with high-rise residential, 'mountains', in north and water in south. Zizhuyuan Park is an example of a typical Chinese garden with a mountain and water landscape. The large lake's eastern shore consists of several small hills which were formed with earth dredged from the lake, to balance the natural hills on the western shore of the lake (Wikipedia 2011, January 13).

SENSE OF PLACE
Zizhuyuan Park is built according to traditionally Chinese landscaping and is famous for its natural scenery and large variety of bamboo. Plants are used as symbols in Chinese gardens and parks, and bamboo is one of the most important symbols that stands for longevity in the Chinese culture. In addition to plants, there are also other important symbolic elements in the park such as water, rocks and pavilions. According to feng shui principles, the park has a favourable shape and orientation.

Chinese parks, in contrast to many European parks, can never be completely surveyed from a certain point. The form of the park is asymmetrical and consists of multiple layers of sceneries which creates a sense of the infinite in the finite. Although the park is in a large scale, the experienced scale is human because it consists of more or less isolated sections, rooms within the room. The composition is never completely revealed and the sequence of rooms encourages to stop and annex the space for a while. The sense of place is a space of spatiality.

With green space, sequences of rooms and space for activities, the park has become a social place for local residents to enjoy outdoor activities and get together. The park has a strong vitality with a large flow of human activity. The park is at its most vital at mornings when you find large groups of people, mainly retired, doing their morning exercises. These are seen as optional activities. People often engage with one another in public activities. Ballroom dancing is a popular social activity in the southern part of the park. When weather is suitable, the area is filled with various groups of people dancing everything from waltz to rumba around boom-boxes. The people are not merely doing exercises, in another way they are performing on a 'stage,' in public because they enjoy the moment. This is something that differs from the European parks where most people probably would feel ashamed.

Interview Person A (2010) believes that the park is a good example of a public space in Beijing because it is a place of vitality and beauty, it has no entrance fee and 'everyone' can go there. However, the park closes at evenings and all visitors have to pass one of the guarded gates to enter. It is easy for the park administration office to control and avoid undesirables like beggars and homeless people but generally, they make no effort to monitor or police those people who enter.
INTRODUCTION

Tian'anmen Square is located in the centre of Beijing. It is the largest city square in the world and stretches 880 meters from north to south and 500 meters from east to west. The square is named after the Tian'anmen Gate\(^{14}\) located in its north, south of the Forbidden City (Shiqi 2010). Tian'anmen Gate, the original 500 year old structure being rebuilt in 1969, is the place where Mao Zedong proclaimed the birth of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949. It is also the place where the portrait of Mao Zedong still hangs (Means 2009, p.6).

Many westerners associate the square with the student's protest 1989, but for every Chinese, the square has always been the centre of political tension and attention throughout China's modern history. The square has been the centre of several demonstration but parallel to these, there has also been movements mobilized by the authorities to display power (Hung 1991, p.84). The proclamation of the People's Republic of China by Mao on October 1, 1949 and the military parade for the 60th anniversary in 2009 are examples of such movements (Means 2009, p.6).

The square is built along Beijing's central axis but has been enlarged and rebuilt many times (Hung 1991, p.91). In 1950's, Mao proclaimed his vision to make Tian'anmen Square the largest and most spectacular in the world. The square was enlarged four times its original size and many residential buildings and other structures were demolished (Wikipedia 2011, January 6). The Monument to the People's Heroes, a 37 meters high granite obelisk, was completed in 1958. It has an inscription written by Mao and is full of carved symbols of revolutionary history, nobility and perseverance (Hung 1991, p.94). Two enormous buildings, the National Museum of China and the Great Hall of the People were built on the east and the west side of the square (Hung 1991, p.85). Both buildings were built within ten months to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China 1959 (Means 2009, p.7).

\(^{14}\) Literally: Gate of Heavenly Peace.
An overview of Tian'anmen Square.
When Mao died, 1976, a decision was made that he would be preserved like Lenin in a Memorial Hall (Means 2006, p.6). Zhonghuamen Gate was destroyed to make room for Mao's Mausoleum (Hung 1991, p.96). The added monument changed the layout of the square once again.

The latest addition in at Tian’anmen square is two huge LED screens showing a video tour of China and the military parade from the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China. These were set up for the National Day 2009 and will be kept permanently.

Hung (1991, p.84) describes the square as “a vast open ground centred on and defined by a series of monuments constructed over a period of some five hundred years”.

Tian’anmen Square is a place of history, an important symbolism for China and the power of the Chinese government (Interview A, 2010; Interview B, 2010). The visitors are mainly tourists, both Chinese and foreigners. As Interview Person A (2010) says: “It is a place where everyone wants to go once in life, a place for tourists. The residents of Beijing never go there”.

The square is circled by low iron fences with four main entrances in north, south, east and west. To enter the square, you have to pass a security check. The trust in foreign tourists seems greater than the Chinese who are subjected to bag inspections as the foreigners walk past the guards. People's Armed Police (Suettinger 2003, p.2) and other security forces are patrolling the square in groups of two or three on the lookout for Falun Gong practitioners, democracy activists and other prohibited activities.

Beside the iron fence, the square is surrounded by wide boulevards. Next to these, especially in the east part, are a lot of souvenir shops, stores and restaurants but this part is not perceived as a part of the square because the road serve as a barrier. In the southwest corner of the square, a new grandiose building appears behind a shabby row of low-rise structures facing the plaza. These will soon be bulldozed to expose the first new structure in the square since Mao’s mausoleum 1977. The new building is a new office building for the National People’s Congress (The Economist Newspaper Limited 2010).

The square is closed during nights. It opens early at mornings, a couple of hours before the sunrise and the flag raising ceremony when the flag is raised by military unit. On the first day of each month, the military band play the national anthem when raising the flag (Shiqi 2010). At the ceremony, the area around the flag is blocked by a thin rope and a lot of military guards in front of the rope but also among the audience. Many people come to watch the ceremony, mainly tourists with their coloured coordinated hats and flag wielding guides. The square closes after the flag lowering ceremony at sunset. Soldiers evacuates the whole square and it is sealed off for the night. The most popular time to visit the square seems to be at mornings when Mao’s
mausoleum is open for public. The visitors are mainly Chinese tourists but also school children. The design of the square has barely any use. People just stand around with nothing to do besides taking 'I was here' photos of each other. There is no places for rest, no benches and a lot of boundaries. The most people that visit the square only stays for a short time but sometimes you can see kite-flyers, families or tour groups sitting down on the ground, eating their lunch package.

ACTIVITY

Vitality
There is a large flow of human movement in the square, all pedestrian, other vehicles are not allowed. The flow is at its greatest in the mid-morning, probably because of Mao's mausoleum that is open between Tuesday- Sunday 8-12 am. In one way, the movement pattern at the square is a forced movement due to the boundaries, the controlled pedestrian crossings and road underpasses. The people are mainly photographing tourists that only stays for a short time at the square. Reasons for this is probably the lack of outdoor seating and the windy climate.

Diversity
The square is a historic and cultural place, a symbol of the Chinese nation, but also a symbol of the government and its power. The functions of the square are not many. The main use is informal gatherings of people whose main activities are standing, looking and taking photographs. There is a lot of salesmen, most of them illegal, that sells anything from panda hats and post cards to Mao's 'Little Red Book'. At the east side of the square, beyond the boulevards, are some souvenir shops, stores and restaurants. At national holidays and other important events, the square is used for military parades.

Necessary Activities
In some way, to see the square can be seen as a necessary act. All people have to visit Tian'anmen Square sometime (Interview A, 2010). The only necessary activity I noticed are a few people waiting for the bus at the east and west side of the square.

Optional Activities
People that visit the square are mainly tourists. The place can be seen as an exhibition of monuments which people are taking photos of. Tian'anmen Square is not a place you go to for a stroll in a sunny day. Since there is no seating, the only optional...
activities are people standing, looking or gathering taking photos.

**Social Activities**
Tourists are mostly travelling in groups, therefore social activities occur. Some people are here with their family and some tourists has brought food and sits down having picnic. To play ball games, roller skating or other activities that may disturb the public order are prohibited but sometimes you can see small groups kicking shuttlecock or families with children flying kites.
FORM

Scale
The scale of the square is inhuman, both the size of the area, the buildings and monuments. The Great Hall of the People is said to be Beijing’s largest building and the recent added new office building in the south-west corner is no exception of grandeur. The feeling of an inhuman and monumental scale is strengthen by the wide boulevards that are surrounding the square. The width of the roads is not necessary according to the amount of cars on it.

Symmetry
Tian'anmen Square is located in the centre of Beijing with an imaginary axis line that begins in Yongdingmen Gate in south and ends at the Olympic Park area in north. The square has a strong bilateral symmetry with similar elements on opposite sides of the axis. The axis, which is highlighted by pavement, passes through the arrow tower of Zhengyangmen, Zhengyangmen Gate, Mao’s Mausoleum, the Monument to the People’s Heroes, the flag pole and the Tian'anmen Gate where Mao’s portrait hangs.

Boundaries
The space is defined by an iron fence and the boulevards that are surrounding the square. Although these barriers, the area and the buildings on the other side of the boulevards also belongs to the square area. In the square area, people cannot get near any of the monuments due to the barriers and patrolling military guards. There is also some temporary barriers put up at different times. At the flag raising and lowering ceremony, the area around the flag is blocked by a rope and at mornings, when Mao’s Memorial Hall is open for public, a large area around the mausoleum is closed. The movement pattern in the square is a forced movement due to the boundaries. To visit the square, you have to pass through controlled pedestrian crossings or road underpasses.

Tian'anmen Square has a strong bilateral symmetry with similar elements on opposite sides of the axis.
Materials

The ground consists of paving patterns of grey and pink granite and gives a coherent overall expression of the square. The paving of the square also continues northwards on Chang’an Avenue, Beijing’s main street (Suettinger 2003, p.12). Granite is one of the most durable stones and gives an impression of grandeur. The north-south axis in the middle of the square is marked by a different direction in the paving pattern. All materials; building facades, pavings, details on furnishing and monuments are all of robust expensive materials. At the map, the square can look pretty green but these areas are only huge lawns covered with flower plantations at special occasions such as national holidays.

Direction

Many of the monuments in the square lies on a line, Beijing’s central axis. The memorial hall and the Monument to the People’s Heroes are both facing north towards Mao’s portrait at Tian’anmen Gate. On the other hand, is the north end of the square, Mao’s portrait directed southwards.
Monuments
The square is one big monument in itself, or a series of monuments constructed over a long period. Means (2009, p.7) describes the square as a state exhibition of past, present, and future. The Monument to the People's Heroes was once built as a dominant monument, but in time it has become a monument dominated by other surrounding monuments (Hung 1991, p.107). The Monument is dedicated to the deceased heroes, but the heroes remain impersonal and the monument is only connected to Mao. The Great Hall of the People is a monument in a massive size that glorifies the Chinese government and the National Museum of China is a monument of the past. Tian'anmen Gate is an important monument for China since this is the place where Mao proclaimed the People's Republic of China 1949. Among other magnificent monuments are the flag raising stage, the Mausoleum of Mao, the Zhengyangmen Gate and the newly added screens and the NPC office. The square also consists of small scale monuments such as stone lions, marble pillars, bridges and statues.

Place Identity
Tian'anmen Square is nothing but a symbol of the powerful government. It is not a people's place (Interview C, 2010) where you go for a stroll or to enjoy the view.

Hierarchy
On top of the hierarchy is the space itself. Tian'anmen Square is the centre of political power, located along the central axis in the most important centre of the Chinese capital. The power is expressed through the grandeur of public buildings but the power is also a kind of anonymous power where the invisible government exercise strict control of the people through patrolling policemen, guards and military. The hierarchy of the square is difficult to decide because all architectural components are
powerful in different ways. Although, the most dominant part of the square, where many people take photos of and where other monuments are directed towards, is the Tian'anmen Gate in the north where the portrait of Mao hangs. The gate is the termination of a linear sequence, Beijing's axis, and is hierarchic by placement. One would think that Zhengyangmen Gate, in the southern part of the axis, has a significant location in hierarchy but instead it is the Mausoleum that dominates by size. The Great Hall of the People also distinguishes in hierarchy by size.

Shape and Colour
The shapes of the buildings are solid, robust and favourable according to feng shui, the Great Hall of the People resembles the Chinese character for king, 王. The important axis splits the square into approximate halves. Scale of colours are light in grey, white and pink tones except the older buildings such as Zhengyangmen Gate and Tian'anmen Gate which are colourful with red, blue and yellow tones. These colours are historic important colours used for decorating royal palaces, representing the centre of earth, supreme power and heavenly blessings (Yau 1994, p.157; Lip 2009, p.65). In contrast to those colourful buildings, the large-scale governmental buildings and the Mausoleum, becomes dull or lustreless in appearance.

Orientation
Tian'anmen Square is located in the centre of Beijing, along Beijing's north-south main axis. The location emphasizes the importance of the square which is a historic and symbolic place of China. Although, the traditional south-facing orientation of buildings is not followed. The only building that faces south is the Tian'anmen Gate, which is also the most important building in the square.

SENSE OF PLACE
Tian'anmen Square is located in the symbolic important centre of Beijing, built along the central axis. According to its location and function as centre of political power, the square is on top of hierarchy in the Chinese society. The square is centred on and defined by a series of monuments constructed over a long period (Hung 1991, p.84). Among the most significant monuments is the Tian'anmen Gate where the portrait of Mao hangs. However much China has changed, the presence of Mao is always there (Means 2009, p.6).

The scale of the square is inhuman monumental which makes the individual feel uncomfortable and small in comparison to the authority who possesses the square as a symbol. The design of the square has a strong bilateral symmetry with similar elements on opposite sides of the axis, which is emphasized by pavement. All materials are robust and expensive, which gives an impression of grandeur. The square is directed towards north where the Tian'anmen Gate has a hierarchical location.

According to feng shui principles, the shape of the square is favourable with its central axis and the shapes of the buildings are prosperous in their robustness and resemblances of Chinese fortune characters.

The square is only open at daytime and the flow of human movement is large which makes the square vital but the visitors are mainly tourists that only stays for a short time. This is probably because of the few functions of the square and the lack of the design. The square has barely any use, there are no places for rest and a lot of boundaries and barriers, which makes the movement pattern predestined. Psychologically, the linear shape and monumental scale seems to say 'Move on, move on' and people that visit the square only stays for a short time. Another reason for the 'movement space' is the lack of edges. The square has no edges where people can stay, stand, sit and survey the whole area without being exposed (Gehl 2001, p.151).

The square could be seen as a vast space where the place identity is nothing but a symbol and an exhibition of communists monuments. The square has no humanity, it is a place for the government, not a public space for the citizens (Interview C, 2010).
INTRODUCTION

Yingtao Byway is a 200 meter long street in Dazhalan hutong area situated in the heart of Beijing, not far from Tian'anmen Square. The area is one of Beijing's old business districts, it has been a center of commerce since the Ming and Qing dynasties (Ning 2006). According to the legend, in late Qing dynasty an eunuch planted two cherry trees in the area and the street got its name, Yingtao, which is the Chinese name for cherry tree. Originally, Yingtao Byway was a ditch and this explains the diagonal direction of the street, which is unusual for a Chinese hutong alley (Lyn 2005). Historically, since the Beijing Opera was located nearby, an 'Opera Association' was established in the area as a gathering place for performers of Beijing Opera (Lyn 2005; Ning 2006).

Today, Dazhalan area has a reputation as of one of the city's slum neighbourhoods due to the run-down condition of its residences, poor public facilities and high concentration of low-income workers (Ning 2006). Although, Dazhalan is one of the areas that has been improved and modified for the 2008 Olympics. The two most important business streets were turned into pedestrian streets and the buildings along the streets were renovated. Today, Yingtao Byway belongs to one of Beijing's 25 protected historic conservation areas (Yutaka, Dorje, Alexander & Azevedo 2002, p.24).

The area I have observed is a small-scale space, a room created in the junction of the road. The space is an intimate space with low one-storey buildings and a street width of 10 meters at most. The space has a commercial vitality but is also a space influenced by ordinary residents that are using the street as an extension of their homes. Yingtao Byway has a large flow of people and is a social space where people meet and interact.

Yingtao Byway comes to life early in the morning. Most shops open around 7am and the small street corner restaurants are popular places to enjoy breakfast. Located nearby is Tiantao Guangda Market, where you can buy groceries like vegetables, meat and fish. The market, which is open from 6.30-12 every weekday morning, is a popular spot for local residents and restaurant owners.

Later in the day, people sit in front of their houses chatting and elderly men gather around tables, playing chess and card games surrounded by spectators. There are no permanent seatings in the space, which means that people bring their own stools and annexes the space. Other residents takes a stroll or walk their dogs in the area. Another common sight are people on bikes passing by yelling things like ‘trash collection’ or ‘housecleaning service’ and there is a lot of street vendors selling anything from dried fish to socks.

At weekends, the space is less crowded. Many of the shops are closed at Sundays, like the market, and you can see children playing together in the street.

18. Ming Dynasty: 1368-1644, Qing Dynasty: 1644-1911.
An overview of Yingtao Byway. Buildings not marked are residences.
ACTIVITY

Vitality
The space has a strong vitality, the flow of human movement is large due to the commerce in the area. The flow is at greatest in mid-morning when the nearby market is open. Most of the flow are pedestrian, but there is also motorbikes, bikes and some cars passing by. A small space in the middle of the street seems to be reserved as a parking lot for cars and motorbikes. It is behind these cars, next to one of the restaurants where elderly men use to play chess and card games. The people in the space are mainly local residents that go for shopping or to socialize with each other. At evenings and weekends, the space is less used.

Diversity
Yingtao Byway has a diversity of functions such as residential, different shops, office and restaurants. The main use is commercial due to the amount of small shops and street vendors but the space is also a popular gathering space for the local residents. Although, at evenings and weekends when many shops are closed, the space is less used.
**Necessary Activities**
Shopping is one necessary activity that is common in this space. Since Yingtao Byway is a hutong area with many residents, you can see schoolchildren walking to school or people go to work at early mornings.

**Optional Activities**
When the weather is suitable, a lot of elderly people are sitting along the facades, observing the lively street life. Some people stroll around the area or walk their dogs.

**Social Activities**
Social activities depends on the participation of other people. Yingtao Byway is a place of vitality where the human flow is large and social activities many. Groups of people are sitting around tables, playing chess and card games surrounded by spectators. A lot of people greet each other, stop at the street and talk to each other. This is probably because people ‘know’ each other, or because they often see one another. Passive contacts, seeing and hearing other people is also a widespread social activity in this space.

*Activities at Yingtao Byway. There is much activity outside the market in north but also a lot of optional and social activities in the junction. The two large green spots are places where people commonly play chess or card games.*

*A street vendor at Yingtao Byway.*
**FORM**

**Scale**
The space has a human scale, it is an intimate space where people feel comfortable and in control of. As Rubenstein (1992, p.50) claims, a space less than 25x25 meters is an intimate space where people can identify each other. Yingtao Byway is surrounded by low one-storey buildings and consists of one 4 meters wide street that divides into two narrower, 3 meters, streets. Where the space is at its widest, it is 10 meters wide. In imperial times, Siheyuan buildings had restrictions on height, design and colour. Before 1911, within the inner city walls, no residential building of more than one storey was permitted. It was considered unthinkable that ordinary citizens should have houses taller than the walls of the Forbidden City. Many Beijing residents also say that living on the ground floor is more healthy, since they remain in close connection to the energy of the earth (Yutaka, Dorje, Alexander & Azevedo 2002, p.17)

**Symmetry**
According to the history, Yingtao Byway was originally a ditch which explains the diagonal direction of the street. The buildings along the street forms a broken lineal edge, some corners protrudes slightly in the street which makes the space asymmetrical.

**Boundaries**
The space is defined by the building facades that are surrounding it. In the middle of the street, where the street at its widest, the space is used as a parkinglot for cars and motorbikes and people have to walk around to pass this barrier.

**Materials**
The floor scape consists of asphalt with grey paving stones placed next to the buildings, which are of grey brick walls, tiled roofs and carved windows. The materials are all typical for Siheyuan buildings in hutong alleys and creates a coherent expression in the space.

**Direction**
The space is directed against the junction where the three streets meet. The junction is like a node where people stop and greet each other.

**IMAGE/SYMBOLS**

**Monuments**
There are no monuments in Yingtao Byway.

**Place Identity**
Yingtao Byway is an urban space with a long history, a hutong alley with classical Siheyuan buildings. The commercial space contains markets, small shops and many street vendors, which provides a convenient supply of daily necessities for the residents and additional spots to meet and interact with other residents.

**Hierarchy**
The building in the junction is visible in a prominent way due to its placement in the node and in the way that the facade faces south west. Another building that is distinctive is the interior design office that distinguishes in hierarchy by size, both in height and area.

**Shape and Colour**
As mentioned before, in imperial times, Siheyuan buildings had strict restrictions on height, design and decoration. The restrictions were graded according to the status of the owner and included rules on the colour and style of roof tiles, the colour of the outside walls and the decoration of the main gate (Yutaka, Dorje, Alexander & Azevedo 2002, p.17). Yingtao Byway buildings consists of grey bricks and tiles with

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18. Siheyuan is a historical type of residence, generally a courtyard surrounded by four buildings.
red doors and red details on carved windows and roofs. Red is a colour that brings fortune and good luck. It is a tradition to paint the front door red before the new year to invite good luck and happiness to your house (Yau 1994, p.153). The red colours contrast with the grey bricks and tiles, creating a distinct Beijing hutong combination.

According to feng shui, the space has favourable robust shapes that lack sharp angles. The only exception is the building which is facing the junction. A junction that confronts the main entrance allow qi that is to vibrant to penetrate the building and cause an undesirable influence on the building (Lip 2009, p.62).

**Orientation**

Hutong alleys mostly run from east to west, with main buildings and gates facing south to prevail the cold northern winds but allowing sunlight (Yutaka, Dorje, Alexander & Azevedo 2002, p.12). Yingtao Byway is an exception that runs diagonal, from south-west to north-east due to its original as a ditch. Facades that faces north do not have any windows, which is a design well-suited to Beijing’s climate of cold dry winters and hot humid summers.
**SENSE OF PLACE**

Yingtao Byway has a place identity made up of a typical historic Beijing hutong alley with grey brick facades, tiled roofs, carved windows and red doors and details.

Yingtao Byway has a diversity of functions but the main use is commercial with small street corner restaurants, shops of various kinds, street vendors, and a large market nearby. It is a vital space where the locals meet and interact and the social activities are many. The space is annexed by people playing chess and card-games, street vendors but also children at play and elderly people watching the street life. Passive contacts such as seeing and hearing other people are widespread.

The space is a well-defined street scape, an intimate space surrounded by one-storey buildings, created in a junction of three roads. As an intimate space where people feel comfortable and in control of, the human flow is large. The street could be seen as an extension of the home, providing residents with extra living space.

Although, there are no permanent seatings, the space is a ‘staying space’ which has an intimate scale and offers many things to watch (Gehl, Gemzoe, Kirknaes & Sternhagen 2006, p.107). People bring their own stools and annexes the space along the facades. These are also popular spots for street vendors. The popularity of the space along the facades could be explained as the ‘edge effect’. At the edge of the space, people gets the best opportunity to overlook the space and are less exposed than if out in the middle of the space. A public space need edges, otherwise it will never become lively and vital (Gehl 2001, p.151-152).
INTRODUCTION
Central Plaza Financial Street²⁰ is situated in the middle of Beijing’s Financial Street District. The area is located inside the 2nd ring road, in the west part of Beijing and is the country's most important financial centre, often called ‘China’s Wallstreet’. The large area consists of 35 blocks of foreign and domestic financial institutions but also Chinese regulatory agencies like the People’s Bank of China (Chevalier, M. & Lu, P. 2009, p.209).

The area is developed by a Chinese real estate company, the architectural firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, SOM architects, along with SWA Landscape Architects. Both firms are American but well established and well known in China. The Central Plaza Financial Street is a part of a large project that was completed in 2007. The project has won several awards, including the American magazine Architectural Record’s price for Best Planning Project in 2008.

The plaza, which covers 30,000 square meters, is like an urban park with soft landscaped green areas but also hard pavement and paths. The area gives an impression of three different rooms within the room;

- Area A, the civic plaza in the west that fronts the Financial Street
- Area B, the green and intimate area in the middle
- Area C, the area in front of Ritz-Carlton Hotel

Within these three distinctive rooms are also several abstract smaller rooms, or ‘gardens’. These gardens forms intimate and private spaces within the larger public space and helps to scale down the overpowering experience of the space.

The surrounding area is predominantly occupied by large-scale banking office buildings. When evening falls and people have gone home, the area turns into an empty place. An attempt to change this has been made when integrating residential units, hotels, shopping malls, cafés and restaurants. The problem is that the area only attracts certain types of people with its luxury residents, five-star hotels and exclusive shopping mall.

‘Seasons Place Mall’, which houses luxury shops including Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Dior, is located along the south end of the plaza. A road which has parkinglots on both sides, cuts through both the plaza and the building. The plaza seems to belong to the shopping mall, not to the city and the citizens. On the north side of the plaza is a ‘bar street’ with restaurants and cafés of various price range; anything from KFC to wine cellars. The commercial activities are located to the ground floor, while apartments and offices are at upper floors.

²⁰ Sometimes referred to as ‘Central Park’.
An overview of Central Plaza Financial Street.
Due to the large scale and the functions of the surrounding buildings, the plaza is not well used. The social activities are few and people only stay for a short time in this space. The plaza has permanent seatings, most of them are of stone materials. The few that are used are wooden benches in the green intimate area, area B. More people come to the plaza at weekends, especially Sundays. The users are mainly young parents with their children or elderly people walking their dogs, despite the fact that dogs are prohibited in the area. The plaza is a restricted green space where walking on the lawn is prohibited.

**ACTIVITY**

**Vitality**
The plaza is an exclusive area that lacks vitality. The human movement is low, probably because of the surrounding large scale offices, and few residences. At weekends, especially Sundays, the human activity increase. Groups of children having organised inline-training, families passing by, children are playing for a short time and elderly people walking their dogs although it is forbidden.

**Diversity**
The plaza is surrounded by different functions such as offices, residences, restaurants and shopping mall. Although, the space is not that popular and it only attracts one sort of people. The space encourages to consume food and drinks in the restaurants and buy luxury things in the shopping mall. Some of the restaurants and bars are open quite late in evenings but the area is empty when evening falls and people have gone home from their works.
Activities at Central Plaza Financial Street. The activities are concentrated to the western part of the plaza.
**Necessary Activities**
Some people are walking their dogs in the lawns although it is forbidden, due to prohibition signs. Shopping is one necessary activity that should be dominating in this commercial space, although the shopping mall is almost always empty like the 'bar street'.

**Optional Activities**
When weather conditions are optimal, the plaza invites people to stroll around the area. A few elderly people are doing their morning exercise in the area. Later in the day, at lunch time, you can see working people having their lunch at the plaza. At evenings and weekends, there are organized inline-trainings for children in the plaza-area that fronts the Financial street.

**Social Activities**
Social activities depends on the presence of other people in the area, which are few. At first sight, the organised inline-trainings seems to be a social activity with a lot of parents and other people watching the children, but the contacts are only passive contacts including 'seeing and hearing other people'. The parents never speak to each other, only to their child or their partner. Area B, which is more intimate and has seatings, is the area where the most social activities occur.

**FORM**

**Scale**
The block mainly consists of large scale, high-rise banking office buildings except the 'bar street' and the 'Season Place Mall' which consists of 4-6 floors. The plaza itself is almost of monumental scale, stretches 350 meters from east to west, about 100 meters from north to south at its widest. Although, the plaza does not appear that monumental in scale, like Tian'anmen Square, because it is divided into smaller rooms that forms spaces within the large public space.

**Symmetry**
The plaza has an undulating shape and is asymmetrical. The architecture of the 'Season Place Mall' and the landscape are woven together which indicates that the plaza belongs to the building, not to the citizens as a public space.

**Boundaries**
The plaza is surrounded by roads and one of the road is cutting through the plaza and the 'Seasons Place Mall'. Although traffic flow is low, the roads are seen as boundaries. Grass areas in the plaza are forbidden to walk on, which makes the green spaces physical barriers.

Central Plaza Financial Street is divided into smaller rooms. This is the most intimate and most popular space in area B.
Materials
The selection of materials are all exclusive and expensive. The floorscape consists of both paved and green areas. Area A, the plaza that fronts the Financial street, is paved with granite slabs in two different greys, arranged in a linear pattern. Several curved paths of paved granite links the plaza together. Area C, in front of Ritz-Carlton Hotel has a large artificial lake of black shiny granite. Building facades are of light grey and white stone or plaster with black details and glass sections.

Direction
The plaza is a curving urban park that lacks specific direction.

IMAGE/SYMBOLS

Monuments
Located in area A, next to the plaza is a finger print stone sculpture that can be seen as a small monument. Another small scale monument is located in area C, in front of Ritz-Carlton Hotel, an artificial lake with three trees planted on an island.

Place Identity:
Central Plaza Financial Street is an exclusive commercial area for a certain type of people. Although the area has a diversity of many functions, it lacks vitality. The reason is probably the large-scale buildings and the lack of intimacy space. The plaza could be seen as a symbol and representation of status and wealth.

Hierarchy
‘Season Place Mall’ is dominating the space by shape and size. The building differs from the surrounding high-rise, rectangular skyscrapers with its 4 floors, unique facade of black, white and glass rectangles and curved back side.

Shape and Colour
The curving shape of the plaza is unusual according to Chinese landscaping traditions. Plazas and squares tend to be axial and symmetrical to create a sense of regularity and maintain the balance between yin and yang. With its wavy shape, the plaza consists of both convex and concave curves. According to feng shui, a convex curve is something you want to avoid because it feels incomplete (Lip 2009, p. 62) but it is also the beginning of an angle pointing at you. It could be resembled as a sharp curved knife, where the convex side is sharp and dangerous and you better stay on the concave side to be protected (Englebert 2009, p.2). ‘Seasons Place Mall’ has a
unique shape with a sharp knife-like end that destroys the balance of surrounding chi according to feng shui principles (Chang 2009, p.49; Interview A, 2010). The plaza consists of a lot of greenery. Paths, paved areas and building facades are of light colours like grey, white, beige and pink with details in black and red.

**Orientation**
Central Plaza Financial Street is located in the middle of Beijing's financial centre among high-rise office buildings. The space lacks vitality and turns into an empty space at evenings. The 'bar street' buildings follows the traditional south-facing orientation while the 'Seasons Place Mall' is facing north.

**SENSE OF PLACE**
Central plaza has an undulating shape which is unusual according to Chinese landscaping traditions. Plazas and squares tend to be axial and symmetrical to create a sense of regularity and maintain the balance between yin and yang. The plaza is more like a park that consists of rooms within the room. It also consists of a lot of convex and concave curves, which are shapes that need to be avoided to achieve good feng shui.

The scale of the plaza is monumental with its 30,000 square meters of green and paved surface, but the experienced scale differs from the actual dimensions. The plaza is divided into several smaller rooms which reduces the scale. The most popular area is the most intimate space which has edges defined by hedges and a lot of wooden benches.

Although the space has a diversity of many functions, it is not that popular. The plaza lacks vitality and is almost always empty at evenings. The lack of vitality may be because of the location of the plaza, right in the middle of Beijing's Financial District surrounded by large-scale banking office buildings or the lack of sufficiently small-scale rooms within the room.
MAJOR FINDINGS

Beijing, the historic capital of China, with its 15.4 million inhabitants (Utrikespolitiska Institutet 2010) is right now in an intensive development phase, transforming from a low-rise city to an increasingly high-rise metropolis. Although Beijing is more and more influenced by Western urban planning, the city still retains the traditions and symbols of ancient imperial times mixed with communist planning ideals.

One of the main components of urban planning are the public spaces; social spaces that are open and accessible to all citizens. There is little available field research about public space in Beijing and other Chinese cities that any such effort represents a benchmark for future investigation.

This thesis is an analysis of four different urban public spaces in Beijing. The research is based on literature studies, on-site observations and interviews with planners. The main questions were:

- What perceptions does planners in Beijing hold of the idea of public space?
- How is the urban public space in Beijing organised and shaped?
- What kinds of activities do the residents of Beijing pursue in the use of urban public space?
- How is symbolism used in Chinese planning of the urban public space, and what role does it have?

In this chapter, the result of the analysis is summarized. The chapter is divided into four headings which will try to answer the main questions. The last part is a conclusion of sense of place in Chinese urban public space.

WHAT PERCEPTIONS DOES PLANNERS IN BEIJING HOLD OF THE IDEA OF PUBLIC SPACE?

Interview Person A (2010) and Interview Person C (2010) describes public space as an open space which is free for everyone to use. Interestingly, Interview Person B (2010) has a perception of public space as a limited space that is only open to people of a certain group. This is more of a truth, public space is not for everyone. Public space has become a space where surveillance by local authorities is routine (Orum 2009, p.371). Most societies are surveillance societies of one kind or another, but China is a comprehensive surveillance country where the government is really interested in what people are doing and thinking. Chinese public spaces are full of prohibitory signs, patrolling policemen, guards and surveillance cameras. Many public spaces in Beijing are also surrounded by fences and some of them have entrance fees. It can be discussed whether a space with an entrance fee is public or not. Interview Person A (2010) claims that a public park with an entrance fee is not a public space because it cannot be used by everyone.

Chinese public space is different from European. Generally, Chinese public spaces tend to be huge (Interview C, 2010) and intimidating, expressing the power of the regime and the insignificance of the individual citizens. Generally, projects are of large-scale that not many people enjoy (Interview A, 2010). They are often built very quickly, often less than a year, which makes the quality poor (Yu & Padua 2007, p.259). When design quality and the relation to the urban context is poor, places become deserted (Interview C, 2010). Interview Person C (2010) also stresses that since Beijing opened up to foreign business, the Western influence has increased and the urban public spaces have become more commercialized.

Interview person A (2010) also describes the differences between Chinese and European public parks. Many European parks consist of large open space where you can see all the way through it. In contrary, a traditional Chinese park consists of several closed spaces; small-scale rooms within the large public space. The activities are also different. Chinese people likes to activate and exercise in public, European people like to sit down, sunbathing and socialize with each other (Interview A, 2010).

The activities in public space are important (Interview A, 2010) but also an intimate human scale (Interview B, 2010) where people can feel comfortable (Ching 2007, p.332). It is also important that the space is carefully designed, that it reflects the...
local culture and history and harmonise with the surroundings (Interview C, 2010; Lip 2009, p.38).

**HOW IS THE URBAN PUBLIC SPACE IN BEIJING ORGANISED AND SHAPED?**

From the analyse of four different urban public space in Beijing, but also from less systematic observations, I found both similarities and differences. According to the shape and organisation, Chinese public space can generally be divided into two main categories:

- Spaces of spatiality, rooms within the room.
- Monumental spaces of symmetry

Chinese public parks differs from many European parks in the composition of the space. A Chinese park can never be completely surveyed from a certain point. It consists of more or less isolated spaces, rooms within rooms, which must be discovered gradually as you move through the space. Parks can be seen as an expression of a traditional Chinese garden which consists of small individual asymmetrical sections with various types of spatial connections (Keswick, M., Jencks, C. & Hardie, A. 2003, p.20). Both Zizhuyuan Park and Central Plaza Financial Street are examples of asymmetrical spaces that consist of small-scale rooms within the large public space.

The scale is an important factor of public spaces. Zizhuyuan Park and Central Plaza Financial Street are examples of where the experienced scale, or the visible scale, differs from the actual dimensions. The spaces are perceived as intimate spaces which we feel comfortable and in control of (Ching 2007, p.332), even though they are large-
scale spaces in the large context. These spaces can be described as spaces of spatiality. The second category are the monumental spaces of symmetry. Beijing city is known for its regularity and harmony (Chang 1998, p.14) where hierarchy has been important since imperial times (Dutton 1998, p.197). The imperial spatial order has also been influenced by socialist ideology inspired from Soviet (Gaubatz 1999, p.1497) with grandiose monuments and huge public squares demonstrating the power of the government (Yu & Padua 2007, p.263). New squares are built at a monumental scale with very little vegetation, often dominated by paving (Yu & Padua 2007, p.263).

Tian'anmen Square is an example of a symmetric monumental space. The large scale makes the individual feel uncomfortable and small in comparison to the authority which possesses the square as a symbol. The space is organised and defined by a series of monuments. Generally, the large monumental scale is common among Chinese urban public spaces. Of course, there are also other kinds of urban public space in Beijing. Yingtao Byway is an example that does not fit into any of the two main categories. The space can be described as a well-defined street space that has a special ‘street culture’ of a traditional hutong in the context of the contemporary city. It is a public space between residential and commercial spaces (Jian 2008, p.49), an extension of the residents home. The space is not a constructed public space, it is a historic space that got its shape from the original shape of a ditch, a traditional urban space that is defined by buildings (Carmona, Tiesdell, Heath, & Oc 2010, p.77). A space need distinct edges, otherwise it will never become lively and vital (Gehl 2001, p.151-152).

WHAT KINDS OF ACTIVITIES DO THE RESIDENTS OF BEIJING PURSUE IN THE USE OF URBAN PUBLIC SPACE?
Based on the observations of several public spaces in Beijing, people often engage with one another in public activities. They do so primarily in groups, whose numbers may range from a few people to a large group of 50 people. These group activities cover a range of material, from playing chess, which engages a large number of spectators, to kicking shuttlecock, and of course, to a range of different kinds of dances, from sword and fan dancers to the large assemblies of ballroom dancers. The people are not merely doing exercises, in another way they are performing on a ‘stage’, in public in an exhibitionistic way because they enjoy the moment. This is something that differs from the European urban public spaces where most people probably would feel ashamed.

These kinds of activities are especially seen in public parks. Parks are places for local people to meet up and socialize, especially retired. Public space in Beijing is a place not only to meet and talk, but also to engage in cultural activities that help to keep alive what it means to be Chinese today. Public parks can be seen as microcosm of Chinese culture. There is an obvious connection between outdoor quality and outdoor activities. A space of high quality is more attractive to people which increases the activity level (Gehl 2010, p.21). A successful urban public space need to be well-defined by edges (Gehl 2001, p.151) and has a human intimate scale where people feel comfortable and in control (Ching 2007, p.332).

HOW IS SYMBOLISM USED IN CHINESE PLANNING OF THE URBAN PUBLIC SPACE, AND WHAT ROLE DOES IT HAVE?
Chinese architecture is full of symbols, powerful expressions and meanings, that is hard to understand for those not familiar with it. Symbols can be interpreted and understood as a function of society, culture and ideology. Symbolism is an important part of the Chinese culture (Interview A, 2010; Interview B, 2010; Interview C, 2010) where ‘feng shui’ is one significant component. Interview Person A (2010) describes feng shui as a circle divided into two parts. “One part is science, that part I believe in. The other part is mysterious, which I do not understand.”
Though, feng shui is important in the way of avoiding some bad elements. One of the main rules about shape within feng shui is to avoid sharp angles, which destroys the balance of the surrounding chi. Modern western architecture are often criticised for not considering traditional Chinese symbolism (Interview A, 2010).

Of course, there are different opinions about symbolism like feng shui. When I discuss the topic with one architect student, she tells me that feng shui is nothing they learn in school and that it is mostly elderly people that believes in it. This is also the opinion of Interview Person C (2010) that says that “the younger the clients are, the less they seem to care about feng shui”. I also discussed the topic with two young graduated architects. They claim that feng shui is a very important part of the culture and that many clients request extensive experience within feng shui. The symbolism play different roles in different projects (Interview B, 2010). If it is a commercial urban planning project, symbolism is often the first thing to be considered (Interview C, 2010).

In summary, Chinese symbolism is still an important part of the urban community. Colours, orientation, hierarchy and shape are important factors to consider when planning urban public spaces.

**SENSE OF PLACE; CONCLUSION**

Studying urban public spaces need the consideration of many different components. Sense of place is the whole experience of a place that is constituted from the interaction between parts –the activity, form and image/symbols (Carmona et al. 2010, p.123).

From the result of the analysis of four different urban public spaces, I found relationships between some elements. The most obvious example is the successful connection between vitality, room shape and defined edges.

First of all, places need people in them in order to generate a sense of vitality. The belief that a good space is a used space leads to investigate what makes some spaces crowded and preferred by people than others. The scale is one important factor of a successful public space. When measuring scale, we often refer to the human body. An intimate human scale is an environment people feel comfortable and in control of (Ching 2007, p.332). A large-scale space can be scaled down by several small-scale rooms, rooms within the larger room. This makes the experienced scale different to the actual dimensions and encourages people to annex the space. To attract people, the space also need to be of high quality with clearly defined edges. The edge effect refers to people's preference for staying at the edges of a space, where their presence is more discreet and they command a particularly good view of the space (Gehl 2001, p.151-152).

Of the four spaces I observed, I found two of them possessing a strong sense of place. Zizhuyuan Park is the first example that consists of several informal small-scale rooms within the room. This is a space where the activities are many and the human flow large. The second space is Yingtao Byway which is a human scale well-defined street scape where many activities takes place. Both of them are spaces with a strong vitality and strong sense of place.

A hypothetical conclusion is that well-defined human scale spaces results in spaces of vitality that encourages people to take part in social activities. Urban planning can contribute to and enhance the potential sense of place which means that the creation of urban public spaces should be well considered.

**RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Because of the lack of time, there are some limitations to this study. The first limitation is that I only selected four of Beijing's urban public spaces to observe; the second is that the observation of usage and the interpretation of the spaces form and image/symbolism is only of my own opinion. I did not have the time or the possibility to ask the citizens about their use and interpretations of the spaces; the third is that the selection of interviews may not be representative for the overall professional planners in Beijing; the fourth is that the urban public
spaces were only observed during a given time when the climate was pleasant.

For further research, the study of other urban public spaces in Beijing could help out to get a fuller understanding of the Chinese situation. To get a more quantitative study, a survey among the citizens about their use and interpretations of the urban public space can be done. More interviews with people within the planning profession could be conducted to investigate the perceptions of the public space. Further studies might focus on comparative studies between Beijing and other large-scale cities, both Chinese and European, to make the study of Chinese urban public space more complete.
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Interview A, Interviewed by Hagenbjörk, L. Beijing 12th November 2010

Interview B, Questionnaire Interview on email, Interviewed by Hagenbjörk, L. Beijing 5th December 2010
Interview C, Questionnaire Interview on email, Interviewed by Hagenbjörk, L.
Beijing 5th December


APPENDIX A: QUESTION LIST FOR INTERVIEW A

General questions about definition of public space:
1. How do you define a public space?
2. Do you think that public space is an important part of the city? Why? Why not?

Questions about Chinese urban public space:
3. What can you tell me about Chinese public space? Is it different from other parts of the world?
4. In China, has the meaning and importance of public space changed during time?
5. In the design of public spaces, is there any discussion (citizen participation) with the people supposed to use it?

Questions about urban public space in Beijing:
6. Beijing city has a rapid development, in which way is the public space changing? (or is it changing?)
7. Describe a good example of a public space. In Beijing? What makes it a good example?
8. Do you know any bad (or less good) examples of public space in Beijing? What is it that makes it a bad example?
9. I have observed four different urban public space in Beijing, do you have any particular views on these places; Central Plaza Financial Street, Zhongshan Park21, Tiananmen Square, Yingtao Byway (Dashilar Hutong Area).

Questions about Chinese symbolism:

By symbols I mean Chinese symbolism like feng shui, numbers, shapes, monuments, myths, animals, cardinal directions etc.
10. Do you believe that symbolism is an important part of the Chinese culture?
11. What role does symbolism play in contemporary city planning?

21. Later revised to Zizhuyuan Park.
APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR INTERVIEW B & C

Information about the study

This questionnaire is a part of my thesis work at the Program of Spatial Planning at Blekinge Institute of Technology in Karlskrona, Sweden.

The aim of my study is to analyse urban public space in a large scale city, Beijing; how the space is used, the form and how symbolism is used in Chinese planning in the contemporary city. I have made some observations on different public spaces and my expectation is that interviews and this questionnaire will serve as a complement to these observations.

To participate in the study is voluntarily and it is not necessary to answer all questions. Everyone has the right to stay anonymous and choose not to be quoted from.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me.

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Questionnaire

Name:
Age:
Profession:
Briefly describe what kind of projects you work on:

About public space in general:

1. How would you define a public space?
2. What can you tell me about Chinese public space? Is it different from other parts of the world?
3. Beijing city is rapidly developing, in which way is the public space changing? (or is it changing?)
4. Describe a good example of a public space in Beijing. What makes it a good example?
5. Do you know any bad (or less good) examples of public space in Beijing? What is it that makes it a bad example?
6. I have observed 4 different public space in Beijing, do you have any particular views on some of these places; Central Plaza Financial Street (in front of Seasons Place, SOM architects), Zizhuyuan Park, Tiananmen Square, Yingtao Byway (a small square formation, Dashilar area).

About Image/Symbols:

By symbols I mean Chinese symbolism like feng shui, numbers, shapes, monuments, myths, animals, colours, cardinal directions etc.

7. Do you believe that symbolism is an important part of the Chinese culture?
8. What role does symbolism, like feng shui, play in contemporary city planning? Is it used in Chinese planning of the public space?