Perspectives on Children amongst Planners in Beijing
A field study in Beijing, China

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Barn är ett folk och dom bor i ett främmande land…
Alla är barn, och dom tillhör det gåtfulla folket
Beppe Wolgers
Preface

This thesis is my final project within the Master’s Programme of Spatial Planning (Fysisk Planering) at Blekinge Institute of Technology (BTH). It covers 30 European credits and was performed predominantly between September 2010 and February 2011.

The thesis discusses the urban planners’ different conceptions and perspectives of the children’s right to- and use of the urban public space. The report is based upon a field study performed in Beijing, China. The field study consists of interviews with professionals engaged within the field and observations of children in the urban public spaces (such as squares and parks).

I would like to thank Professor Han Linfei (Beijing Jiaotong University), who invited me to join his office in Beijing and helped me to find proper persons to interview and make contact with. Furthermore, I would like to thank my tutors at BTH; Lecturer Gunnar Nyström and PhD student Lina Berglund Snodgrass, for their support and comments.

My stay in Beijing was made possible thanks to Sida and the Minor Field Studies Scholarship that I was awarded to perform this study. During my stay in Beijing, I had the chance to meet interesting people for my interviews and discussions. Thanks to you all, for spending time helping me.

During my studies of this thesis, the support from my fellow student Linnea Hagenbjörk (who was with me in China) and Helen, Mikael and Gullvi (who spend time proof-reading and discussing this report) has been great. Also, all discussions and cheerful calls from other students and friends have been positive for me. Thank you.

Camilla Bramer
Camilla Bramer
April 2011, Skara, Sweden
Abstract

This thesis is focused on the perspectives on children held by urban planners in Beijing from an explorative approach. The aim is to investigate how planners in Beijing are considering children and the children’s perspective in the urban planning processes.

My research is based on interviews with planners in Beijing and literature studies to achieve an understanding for what type of perspective on children that dominates among planners in Beijing. In addition to this, the environmental situation for children in Beijing has been researched through literature studies and observations, to enhance an understanding for children’s role in the Chinese society and Beijing’s urban environments. The interviews were performed in Beijing during the autumn of 2010 among six people involved in urban planning processes. The observations were performed in Beijing during the same time, predominantly in parks and hutong areas of Beijing.

This report is based on the theoretical approaches of The child and urban environments, The urban planners and the perspective on children and The cultural, historical and contemporary context of China. The theoretical approaches are used in the analyses focused on the themes of Children in the urban public space in Beijing and The perspective on children among urban planners in Beijing.

The result shows that the perspective on children among planners in Beijing today correspond to the perspective on children dominating urban planning processes in Europe during the 1960’s and 1970’s. These perspectives mean that in Beijing, children are not seen or used as active stakeholders in urban planning processes and the adult perspective on children is dominated by prioritizing children’s needs rather than their views and thoughts on their ambient environments. This derives from that in Beijing no sort of citizen participation is common. Therefore, neither are children asked to have their say during planning processes. Planning without citizen participation and with the main focus on the “expert planner” was the situation in many western countries in the 60’s and 70’s. This gives that the perspective on children among planners in Beijing today to some extent corresponds to the perspective among planners in Europe in past times. Today Beijing is undergoing radical urban changes due to of the rapid economical growth of China. This gives, that it is not only the political climate that affects the use of citizen participation, but also that private investors and their interest is dominating in the development processes.
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Reading directions and outline
This thesis is divided into a number of headings. In the introduction background information and the aim and main question of the thesis can be found. Following is the methodological chapter, where my methods are described and to some extent evaluated. In that chapter, the persons interviewed and the observation areas are described. In the literature review, a limited discussion about the research mode is performed. The next part of the report is the theoretical approach where the theoretical data is gathered under three main themes; the child and urban environments, the urban planners and the perspective on children; and the cultural, historical and contemporary context of China. This approach makes the benchmark for further analyses where the empirical data is discussed from the theoretical approaches and analysed. After the analysis chapter, the result and conclusions of my research are gathered and the main question is answered. Finally, there is a discussion chapter where I critically discuss my result and critically discuss my sources. In addition to this, recommendations for further studies can be found at the very end.

Thoughts
I have, during my work, come to the insight that questions concerning children and their upbringing are quite sensitive. We have all been children and many of us have thoughts and opinions on children’s upbringing and what is ”right” and ”wrong” according to adults’ actions with and against children. Important to point out is that these ”rights” and “wrongs” are made up from the context we are brought up in and live in. To stress this, I want to use a quote from the book Seendet och seendets villkor (Näsman, 1995), which handles research and thoughts about children’s welfare.

Every attempt to judge what is good or bad for children is made within a discourse characterized by its social context in time and space. The context decides which benchmarks that are legitimised for such a judgement, as well as apprehensions of whose opinion and which arguments that are to be awarded.

This give me the insight that I am not the one to judge what is right or wrong within the knowledge and experiences that I have met during my work with this thesis. My wish is that the reader will keep this in mind while reading this report, and stay open to differences that constitute the context that this report is written within.

My pre-understanding within this specific field consisted mainly of non-scientific observations and studies in China during the spring of 2009 and a natural interest within the field of planning with children’s perspectives. I have not earlier performed any direct linked studies, so the fact that I am a Swedish Master’s student with mainly basic theoretical knowledge provides the ground that this thesis is written on. Neither have I got any professional practical experiences from urban planning in China and almost no professional practice within the urban planning field in Sweden.
1 Introduction

This chapter is focused on introducing the reader to the report, by describing the study subject, the choice of subject, the aim and the main question.

1:2 Background, problems and possibilities

During my studies at BTH I have developed an interest in the urban public spaces in cities and in analysing them and their users. Squares, parks and streets form a major part of our everyday life and experience of a city. In my performed projects, I try to focus on the life of the citizens within the society which are not easily represented by themselves. These citizens might for example be children, disabled or elderly.

During my 6th semester of studies at BTH I chose to study as an exchange student at Nanjing Forestry University in China. During this semester my interest in large scale cities and their complex urban planning situation rose. This thesis is the product of trying to combine the interest of these three focal points.

1:2:1 Urban planning processes

The processes of urban planning have developed from an authoritarian planning model based on one general city plan (Hall 2002:4 & Strömgren, 2007:37) developed by a few specialists (Alexander, 2002:4), architects, to an urban planning which now concern mainly the process (Hall, 2002:7) to reach a “sustainable development”. Sustainable planning can be said to focus on its citizens, the environment and the economy with the ultimate process as the goal and the final plan as the result, rather than the ultimate plan as the goal and the process as a transport distance.

During the development of the urban planning processes, the citizens’ participation has developed to become an important part of these processes in many countries. Though, still some citizens’ thoughts are often ignored. One of the groups whose perspective often goes missing in the processes of urban planning is the children. They might be “planned for” with playgrounds and schoolyards, but they are seldom an active participant in the planning process itself, as they have every right to be. This right derives from the specified children’s rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2008-08-26), connected to the Human Rights, adopted by the UN. The link between the human right to express opinion and urban planning goes through the citizen participation processes, which clarifies the children’s rights importance to the urban planning field.

1:2:1:1 The children’s perspective

To grasp how to represent or “bring the children into urban planning processes”, it takes a combination of theories from varying fields such as social sciences and planning (Horelli, 1997:109). To let children be active stakeholders in an urban planning process challenges the traditional view of children and their cultural status of belonging to an environment of play and leisure (Horelli, 1997:113).

Research concerning childhood has undertaken a development which has changed focus from giving a voice to an underestimated group of citizens to a larger applicable amount
of theories and conceptions (Halldén, 2003:15). It should be possible for the urban planning organizations to put on these concepts as well. Children do have special needs, yes. However they do not need to be treated differently in specific areas of the city. The playground reduces the children's play to acting as an animal in a cage when the play is so much more than swinging and running, with both cognitive (behavioural) and social aspects (Nilsson, 2001:148) and therefore it might be interesting to know what other environments that children want or need in large scale cities.

1:2:1:2 Children’s perspective within urban planning
Since children seldom are recognized as active stakeholders in planning processes, I find it important to investigate the different perspectives of children that pose the planners’ works. Through literature studies at least two or three dominating planning norms concerning children in the public space can be identified, where the child is seen as a subject or an object. Both these perceptions are based on the adult perspective, on their values and positions in society. (Dahlgren & Hultqvist, 1995:280) When children are seen as subjects, children and youths are given the chance to affect the planning documents and decisions. Their knowledge and experiences are used as a resource and the planners’ role is to communicate with the children, thus taking the role of a (1) communicator (this is the first perspective). When children are seen as objects, the adults use their interpretative prerogative and are trying to plan from what they see as most important and best for the children. The planners’ role is then, to know what best is for them, thus being (2) the expert (this is the second perspective).

Furthermore, the general perspective on children in society is important in this discussion. It is expressed by legislation and other official norms, and varies between countries and cultures (Nilsson, 2007:56). The children’s individual perspective is each child’s approach to its own life, itself and its surroundings. First when we have taken the child into the planning processes as (3) an active stakeholder, we will be given the “real” children’s perspective (this is the third perspective).

1:3 Choice of subject
As described above, both studies of urban public spaces and large scale cities are interesting to me. Therefore I am using Beijing as my field study platform, as the large scale city is a sort of urban environment that planners in Sweden do not have the chance to observe or investigate. As the globalization and urbanization of the world continues, I see that the problems and possibilities in Beijing today might be the reality for other cities in the future. Consequently, there is a chance that Sweden as well as other countries, can learn from China and Beijing in the future. To be able to learn, we need to study. The focus on the perspective on children among planners in Beijing was chosen because no similar (known) study has been performed in this city before making it possible for this thesis to contribute to the knowledge base within this field.
1:4 Aim
The aim of this thesis is to investigate how planners in Beijing are considering children and the children’s perspective in the urban planning processes. More specifically; what perspectives of children planners of Beijing hold and how these perspectives associate to the cultural, historical and contemporary context of China.

1:5 Main questions
To fulfill the aim of this thesis, the following question is used:

1. How is the child viewed upon among contemporary urban planners in Beijing, China?

To grasp this question the following focuses are a part of the result presented on page 78:

- What perspective on children can be identified among contemporary urban planners in Beijing?
- How are the child and the “children’s perspective” considered in the urban planning processes in Beijing?
- What is affecting the perspective on children among planners in Beijing?

1:5:1 Limitation
This study is focused mainly on the children's perspective among urban planners in Beijing. The focus lies in the empiric with a descriptive focus and to draw conclusions from the result. Though, my studies also hold normative elements, because it is hard to perform a describing study without any form of thoughts concerning how it might be – better or worse – or what is good or bad (Allmendinger, 2009:12).

Consciously, concerns focused on the design of specific “good” places for children, as well as methods for citizen participation with children has been deselected. Inevitably they are briefly discussed, but there is not enough time or space to perform a major discussion in this report. Neither can a plan for “good planning for children” be found here, nor specific recommendations for such planning. Instead, this report is attempting to act more as a review of the actual situation within the field.

Important to point out is that this report does not give the exact or overall picture of the situation of the perspectives on children among planners in China or in Beijing, due to limitations both from the experience of the analyser (me) and the limits of space and time.

Children’s perspective can include many things. There is a difference between the child’s own perspective and for an adult to hold a children’s perspective. Just yet, even though this is described more detailed in the theoretical approach chapter, I want to point out that this thesis focuses on the adult’s (the planner’s) perspective on children. In other words, it is the planners of Beijing children’s perspective that are in focus. By using the word children in this report, I aim young citizens not yet aged 15.
2 Method

This thesis is based upon a qualitative field study performed in Beijing during the autumn of 2010. The research has been explorative so far as its aim is to obtain as much information as possible within the field and because more than one method is used to gather this knowledge. Thanks to earlier studies and gatherings of information the research focus does not fully lie in the explorative studies, the work is furthermore descriptive and includes analyses.

I have chosen to perform a qualitative discovery-driven case study since it is more important for me to investigate the relations and processes within the field of perspectives on children among planners, rather than to compile statistical material and a definitive result. Social relations and processes are often linked to each other and affect each other mutually (Denscombe, 2009:60), and I see the planning of the urban public space as such a process.

The studies performed are a combination of literature studies, interviews and observations. This combination has provided me with a holistic comprehension rather than a one-sided result. Qualitative methods are generally suitable to use to explore attitudes, behavior and experiences and I have therefore chosen to perform my interviews with a limited group of persons (four) through dialogues instead of a greater amount of formulary interviews. These four interviews have though been completed with two e-mail interviews, so the total amount of interviewed persons is six.

I am well aware that my methods and the upcoming analyses are colored by the context I derive from. I am a Swedish young woman with mainly theoretical knowledge within the urban planning field, who travelled to China to perform interviews and observations. The collection of theoretical and empirical data and the performed analyses will naturally be affected by my Swedish (European) background and the fact that my main knowledge is based upon studies at BTH and Nanjing Forestry University and not practical experience from working life. I have sought to be objective in my analyses, but I understand that this is not fully possible.

2:1 Theoretical studies: literature studies

To form an understanding of what children are and how they act in the urban public space, as well as to form an understanding of what perspectives on children that exist, I have focused a major portion of my work on literature studies. Urban planning is complex so far as it has got many affecting factors, as economy, social studies, architecture, psychology and design. This means that to comprehend this specific subject; a wide literature study was needed.

The most articles used in this report were found through BTH’s library and the LIBRIS search as well as Elin@Blekinge. Search words that I have used to find information are for example: children, urban planning, China, Beijing, Shanghai, children + urban planning, children + public space, china + public space, china + children, children+rights+participation, children+participation and children+rights+china.
The focus within the studies is of wide range, from social studies with focus on children’s experience of space and the adult-child relationship, via studies of the Chinese society, to research made within the planning-architecture field concerning the children’s perspective within planning. As these themes have not posed a major part of my earlier scheduled studies, the search for information was sometimes time-consuming and a bit difficult. A lot of the literature found was not directly focusing on urban planning and planners’ perspective on children, but was useful nonetheless as I needed a wider understanding for both children, the children’s perspective and the context of China to perform my further studies.

2.2 Empirical studies: interviews
The interviews were performed exclusively in Beijing during November 2010. The answers from the e-mail interview were received in December 2010. Who to interview was chosen from discussions with Professor Han Linfei and lecturer Gunnar Nyström. The selection of interview objects can be said to be a bit non-representative for the planners of Beijing, because all the persons that I have interviewed speak English. This fact means that they all have international relations and work in positions where they have the chance to develop their language skills. By other words – no “regular” municipal urban planner (from the middle-aged guard) was represented. The old people in China might know English, and so does the young. The over-middle aged does not, because they were schooled during the period when English was not taught in Chinese schools. They are all well educated with a masters’ or PhD degree and are all a part of the urban planning field in Beijing in one way or another - but unfortunately none of them holds the specific education as an urban planner. The professions represented are architect (dominating), engineer and an urban morphologist. All persons interviewed, except one in the group interview, are Chinese. Two of the persons interviewed are men, four are women.

I have performed three dialogue interviews with a total of four persons and in addition two interviews based on e-mail (formulary interviews). All persons are promised full anonymity, why no names or full interview reviews will be issued in this report. Two of the interviews have been chosen to make up the main empiric further on in this thesis. These are the interviews named A and B.

A: Interview A was performed on the 4th of November in 2010 between 10-12 am at a café in a tower building of an office compound in northern Beijing. A is a man around the age of 30 who lives in a gated compound with his family (wife, one child).

B: Interview B was performed on the 5th of November in 2010 between 2-3.30 pm at B’s office in a hutong area in the middle of Beijing. B is a woman around the age of 30 who lives in the hutong area near by the office with a Western man.

To perform the interviews, an interview guide composed from my literature studies and knowledge about interviews was used. I had never performed a knowledge based interview before the work with this thesis and to start by performing interviews in English
was a challenge. Since I wanted to make sure that I would not run out of questions or having trouble with the language, I made my interview guide quite detailed (see attachment I, used in the interviews A and B). This resulted in that I partly left the guide, as the discussions went on well. Not all questions were asked, because they got answered through answers to other questions. In addition to this, some questions were not relevant to ask due to the earlier answers were “no” or “have never heard of”. The one interview that turned out to be problematic was the “group interview”. I was told on beforehand that I would have the chance to interview three persons representing an architectural / planning office for half an hour to an hour. Because of this, I modified my interview guide arranged for single interviews to fit a group – with more open questions based on discussions within the group. That guide focused more on the participant actions with children within planning projects (see attachment II, used in the interviews C and D). Unfortunately, it turned out that there were only two persons participating, with a minimum of time and a minimum of interest in answering my questions. Therefore, the discussions default and the interview were a bit “failed”. Though I got enough answers to create a picture of what I wanted to bring out. The e-mail interviews have got modified interview guides; more like formulaic interviews (see attachment III, used in the interviews E and F). This kind of interview was carried out because of shortage of time and trouble to arrange a meeting.

To shortly evaluate the interview guides, it can be said that I should have chosen to focus more on the surroundings of the persons interviewed – such as in what context they perform their daily work, what kind of factors that affect this work and so on. The guides that I used, focused more on the direct relation to children and their urban environments, which of course was needed – but not the only interesting subject.

The single interviews (A and B) provided me with the most comprehensive information, because there was no stress in the interview situation and the persons were interested in sharing their thoughts and knowledge. Therefore, they will be the focus for the analyses in the analyses chapter. In the categorization of planners’ perspectives on children, represented in the chart on page 73, also the interviews C and D are represented. Furthermore, through the analyses chapter, some comments from the E and F interviews are used to emphasize certain things. In short all interviews are represented in this report, but the A and B interviews are analysed more deeply and accounts the largest part of information.

The original interview guide is qualitative, structured and controlled so far as all questions concern the interviewed persons’ professional situation and knowledge and thoughts concerning children and urban environments. Though, the questions are open so far as they do not have any fixed answer alternatives and the person can answer whatever he or she wants. The modified interview guides are all based on the original one, so that the form and subjects of the questions do not differ much. All interview guides can be found in the attachments of the report (I, II, III). During the interviews I took notes and recorded to be able to remember what had been said. In the analyses, the notes were used to structure the chapter around certain themes. When citing the interviews in this report, I
have sometimes translated the language from spoken into written language to make them easier to understand.

In excess of these structured interviews I have also gathered knowledge and thoughts through discussions with persons with knowledge about China and the Children's Rights situation, at for example

- University of Gothenburg,
- the Swedish Embassy in Beijing and
- Save the Children in Stockholm and Beijing.

Though, these persons are not cited in this report.

2:3 Empirical studies: observations

The observations were performed in Beijing during October and November in 2010. They aim to provide me with a view of the children and their families’ activities in the urban public space in Beijing. In addition to this, the observations provided me with overviews of the Beijing's different urban environments, in combination with my experiences from the daily life of Beijing during the same two months. The gathered information is used mainly to provide the reader with a description of what environments that composes the daily surroundings for families and children in Beijing. It is also used to interpret the answers from the interviews, discussed in the first part of the analyses chapter.

To choose areas to observe, I was assisted by Professor Han in Beijing. I pursued to find both “good” and “bad” places for children within the city, but was only recommended to go to areas where children and their families are known to spend their time (“good” places). Therefore, the specific observations (out of the ordinary daily observations) came to be focused on “good” places. Some of the areas recommended, such as Beijing Zoo, I found too organized (with little space for children to act without boundaries) and I therefore chose not to observe them.

The observations were performed in an unstructured way with a discovery-driven aim. The focus lies in describing the environments where children and their families are moving around and what activities they undertake during the time of observations. Registration of the observations consists of photos and notes.

During the observations I chose to be unknown and not accessorial, in the meaning that I did not speak to anyone (except when necessarily) or made my aim known to the people observed. Nevertheless was I not seen in the situations when I was the only foreigner present. I cannot tell whether this affects the performed activities, but I mean that the effect is not that large. At the utmost, some of the children and their parents spent one minute talking about me looking curiously and waving, but then they returned to their activities.

The observations were mainly performed during daytime, by walking around in parks and streets. Sometimes, in areas with a lot of activities, I sat down for a while to observe some
of the activities more specifically. The fact that I wore likens clothes and brought a map and a camera, made me look like a tourist. Also, it might be right to stress that most of Beijing's citizens now are used to both tourists and foreigners living in Beijing. Most of the people who stare and react strongly in a meeting are domestic tourists.

The main focus of my recommended spots to observe was parks. Therefore, I chose to focus mainly on those and complement this focus with walks through the hutong areas nearby where I lived in Beijing (Dashilar Hutong). The parks chosen were Park of the altar of Heaven, Resource centre on the Rights of the Child (close to Guan Yuan Park) and Park of the Altar of the Sun. As mentioned above, the focus of the observations was to describe the environments and the by children performed activities.

In excess of the chosen parks I visited other parks and areas, for example Chao Yang park which I found too large to observe and of course these experiences constitute a part of my understanding even though I am not describing these observations in detail in this report. Since I stayed in Beijing for two months this time (earlier just as a tourist for a week) I have performed both aware and unaware observation also in my daily life. I have seen children and their families on their way to and from school, how restaurant owners bring their children to the restaurant during the weekend (where the children are studying or playing electronic games) and how small children play in the streets with chop sticks and yo-yos.

The chosen parks are to a large extent traditional parks in Chinese manners, with detailed plans for where to walk and not (paved pedestrian walks and distinct elevated green areas) and arranged plantations. There are also arranged ponds, activity areas and small houses for shelter from bad weather and sun. The activity areas vary a bit between the parks, but pose for example exercise equipment for adults, artificial mountains for walking and playgrounds for children. The environments and activities will be described more detailed below.
2:3:1 Park of the altar of heaven (Tiantan Gongyuan)

This park I visited the first time during a Saturday in the end of October and the second time during a weekday afternoon in the middle of November. The entrance fee for the park (adults) is 15 Yuan (about the same in SEK) and the park is well-visited by families, elderly and groups of tourists. Also, many young couples come here to walk around or sit on a bench for a talk. In this park, there are no specific activity areas for children (like playgrounds) nor for adults. Instead, all kinds of activities are taken place in the pavilions, pavements and actually even in some of the green areas. In most of the park in Beijing, it's not allowed to tread the grass areas, although in some parts of this park it seems allowed.

The activities taken part in the parks, like dancing and exercising, are mostly performed by adults. But also children do exercise. Accompanied by their parents or grandparents, they roller-skating, skateboarding or just walking around looking on other people, the nature and performed activities. In this park, which was my first observation of such kind in Beijing overall, I saw children playing in a group. They did not know each other on before-hand and played in a grassy area full of leaves. Not just the group-playing part was an unusual observation, but also that the children got the chance to play in the leaves.
In addition to this, the park has some more quiet parts, where you are allowed to walk along paths in the earth between trees (almost like a forest). In these parts there are few children, and those who come here with their parents are engaged in taking photographs in front of trees, large stones or other nature elements. Chinese parents are often taking photographs of their children in different environments to collect memories of what they have seen.
This park was visited during a Sunday in early November. The park was full of families and grandparents with children and seemed to be very popular. There is no entrance fee to this park, and many children come here not only to visit the park but also to visit the learning center within the park, where lessons for the piano, the violin and so on are kept.

The park has many activity areas and playgrounds. Some are for free (regular playgrounds) and some cost from 5 to 20 Yuan. The more advanced activities are almost like a Tivoli, with roller coasters and merry-go-round. There is also an area with pottering that can be bought from stalls and then made parent-child on chairs and tables nearby the stalls. Many children explode because they cannot have the type of pottering they request and their parents seem embarrassed in these situations.

The park is popular and well-managed in some parts, mainly the activity areas. The majority of the families visiting seems wealthy, but most of them only bring one child. The park is a cooperation agency to UNICEF, but it does not seem to be any type of UNICEF-linked activity in the park or its surroundings.
This park is located in the Sanlitun area of Beijing, the most western parts with embassies, western restaurants and many foreigners living around. This park I visited during one midday in the middle of the week, and during one Sunday afternoon in November. The differences were major. During the weekday I saw only a few visitors, older men and people taking a walk during their work-day (dressed in uniforms). During the weekend, the park was filled with families, but not many grandparents with their grandchildren were seen.

In this park, there is one separated activity area for children's activities. Inside the area there are small roller coasters and merry-go-rounds, trampolines and pottering to buy and make child and parent together. Thus, in general these activities are not very well-managed. The pond in the middle of the east side of the park, where the children’s activities are situated, is popular for “fishing”. In the park there is a mix of people with different origins, Chinese, Americans, European and people from other Asian countries. The families are actively socializing with each other and the parent – child communication is more obvious in this park compared to the other park observed.

*Family activities in Park of the Altar of Sun*
This area is a hutong area close to where I stayed during my time in Beijing. For this observation, I spent a few hours, during two weekdays, in the morning and the early day to walk around.

The area is situated in the south-west of the Forbidden City and consists of both tourist-streets and classical hutong areas. In the main tourist-street (Dazhalan west street) there are many Chinese restaurants, small street corner restaurants, shops and snack-stores. No international brands, like KFC or McDonalds are found in this street, and most of the tourists visiting the area are domestic. Furthermore, along this street, there are some international hostels (mainly international tourists) and Chinese hotels (mainly domestic tourists). The Dazhalan street is prepared (during 2009) with a flat pavement and is open for car traffic only during late evenings, nights and early morning. The rest of the time only minor vehicles like motorcycles and bikes are welcome among the walkers. Though, these vehicles take a lot of space and the pedestrians are at a disadvantage as in most of the streets in Beijing. The street is about seven meters wide and the buildings vary from one to five floors. The surrounding streets are of minor scale. They are narrower (from one to five meters) and the houses are lower, with three floors at the most. In these streets, the range is varied through my walk. You can find smaller restaurants and shacks and vendors selling fruit or supplies. Some of the courtyards spotted from the streets look well-managed, some are rundown. There are public toilets used by the residents and surprisingly many cars and other vehicles make their way through the narrow streets filled with garbage and left-over gadgets.
The daily life in the hutong is intense and here the children are allowed to run around and play. Most of them seem to be of a lower class, but very few look directly poor. During the daytime, the younger children are accompanied by their grandparents or mother, often near by the parents’ store or food stall or directly outside the house of residence. If the children are a part of a greater group, the groups most often consist of elderly gathering for discussions or playing cards (predominantly older men). Some children are playing the yo-yo two and two, but very seldom are children seen in groups running around playing.

In the tourist street the life for the children seem quite the same as to children in the smaller street. The main difference is the amount of traffic and also the standards of housing and other facilities. More children are being carried here, many of the younger ones being carried for long times every day. When the younger children are playing in the street, they are more supervised compared to the ones in the smaller streets. They are told not to run and many of them are playing in the entrance of their parents store and restaurants, with whatever they can find (chopsticks, garbage, and plastic gadgets).

*The life of children in the Dashilar Hutong area*
2.4 The analyses

After the gathering of information through literature studies, interviews and observations the main task was to report what was found and analyse this from the main question. In the analyses, the empiric from the observations and interviews was analysed from the theoretical approaches gathered based on the literature studies.

The analyses are divided into two main themes: Children in the urban public space in Beijing and The perspective on children among urban planners in Beijing. In the first theme, the observation studies and empiric from interviews were used to describe and analyse what kind of environments that makes up the surroundings of children in Beijing and how this might affect their lives. In the second theme, the empiric from the interviews was used to conclude what perspective planners in Beijing can be said to hold. From this gathering, a categorization was performed based on Francis and Lorenzo (2002) seven identified perspectives on children. The categorization was based on the four oral interviews described earlier in this chapter (A-D). After the analysis parallels were drawn between the result and theoretical approaches which resulted in a conclusive chapter that foregoes the discussion chapter where the result and sources are critically discussed.

2.5 The study process

The work with this thesis has been performed in Karlskrona and Skara (Sweden) and Beijing (China). It can be divided into the following stages:

**Preparation:** April - August 2010 in Karlskrona.

Focusing on finding contacts in Beijing, writing a draft program for the thesis, applying for the MFS scholarship and perform initiative literature studies.

**Collecting of background information:** August – September 2010 in Skara.

Focusing on compiling the program for the thesis (with aim, main questions and limitation), preparing for empirical studies and perform literature studies.

**Field study:** October - November 2010 in Beijing.

Focusing on performing interviews and observations and to broaden and deepen the literature studies.

**Analysis:** December - March 2010/2011 in Skara.

Gathering the methodological and empirical materials in the report and analysing the empirical material from the methodological approach in order to answer the main question.

During the process of this thesis I have changed some things regarding limitation. For example, my initial thought was to make a comparison between Sweden and China, seen to how the children's perspective is taken into consideration in the planning of urban public spaces. Though, after some literature and methodological studies, I realized that this would be too large to grasp within a Masters' thesis. This mostly because of the time needed to make interviews with both Swedish and Chinese planners, but also as the
possibilities to absorb written plan documents in China and compare them were complicated, seen to language difficulties and accessibility. More detailed I had thoughts about using the phrase urban public place instead of urban public space, since children's areas are often referred to as children's places instead of children's spaces. Though, the word place to create a too distinct boundary for one place, while space is more like an area or sphere – and what I want to research is more like children in the cities spheres rather than the cities distinct places.

Over time I was working with the observations, I came to realize that my focus was mainly on areas where wealthy families are spending their time. This is not surprisingly since, as mentioned above, the focus came to be “good” places for children instead of both “good” and “bad”, and the “good” areas in the city are most often focused on wealthy families. Even though only one of the parks observed got an entrance fee, you can tell from both the observations and the traditions of the city that not everyone is welcome to visit. To change the focus a bit, I added the observation in the hutong area of Dashilar where a greater mix of family types was found. Though, this observation did provide me with much knowledge concerning the life of the poorer children. It would take a lot more time and language knowledge to perform such a study (to visit hidden migrant workers and so on) and therefore my studies are still inevitably focused on more wealthy families and children.

The practical work of the thesis was organized through lists of what to do and when, quite detailed. Early in the process I tried to find what kind of headings that I would use in the final report and kept entering actual information into that sort of document all the time. In Beijing the days were divided into “at the office”- (literature studies, preparations and writing), “interviews”- and “observation”-days. The days at the office were dominating in time, but the observations and interviews would not be possible to perform without them, because I had not enough previous knowledge to know what to do and how.
LITERATURE REVIEW
3 Literature review

I have, to an extent wider than I guessed before I started my research, found literature and studies that deal with the subject that this report is based on: Children and urban environments. A lot of the studies are focused on specific environments for children, such as schoolyards, kindergartens or playgrounds. Another primarily deals with the children’s participation within planning processes or methods of performing citizen participation with children. The research that is available today is mainly focused on how to (among adults) interpret the children’s perspective and children’s needs or how to make children an active participant in the planning processes. Since this is not the focus of my studies, I have come to read a lot of publications and articles that are not directly linked to my limitation but that has helped me to form my aim and research question. What research that has been most useful is shown in the theoretical approach chapter, but some important researchers will be described below.

**Norman Stockman:** is a British sociologist with at specialized interest in China. He is now retired but still contributes to the postgraduate course leading to the Master of Chinese Studies at the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. From teaching the course “Chinese Society” for over 10 years, the interest in writing the book *Understanding Chinese Society* (Stockman, 2000) emerged. The book introduces the reader to the context of today’s past and future Chinese society which has been very helpful for me in the preparations for and writing of this report (University of Aberdeen, 2011-02-09 and Stockman, 2000).

**Maria Kylin:** is a lecturer in Landscape architecture at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Alnarp. Her doctoral thesis *Från koja till plan – om barnperspektiv på utemiljön i planeringssammanhang* (Perspectives on children in urban planning contexts) (Kylin, 2004) shows how children’s experiences of and in the outdoor environments can be seized in different planning situations. This thesis has primarily provided me with what differences there are between children’s and planner’s perspective on ambient environments and discussions about the children’s perspective within urban planning (SLU, 2010-10-11).

**Mark Francis and Ray Lorenzo:** from University of California (Davis, USA) and Milano, Italy have published an article which presents a historical and critical review of children’s participation in city planning and design where seven realms of perspectives within urban planning are identified (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002). This article has been very useful in the methodological approach of this thesis as well as the analyses.

**Philip Allmendinger:** is a professor of Land Economy, member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors with a special interest in research about Planning Theory and Practice, Governance and Regional Planning and Development and planning regulation. One of his publications is the book *Planning Theory* (Allmendinger, 2009) which has been useful in during the work with theoretical approaches for the studies in this report (University of Cambridge, 2010-01-05).
4 Theoretical approach

In this chapter, the theoretical approach from which the empirical material will be analysed in the upcoming chapter is gathered. The theoretical approach is divided into three focuses:

- **The child and urban environments**: where children, children’s environmental needs, children’s places and positive and negative characteristics of urban environments for children are described.
- **The planner and the perspective on children**: where definitions of children’s perspective, different types of perspective on children and the connections between the children’s perspective and urban planning is described.
- **The cultural, historical and contemporary context of China**: where the family life and the life of children in China, the history of the public space in Beijing, the political context, contemporary urban planning in Beijing and the human right situation in China is described.

4:1 Definitions

In the description of the theoretical approach as well as the further analyses, the following definitions are relevant. The definitions are my own, based on earlier experiences and knowledge gained from articles and literature.

**Children**: By using the term *children and youth* I mean young citizens not yet aged 18 years. More detailed, by *children* I mean young citizens not yet teenagers, which are the focused group in this report. This focus is chosen because Chinese children aged 15 to a large extent leave their parents’ home to live at boarding schools and by that age start acting more like adults in the urban environments.

**Children’s perspective**: By this term I aim the perspective that either children hold of their surroundings and their life, or the adult perspective on children and their environments and life. The main focus in this thesis is the adult planners’ perspective on children.

**Planning (urban planning)**: When the word *planning* is used in this report, I mean planning such as performed by politicians and professionals in order to plan for the urban and rural areas of a country. The term *urban planning* is used because I find that term more appropriate for the planning in Beijing, compared to spatial planning (fysisk planering) which is primarily used in Sweden. Urban planning is concentrated around the physical form of the city and its functions, as well as strategic development of a city’s areas and its use. It includes everything from traffic planning to the design of parks (even though this might vary between cities and countries division).

**Public space (urban public space)**: With the term *urban public space*, I target areas in cities used for public needs and used by the citizens and visitors. For example, parks, streets and squares are places that constitute public space. In these areas, both controlled and uncontrolled activities takes part – such as vendors selling or children playing.
4:2 The child and urban environments

4:2:1 Children

What is a child? According to the UN convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is every human being not yet aged 18 years (UNICEF 2010-09-25). Biologically, the humans are children from their birth until their puberty (Nationalencyklopedin, 2011-03-22a). From this last definition, you can tell that the child and its childhood are individually decided and they depend on the person that poses the child. Therefore, children need to be understood from their position in a system of generations; they cannot only be defined from their physical and mental maturity (Halldén, 2003:16). This means, that we cannot see children as one homogenous group of young people, which adults often tend to do. Children are individuals and have individual needs, which need to be taken into consideration when planning cities.

The term child is in the everyday language loaded with conceptions that concentrate on the differences between adults and children. Children are tiny, weak and fragile. They need to be fed, given physical shelter and care. They are spontaneous and unreliable and they need to be protected and fostered to be self-restraint (Näsman, 1995:291). But in addition to this, children are creative and intelligent and their rights and knowledge are worth as much as adults’.

4:2:2 Children’s environmental needs

Swedish research often concludes that children do not use nor describe outdoor environments in the same way as adults. Their activities and movements are tightly linked to the physical environment's design. They describe environments mainly based on what activities that can take place in the specific area, not naturally how it looks (Mårtensson, 2005:4 and Kylin, 2004: attachment 1:72). Children orientate by characteristics as hills, trees, pounds and paths. A lively street or traffic might make up the boundary for their play. As adults, most people lose this relation to the environment (Nilsson, 2010:64) and start using other landmarks or boundaries in the view of environments. Those might be the place of work, the municipal boundary or the district boundary.

As citizens, children are the one part of the population that uses different areas the most. They explore new areas from what can be done there, what can be found and what play that can take place in the specific environment. They explore places from both a social and cultural point of view and this is done from the context where the child lives with its parents and other closed socially related. As the child develops, the area that it can explore grows and as a result its knowledge about different areas character, design and physical context expand. The curiosity around the physical unknown transcend gradually into a curiosity concerning the social unknown – and the physical environment becomes a background to happenings taken place in a social context (Nordström, 2001:50). When children explore their ambient environment they create an understanding for and knowledge about the surroundings, and at the same time they test the limits for what actions can be performed where and when – and what they are allowed to do (Nordström, 2001:49).
A study performed by Kylin and Lieberg in Eslöv, Sweden (Kylin, 2004: attachment 1:70) shows that both teachers and planners agree that the best and most amusing places for children are the wild nature or other green areas. These are areas not “planned” with qualities like variation in vegetation, movable materials to build tree houses from, water, bushes and trees (Kylin, 2004: attachment 1:70). The available area for play and free activities affects what activities that are performed – larger areas provide better potential for play compared to limited areas (Lenninger, 2006:6). Parks in urban environments hold many qualities that children can relate positively to, both planned and unplanned. They include wild, spacious and playful qualities and are often filled with other people to watch, play with or interact with - which make them suitable for playing, and other social activities that children seek and need (Nilsson, 2010:45).

Grandmother and child playing in Chao Yang Park

Naturally, children of different ages and stages of development have different needs in outdoor environments. These differences will not be described in detail in this report, but in summary it means that for small children the physical and social environments are mixed in the play. Every play is a movement and every movement is a part of the play. The small and middle young children spend their days within quite narrow spatial limits. As they grow older, they walk further away from their parents and develop their own social relations. Older children and teenagers spend most of their time in adult environments, and the social interaction is the critical element for what environment to choose (Tallhage Lönn, 2000:69-70). The need of supplies and physical elements in the ambient environments follow this development. The small child needs a safe environment close to its home where he or she can spend his/her outdoor time together with a parent who supervises and support. It might be a playground or a park, for example. The middle young child needs to be able to leave these safe areas close to home to some extent, to
explore their surroundings. For example, they need to be able to move (safely) with a bicycle to the friend living some distance away. And the older children and the teenagers need places to meet friends, away from the adults and parents, but in close interaction with them. It might be a youth club or a café in the city center (Tallhage Lönn, 2000 and Lenninger & Olsson, 2006, among others).

4:2:3 Children and urban environments
Children in cities and children in the countryside have different possibilities for play in their ambient environments. Children do not follow the norm (of adults) that they should stick to the playgrounds to play. They carry the play along, and therefore they play in areas not designed for playing (Nilsson, 2007:58). Adults most often want to protect their child and arrange the best context for them to play in. Due to intense traffic and the risk of crimes in urban streets, they see those places as inn suitable for children. This limits the child’s change to independent outdoor movements, which at the same time is needed for their social development (Elsley, 2004).

To a larger extent today, especially in urban environments, children spend a lot of their time in places separated from other parts of the society – such as homes, schools or other institutions. In these places, their actions are often observed and evaluated by adults (Fog Olwig & Gullov, 2003:2). When in these adult controlled environments, children have little space to develop social relations and cultural values that are needed for the child – not always appreciated by the adults (Fog Olwig & Gullov, 2003:3). As different places frame different kinds of social meeting and opportunities this might prevent the natural development of the child (from physical to social experiences) and disables the child to use the physical environments in the ways it want, as described above.

The environments of the cities can be described as deteriorating for children to live in compared to live in the countryside. The increase in car use and social dangers gives that urban public spaces often are unattractive and even dangerous for children to spend their time in (Karsten, 2003:457). The small elements that attract the child, like cones, sticks, stones and trees are not as often found in the large city as in the countryside or small cities. This gives, that many urban environments do not stimulate the child in the way it seek and need, to a larger extent than adults need or can imagine. Furthermore, other factors affect the child more than adults. For example, air and noise pollution, with negative health impacts, affect human of all ages. Children in cities are more exposed to heavy traffic amounts and dangerous traffic environments compared to children living outside the city. This limits both their chances to play but also to become more independent in their movements, since children can’t act alone in a safe way in car dominated environments before the age of 12 (Nilsson, 2010:53).

Within the research, there is also a discussion about high-rise buildings’ negative impact on humans and especially on children. For example, research in "miljonprogramområden" in Sweden has shown that children who lives in the higher floor of a building has got less outdoor play time compared to those in the lower floors (Hans Wohlin at KTH, Nilsson, 2003:6). Liken research in Denmark (Jeanne Morville,
Copenhagen Danish Building Research Institute in 1969) has shown that children in high raised building have got shorter time to play outside, problems to leave their home on their own to play (because of troubles with stairs and elevators), greater problems with interaction, less friendships and are more often accompanied by adults in their play – compared to children living in other types of accommodation (Nilsson, 2003:7-8).

4:2:4 Children's places
The child's daily environments can be categorized into two types of networks. One is made by adult-official places like schoolyards, pavements, playgrounds and gardens. The other one is a network created by the child itself, with places often hidden for adults. These places have a meaning given by activities performed there – like big rocks that act as a meeting place or the forests that fit perfect to play catch the flag (Kylin, M. 1999:21).

Francis and Lorenzo (2002:158) have divided children's places into the following typology, which describes what kind of environments that constitute the life of the child:

**Institutional places**: such as schools, schoolyards, daycare, theme parks and sport parks.

**Public spaces**: such as streets, sidewalks, parks, malls and beaches.

**Private spaces**: such as home and private gardens and within the family car.

**Found places**: such as vacant lots, natural areas, waterfronts and street corners.

**Found / off limit places**: such as discovery/adventure places and vacant lots.

**Wilderness**: within urban or natural areas.

**New and innovative areas**: such as community gardens, school gardens, city farms, greenways, skate parks and cyberspace.

Important to state is that these type of places are identified in a European context, in China a liken categorization within research might differ.

4:2:5 Positive and negative characteristics of urban environments for children
A study performed by Susan Elsley (Elsley, 2004) shows that, in general, young people do like the ambient environment they live in. They like places that are arranged for children (such as parks or soccer fields) but they do not always use these areas the way planners intended them to be used, which sometimes leads to tensions between agencies and children in the areas. Furthermore, as mentioned in other research above, many children appreciate the wild areas surrounding communities where they can run, swing, climb and so on. As negative characteristics, children identified places where they had been exposed to something unpleasant or places that are unsafe or destroyed (Elsley, 2004:157-158). Elsley concludes that children today seems to like the same environments as children have through decades, although other environments (like city centers or neighborhood surroundings) have gone through a major development since.
To fulfill children’s needs, both designed areas for play and informal areas within their neighborhood are needed (Elsley, 2004:155) and they need to move freely between different areas and elements to explore, play and create their own places (Lenninger, 2006:17). The following lists are compiled from the book *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth* where David Driskell (2002:24-26) has identified what makes a city a good place for young people, versus what are negative characteristics (creates non good places). This identification was made through young people’s own evaluations of their local communities.

According to Driskell (2002), a good place for young people (children and youth up to the age of 18) holds the following characteristics:

- **Social integration:** where young people feel welcome and have the chance to integrate with other age groups in both public and semi-public places. They feel a sense of belonging and of being valued.

- **A variety of interesting activity settings:** for young people where they can meet friends, play sports or informal games, join in community work, shop and run errands, avoid adult supervision, observe the actions on the street or other public spaces or just to be alone.

- **Safety and freedom of movement:** with a sense of safety, even though crime exists, because the young people know the local area and the other residents and interact with them regularly. When the sense of safety exists, this open up for them to move more freely, to meet friends and take part in activities.

- **Peer meeting places:** where young people can play and socialize on their own but still official, like a street corner, a café or a place in a local park or plaza.

- **Cohesive community identity:** that young people can be a part of through festivals and cultural life. Young people are well aware of their community's history and feel proud for its accomplishments.

- **Green areas:** that is accessible to young people, like green fields for organized sports, parks with plantings or safe forests or overgrown greens.

Negative characteristics are:

- **Stigma and social exclusion:** when young people feel unwanted or left out, when they can’t interact with other age groups and be seen in public places and when local media often report on "youth problems".

- **Boredom:** when places arranged for young people are so sterile, featureless or littered that young people avoid them.

- **Fear of harassment and crime:** when young people avoid areas or sections of the community because of fear of harassment or violence which makes these areas inaccessible even though they might be close.

- **Racial or ethnic tension:** where young people experience fear or stigmatization based on their origin.
- **Heavy traffic**: where streets and other places are taken over by cars (both moving and parked) so that little space is left for persons to move around. Great volumes of traffic create major barriers for children's movement in local communities. High speed and great volume of traffic also make areas not directly connected to the traffic unpleasant to visit.

- **Uncollected rubbish and litter**: which are seen by young people as signs of neglect and makes parks and streets ugly and unattractive.

- **Lack of basic services**: such as water, sewerage and waste collection which results in work for young people (such as fetching water) as well as the indignity and shame of being dirty and increases the prevalence of disease.

- **Sense of political powerlessness**: when young people doubt the value of their ideas and opinions and are skeptical about adults taking them seriously. This often results in, or derives from, doubts about the community's ability to change in a positive direction and skepticism about politicians and the political system.

*Children playing in Dashilar Hutong*
The urban planner and the perspective on children

What is "the children's perspective"?

Children's perspective can mean to act in children's interest, but that is not the only possible meaning. The term children's perspective is ambiguous, used as an ideological term with a large rhetoric capacity and in research context as a methodological term (Halldén, 2003:12-13). But fundamental to achieve, use or know the children's perspective is to accept and stress children as a social category in the society and to emphasize knowledge about children's conditions and rights (Näsman, 1995:292).

By choosing what definition on children that is used, determination is made whether children are seen as “future citizens” (not yet capable of full participation in matters which affect them) or seen as “fully citizens” already capable of participating in affairs affecting them (Simpson, 1997:908). If children are seen as future citizens, they fall outside the frame of who to consult in matters concerning citizens. Thus, according to the Convention on the Right of the Child (12th article) children should be taken as real citizens – as they have got the same rights as anyone else. China adopted this convention in 1992. In an urban context, the children's perspective mean (among other things) to let the value of children's places reflect in the structure and design of the whole city (Kylin, 2005:8). It is also to give space to children within the society, to let them achieve experiences and use these experiences (Halldén, 2003:12).

Every attempt to judge what is good and bad for children is made within the discourse of its social context, which includes both what benchmarks that are used for such a judgment as well as the views of who and which argument to trust. These positions are often unspoken but will be made visible in the discussions and thoughts about what is the best for children (Näsman, 1995:279).

Thanks to the Convention on the Rights of the Child’s actualization, the children's perspective has taken a position on political agendas around the world which also has affected the daily work of many professions. Though, the children's perspective as such is not new, earlier there were discussions from what was seen as best for the child, for example while handling placements in foster care (Halldén, 2003:13).

Within the discourse, there is a discussion between what the children’s perspective is and what a child’s perspective is (barnperspektiv vs. Barns perspektiv). This can be compared to the difference between children's culture and a child’s culture (barnkultur vs. Barns kultur). The difference between the children's perspective and the child's perspective is: does someone represent the child or does the child represent itself? The point is that the children's perspective includes the child’s perspective, but this is interpreted through a representative (Halldén, 2003:13). And, as mentioned earlier, this thesis is focused on the planner’s perspective on children, since it handles the question of the planner’s willingness and ability to interpretive the child’s perspective.
4:3:2 Different types of perspective on children

Despite the differences between the children's perspective (perspectives on children) and the child's perspective, there are also differences in how the children's perspective is manifested. From the adult perspective, a child can be represented as the adult is trying to understand how the child sees the world and its conditions and forward this knowledge. But in addition to this, the adult perspective can imply that the adult point of view of children’s needs is stressed (Quarsell, 2003:102 and Näsman, 1995:280). Thus can the adult perspective mean that the adult (consciously or unconsciously) represent adult values from an adult context instead of the children’s’ (Näsman, 1995:280).

The idea of perspective can be given different meanings. It might stand for a remarked position but also for a point of view or a presented theory. You can both see something from a perspective, but also find yourself within a perspective (Quarsell, 2003:102). According to Nilsson, IPA- children's right to play in Sweden, three types of children's perspective can be identified. These are:

- the adult perspective (including the individual view of childhood and its conditions),
- the societies’ perspective (that consist of the general perspective of children within the society, manifested through for example the law) and
- the child's own perspective which is the individual child's perspective on its own life and its surroundings (Nilsson, 2007:56).

Further on in this report, the focus lies in the adult and societies perspective on children: which can be divided into several detailed focuses.

The adult can see the child either as a subject or an object. When the child is seen as a subject, the adult try to use the child’s knowledge and experiences as resources, through different kind of actions. When a child is seen as an object, the adult instead shoulder the responsibility to representate the child’s best in the measures concerning her/him. These last definition origins in the adult prevail, because it is both natural and socially acceptable that adults representate children (Näsman, 1995:292).

Thus, today, it is getting more and more interesting among planners and others to work actively with the children's perspective and even more communities are attempting to include children in the design and planning of their ambient environments (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002:157-158). In the article Seven Realms of Children's Participation, Francis and Lorenzo gather studies and knowledge about children's participation within design and planning projects. They identify seven realms (perspectives) that can be said to dominate among planners within projects on how children's experiences and the children's perspective should be stressed and involved.
The following seven perspectives on children's participation identified by Francis and Lorenzo are, as summarized:

- **Romantic**: with "children as planners" in focus. Within this realm children are seen as the best designers of their own environments, and the realm has its early roots in an ideological period when children were considered to have better ideas compared to adults. During this period adult participants were often asked to draw memories from favorite places from their childhood. Today this realm is not used within citizen participation, but it has led to a development of knowledge of the important concept of childhood – which is used in many other realms.

- **Advocacy**: when planners plan for children. This realm grew during the 1960's when many large scale housing projects in Europe were developed. The focus was that planners became proponents for the poor and powerless (adults and further on children) which at first resulted in the preventing of new large scale motorways but later on resulted in provoking recreational space for children. Thus, children themselves were not participants in the processes, just spoken for. Another limitation within this realm is that it is not holistic and sometimes ignore the official decision making process due to the aim to fulfill its needs.

- **Needs**: when social scientist speak for children. Within this realm, research within environmental psychology is used for advanced thoughts about children's environments, where researchers mean that children have unique needs that should be seen in the design for children's environments. These environments might be parks or other half-natural environments and the research derives mainly from geologists, psychologist, sociologists, landscape architects and planners like Kevin Lynch. Also in this realm a negative characteristic is that only research is taken into consideration, the children do not have to participate.

- **Learning**: where children are learners. This realm is a bit more modern and sees environmental learning and education as a central focus of participatory processes with children. This often leads to a development of knowledge and sometimes also to a social change within the society, but seldom to realization of change or redevelopment of physical environments.

- **Rights**: where children are seen as citizens. This is a more recent realm which focuses on defining and working for children's rights within urban environments, based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is an important evolution in the thinking and handling of children's participation; that children should be seen as fully authorized participants – as they hold important competence. Principles handled are both democratically, right-based and empowerment, but a limitation is that the realm tends to focus so intense on children's rights that their environmental needs are disregarded.

- **Institutional**: where children are seen as adults. Within this context, children are treated like small adults and are expected to hold the same knowledge and power as adults. Citizen participation is today a general requirement in many developed countries, which has led to an institutionalization of participation processes, limited in time and space. Then the real aim of citizen participation might be lost,
and the children’s participation is lost due to the lack of spontaneous and child centered participation projects. Furthermore, these demanded participation projects often results in a limited change in the physical environments compared to the original ambitions.

- **Proactive**: which is a more integrative and effective way to involve children in design and planning processes, called participation with vision? This type of participation process leaves the traditional forms of participation and has its origins in concepts of what are good environments for children in combination with correct principles and methods aimed to generate genuine child- and adult participation in planning processes. This realm is seen as communicative and educational, but has limitations by difficulties to be used in all situations and that planners and designers need special education to work ambitious with it. (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002:157-165).

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*Girls and their mothers on the way home from school, in the Sanlitun area*

### 4:3:3 Urban planning with a children’s perspective

As mentioned earlier, planners (adults) and children experience and describe physical environments in different ways and from different starting points. The “plan”, which is the most used instrument of planners, is hard to grasp for a child. This is one of the reasons why the children's perspective is hard to handle within urban planning according to Kylin and Olwig (Kylin, 2004: attachment 3:2 and Olwig, 1990:47). Planning that includes the children's perspective need to include also the knowledge to plan for and with children – as a specific planners' talent. To be able to do this, the planner needs an insight in the children’s perspective of the surrounding environment, creativity and a
critical view of how the society’s development affects the children's habitat (Kylin, 2004: attachment 3:2).

To ease up the communication between the children and the planners, the adults (planners) need to provide children with a graspable context (Lenninger, 2006:2). Adults need to understand how children describe their surrounding environment and what is important to them; otherwise it is hard to take their opinions as credible input to the citizen participation (Nordström, 2001:60).

To plan for children is not only to make analyses of what they need in their surrounding environment or to make it possible for the children to express their meaning. It is rather the transfer of this knowledge into the design of the urban environment that is the current issue (Kylin, 2004: attachment 3:3-4). This problem occurs because the question of children’s needs is casted in the planning discourse where the sight of spatial environment is spatial. This is complicated, which gives that the found knowledge is hard to handle within the planning discourse (Kylin, 2004: attachment 3:3-4).

The spatial environment is very important for children and it is of great importance to their development and satisfaction with their lives (Nordström, 2001:59-60.). But when the interest in attractive land is large, the economical strong developers are more often, compared to children, the winners. The children are more and more often bereaved their playgrounds and informal meeting places, on behalf of private interests (Almjell, 2001:167.) Children's need of places on the ground vary with their age. The youngest children need to be close to the adults to feel safe, elder children need to be able to move away from the home and the adults as a part of their evolutionary process (Almjell, 2001:168.) The planners' task must then be to provide these different areas and settings.

Generally, planners do not see children act in areas that are not designed for them. They usually focus mainly on places like playgrounds and schoolyards, as these areas figuratively “show” that there has been a focus on children's places within the project (Kylin, 2004: attachment 3:2). That sort of planning cannot seize children's own experiences on outdoor environment (Kylin, 2004: attachment 1:70) and to achieve benefits within the planning processes, focus need to be changed.

Hart (1992) concludes in the article From Tokenism to Citizenship that children are the most photographed but the least listened to of all citizens. Adults often put children at the centre of attention, but are seldom interested in listening to their knowledge and thoughts (Hart, 1992). This means that everyone that has got a right to speak out leaves their childhood behind before they can tell it and by that make a change (Näsmann, 1995:300). And if this happens, the children's rights and needs are overshadowed.

The impressions and experiences that children achieve from physical environments are essential for their development. Children have great ability to find positive opportunities and bond to important places and details in their physical environments. Furthermore, the individual identity is linked to important places and environments in the surroundings as well as social relations to other people, who are affected by experiences, achieved earlier
(Tallhage Lönn, 2000:69). Important is to create an environment for children that guarantee the maximal chances to development, both physically, mentally, spiritually, morally and socially, so that children are prepared for independent living in the free society (Nilsson, 2003:52-53).

Research has traditionally been focused around children's needs and what is best for children. By the dialogue concerning the Convention on the Rights of the Child the discussion was broadened to concern the children's right to respect. It has also been “more important” in political and pedagogical context to “have a children’s perspective”, both figuratively and practically. This creates a problem; since to handle from what is seen as best for the child and fulfill children's needs can sometimes go counter to treat children with the respect they have got the right to (Quarsell, 2003:102-103). The ethical issues are important when touching this theme, both in terms of who is responsible for handling the children’s rights, but also in respect of integrity and the child’s consent when using them as stakeholders (Halldén, 2003:17).

As adults, we often see children as ”not yet adults” or ”growing” - but we seldom add an eigen value to the childhood itself. In some ways, children are seen as without knowledge or ability to become participants because they are “just children” (Quarsell, 2003:103). But Elisabet Näsmann point out that she (and many among her) sees the eigen value in seeing and listening to children's knowledge and experiences about their ambient environment (Näsmann, 1995:286). But still, focus is changing. From the middle of the 1960’s, a new view of children and childhood has grown within the research fields. Earlier, children were studied within clinical study situations, but today the focus lies more in studying them within their own context (Dahlgren & Hultqvist, 1995:63). From living under conditions based only on adult conceptions, children have become more visible within the society and the childhood's eigenvalue has grown. Today children achieve higher priority and are within many contexts seen as important individuals (Tallhage Lönn, 2000:53 and Halldén, 2003:15). During the 20th century the voice of the children has grown stronger, but focus has fallen more on the security surrounding children. Technical development and motoring have limited the lebensraum of children and in combination with safety measures a great limitation in children’s freedom has occurred. Thus, their needs are more listened to and their material needs are highly prioritized (Tallhage Lönn, 2000:53).
A family enjoying the leaves in Fragrant Hills Park, Beijing

To summarize, perspectives on children among adults can mean a variation of things. It can mean that an adult is trying to understand a child’s perspective on things and wanting to represent this among other adults. It can also mean that the adult has got his or her approach on children’s needs and wanting to let them be heard.

Since the plan, often used by planners to illustrate a project and describe environments, is hard for children to grasp – planners that do want to use children actively in planning processes need to work to find new methods of illustration and participation compared to the traditional.

In large scale cities, as well as in many other environments, the attraction of central land areas leads to high land prices and discussion about what to prioritize in these areas. If children are to be given space also in central areas of the city – planners need to be strong representatives for them and their needs because they are seldom given the chance to be so themselves. Planners also need to see beyond the traditional areas that children are supposed to interact in, such as playgrounds. All types of various environments are essential for children to experience during their growth to be able to develop into an adult. As the urbanization of the human’s areas goes on – children and their environmental need are set aside for the benefit of stronger economical voices and as the houses turn taller and the vehicles grasp areas that earlier were available for play and walking. Thus, if urban planning with a children’s perspective should be made possible, planners need to be strong representatives for children’s need and voice in urban planning processes.
4:3:4 Laws and regulations for children’s rights

The law for planning and construction in Sweden rests upon the principle of citizen participation but does not ensure that children’s knowledge and thoughts should be a part of the citizen dialogue. The implementation of this relies on the engagement on the individual municipalities (Tallhage Lönn, 2000:38). The individual municipalities are represented by planners, which has got the major responsibility for maintaining the citizen participation throughout the planning processes. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (13th article), all children have the right to use the instruments that they prefer to express their opinions. These ways to express opinions can for example be to sing, to paint, to dance or to speak. And it is up to the adults to interpret what the children really mean. (Tallhage Lönn, 2000:38). This gives, that planners need to be more flexible to be able to reach citizen participation where all citizens can be heard, compared to the traditional consultations that are performed today.

Despite differences in upbringing or the pedagogy surroundings that are affecting the child, all children need to play and create their own space for playing (Kylin, 2004: attachment 3:2). The right to play is stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (31st article) - all children have got the same right to culture, play and spare time activities (Nilsson, 2007:15). To make sure that this statement is implemented in a society, and to make sure that children have enough space for their play; children need strong representatives on all levels in the planning processes (Lenninger, 2006:8).

In this report, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is mentioned to illuminate that there is an actual document that states that children’s thoughts and needs should be taken seriously. Both China and Sweden have ratified the convention, which is the first legally binding international instrument that includes civil-, cultural-, economic-, political-, and social rights (UNICEF, 2008-08-26). The convention consists of 54 articles and two optional protocols and has got four main principles of: non-discrimination, devotion to the best interests of the child, the right to life, survival and development and respect for the views of the child (UNICEF, 2008-08-26). In summary, the convention means that all children have got the same rights as adults to take part in and speak out in situations concerning the child. In the long run, this means that if adults have got the right to participate in urban planning processes, so have children.

From the early texts which can be said to act as pre-documents for the Convention on the Rights of the Child you can tell that the picture of the child as an object needing protection is dominating. In the current document (the adopted convention) the picture of the child as an active subject is predominant instead. A shelter focus is still there, but the main theme is now the obligation for states to provide children the chance to control and affect their situation (Näsman, 1995:291, with cross-reference to the Declarations of the Rights of the Child, adopted by the League of Nations in 1924 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the UN in 1989).
4:4 The cultural, historical and contemporary context of China

This chapter will focus on introducing China as the contextual frame for this thesis and the context that forms the background for the perspective on children within the country today. To provide an overall picture of “the Chinese context” within this report is not possible. If the reader wants to improve the knowledge about the life in China, I recommend the book *Understanding Chinese Society* that can provide a better overall picture of this field (Stockman, 2000). Naturally, China should also be seen in a global context and further on China might influence, or be influenced by, other countries to a larger extent that has been the reality for the last decades. Thus, this is just limited touched in this description.

China is situated in the east of Asia, below Russia and Mongolia. The country has got approximately 1.3 billion inhabitants, the highest number in the world (Nationalencyklopedin, 2011-03-22). Beijing, the capital of China, has got approximately 12.5 million inhabitants living in the city area and is situated in the north east part of the country Nationalencyklopedin, 2011-03-22).

4:4:1 The life of children in Beijing

Since 1949, the population of China has more than doubled. So have the parts of the population living in large scale cities. In large scale cities in China the fertility rates are low. This is partly because of the free will of young couples choosing to focus on career as well as the family planning policy, but also as there is a shortage of women which leaves men without a partner. This shortage depends upon the pressure within families to abort female fetuses to receive a boy instead and thus a more reliable supply in the future. This shortage leads to trafficking among girls and women, which results in that many parents of girls are concerned about fears when they let children away to school and other activities (Lagerkvist, 2007:89-91 and Ljunggren, 2008:144-145).

In Beijing, as well as in many other places of the world, children's lives has become more structured and controlled, their access to outdoor environments has deteriorated and their time spent in structured places has increased. Children's time is filled with organized activities such as sports and music training, which has resulted in that many children lack control over their daily lives. Most of their time is spent in institutions like schools or day care and when not there – they are still supervised by adults when playing or training. In China in general, most children are raised by their grandparents or a nanny instead of attending day care (Lagerkvist, 2007:93). But the current trend is that even more children are taken into daycare, partly because the grandparents might not live as close to the young family as was common earlier in China, but also as the pressure on providing the “right” education to the child. Also statistically, the pressure is high. In China there is a problem called 4-2-1 which means that one single child need to support for both parents and two couple of grandparents, when the parents are pensioners, because of the low pensions. This leaves the child to support six persons in excess of him or her and the new
family, and to manage this, the child needs to compete with others to get a well paid job (Stockman, 2000:111).

The official line can be said to be that parents should raise their children to become good citizens and the parents are responsible for the child’s actions. The fact that most families consist of one child and two adults, the pressure on the only child might be hard to enhance a good education, to be competitive, be a good girl or boy and so on. But not to forget, Chinese parents of one child spend both more time and a larger part of their income on their child compared to those who have more children (Stockman, 2000:112).

Two girls on their way home from school, Sanlitun area of Beijing

4.4.2 Family planning
To analyse anything concerning children in China, without touching the family planning policy (in Sweden known as the "One-Child policy") would be a mistake. The family planning does not directly affect the urban planning processes, but it might be said to do so in a wider perspective. This is, for example, as children in Beijing seldom get to play in groups and have natural interactions with other children, which comes natural in families with more than one child. This in combination with the pressure on parents and their children to let the children attend individual classes (violin, the piano, English) to develop skills leaves the child in a strictly controlled life with less or no impact from the daily environments to affect their handlings and leave room for free play with other children.
The family planning policy means that every married couple is given the chance to have one child. Children born in excess of the family planning policy have not rights to education and health care on the same premises as the first born child, and on top of this their parents have to pay penalties when they are born. In the cities, it is unusual to deviate from this rule but in rural areas it is more common. In many country side provinces it is also legal to have more than one child, if the first one is a girl. Some other exceptions also exists, for example that a couple having a disabled child as their first are allowed to have a second, and that some ethnical minorities are allowed to have up to four children (Utrikesdepartementet, 2007:4). The family planning politics were converted into law in the year of 2001 (Ljunggren, 2008:143). Prognosis shows that the population of China will, according to the age structure of people able to work compared to the elderly and so on, be in great shortage around 2035 (Ljunggren, 2008:144).

The law and regulations in China have forbidden gender abortions, but this phenomenon still exists. Today 121 boys are born to 100 girls\(^1\), compared to numbers in the rest of the world where girls are in majority (Ljunggren, 2008:145). The gender abortions have led to that up to 50 million women are missing, compared to how many men that are looking for a partner. The general reason why parents choose to abort female fetuses is that boys more often stay with their family and work to support them when they grow up. Girls on the other hand, by the time they get married, often leave for the new family to live and support. That girls belong to their new family is now undergoing a change, when even more couples live on their own. Thus, still it is common that young married couple live with the husband’s parents, even after they have got their own children (Stockman, 2000:116).

In Beijing today the fertility rates are low as in many other large scale cities in the world. By the time the family planning policy was presented, the fertility rates had already fallen within the cities and has continuing doing so ever since (Stockman, 2000:111). Many households in Beijing today are single ones, and families predominantly live outside the fourth ring road of Beijing (which today makes up the boundary for the central parts of the city). Naturally this affect the fact that children are not often seen in the streets.

4:4:3 The human right situation in China

The intention with this chapter is not to describe and analyse the human rights situation in China; that would take a lifetime to perform. Instead, this is a description of what knowledge I have collected and brought into this project, partly from my earlier experiences of the Chinese society and partly from media and the Foreign Department of Sweden. The reason why the human right situation is interesting in this thesis is because one of the main themes of interpretation of the children’s perspective into urban planning is through citizen participation – which is not a natural part of the planning processes in China today. As such, this relates to the human right situation since the lack of citizen participation indicates a shortage in the freedom of speech, which is stated in the human rights declaration.

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\(^1\) To compare with numbers from Utrikesdepartementet 2007:4, that says 119 boys to 100 girls.
In the year of 2004, the states protection on the citizens’ human rights was written in to the constitution of China. The juridical system is continuity reformed and the articulated vision is that China should develop towards a constitutional state with a higher abidance to the Human Rights (Utrikesdepartementet, 2007:2). China is a one-party state and questioning of the Communist Party’s power is not tolerated (Sida, 2009-07-15). The free right of opinion, -expression, -press, -association, -assembly, -demonstration and freedom of religion are sensitive issues in China. These rights are written into the constitution, but the observances of them are not given. A number of enforced disappearances are reported each year and reports on torture, reprisals and addressed exercise of power reach the western world many times through the year. In the lengthening these contradictions are affecting the citizen’s opportunity to influence the development of the urban environment (Utrikesdepartementet, 2007:2). No right to citizen participation or expression over plans is used and many incidents of forced deportation, violence and killing when developing elder areas with new buildings are reported (Olsson, 2010).

The Foreign Department of Sweden (Utrikesdepartementet, 2007:18) describes how the UN committee of the Convention on the Rights of the Child has studied how the adaption of the convention has progressed in China during the year of 2005. They then noted shortages in questions concerning the access to primary education, rules for imprisonment and detention, discrimination of disadvantaged children and the applications of the laws against gendered abortions. The active work to improve the rights for children in China is primarily performed by organizations such as Save the Children, which during 2010 has opened a CSR-centre in Beijing. This centre is working to make companies realize that they can improve the situation for children in the countries that they are active in, from a child rights perspective (Rädda barnen, 2010-01-20). Organizations that for example handles questions such as rights for immigrant workers, HIV-positive and work-related injured have been limited in their work or shut down by the government (Sida, 2009-07-15). For those organizations, as well as the citizens, the legal security is poor. Within the country both death penalty and torture are used – even though the last-mentioned is forbidden in law.

In the ancient society of China, the role of the women in the society was strictly limited. It was the men who inherited property, the women were not allowed to study and their feet were bound to symbolize their position of dependence. During the time of Mao (1949-1976), there was a substantial change and almost all women in the cities began to work outside the home. Today, more women compared to men study in university and work full time. Despite this, the women stand for the majority of the work with children and household care (Björkestén, 2006:140-141, Ljunggren, 2008:140 and Stockman, 2000:115).

Today the access to education and higher education depends mainly on the income of your parents and where you live, but generally still more girls compared to boys drop out of school and are illiterate. The government funds are too low to ensure good education for everyone, which puts a heavy burden on parents and family which leads to differences in educational range (Ljunggren, 2008:128-129).
Thus, during the last decades, the private sphere for inhabitants in most parts of China has been enlarged and China is performing reforms of the legal systems (Sida, 2009-07-15).

4:4:4 The political context for children and planners

The brief introduction about the human right situation in China leads us in to a brief introduction about the political context of the country. China (the People’s Republic) is a socialistic republic and an autocracy ruled by the Communist Party of China in a one-party rule (Nationalencyklopedin 2011-03-22). The republic is seen as a both economical and military super power of the world and the country holds a permanent seat in the Security Council of the UN. The People’s Republic (directly translated from Chinese – the Middle Kingdom) was founded in 1949, when the communist party took over the country after a civil war.

China is divided into provinces (for example Jiangsu), autonomous areas (for example Tibet), special administrative zones (for example Hong Kong) and metropolitan areas directly under the Central Government. Beijing is one of these metropolitan areas, as well as Shanghai, Tianjin and Chongqing (Nationalencyklopedin 2011-03-22). The power structure is based on the fundaments of the People’s Central Government (the civil government), the Communist Party of China (the constitutional party) and the People’s Liberation Army (the country’s defense). The People’s Central Government chooses the State Council that is the government of China and holds the executive power. The actual power lies however in the Politburo Standing Committee, chosen by the Central committee (which in turn is selected by the Communist Party). The Standing Committee is represented by nine members from the political elite of the country.

Urban planning cannot be seen as an area of study that does not relate to politics. It does, in all countries. Thus, it cannot be said to be distinct from the economic and social processes of capitalism or communism (Allmendinger, 2009:102).

A common problem for planners worldwide is where to draw the sector boundaries of urban planning, since the issues concerned within the sector are so wide – touching everything from health issues and education to land- use issues (Allmendinger, 2009:194). Furthermore, this broadness can turn into a problem in the development of a more open economy in China – because some of the issues are not as interesting for private investors to touch as others. As China’s economy is quickly opening up and growing rapidly, the focus for the planners goes from utilitarianism (to maximize the good for the majority) to market-led planning where each person needs to speak up for his him or her self, and the importance of the public interest might be affected by this. The economical reforms and the rapid economical development of the last 30 years has improved the living conditions for millions of Chinese (Sida, 2009-07-15). In 1990 the number of poor in China was about 85 million; in 2004 the number was 26.1 million. This economic development has though brought problem as well; as growing environmental problems, tensions between the poor and rich (enlarging segmentations) and still many millions of the population have poor access to education, health care and other social insurances.
National day celebrations, Tiananmen Square

4.4.5 Urban planning in Beijing

In the year of 1949 the Beijing Urban Planning Committee was established, the same year as the creation of the new China (Yutaka, et al. 2002:18). Specialists realized that the old Beijing would not be able to shoulder the role as a capital in the 20th century and therefore specialist from Soviet were invited to develop the concept for Beijing’s urban development plan. The focus for this plan was that Beijing should develop as the political capital of China, but also as a cultural, industrial and artistic centre and that the population of the city center should not exceed 4 million people. Thus, in 1958 the *Beijing City Construction Master Plan* was adopted and the focus for this plan was for Beijing to develop from a consuming city to a producing city – which resulted in high levels of pollution and traffic congestions as a result of that many communal factories were placed in the inner city.

From 1966 to 1976 the Cultural Revolution was ongoing in China (Yutaka, et al. 2002:18-19). Naturally, Beijing was affected and many of the city’s ancient structures were damaged or destroyed. At this time, the Beijing City Planning Office was closed down which resulted in uncontrolled occupation and development of land and a large growth in population within the city. After the revolution, the political and economical growth was rapid and in 1983 the State Council approved the new *Beijing City Construction Master Plan* which focused on industrial development, population control, upgrading of the old city and improvement of basic infrastructure. In 2002, this was still the plan used for road-building projects.

In 1993 a new Master Plan was approved (*Beijing City Master Plan* 1991-2010) where Beijing’s status as an aspiring international city was clearly highlighted. The focus in this plan was the need of balance in *integrating cutting edge modern development into Beijing’s unique ancient heritage* (Yutaka, et al. 2002:19). To combine the development stated in the plan and the importance of protecting the ancient heritage, *the conservation*
plan for the historic and cultural city of Beijing. This plan was adopted in 2002, and includes detailed guidelines for the protection of the old city which should be guidelines for further development of the old areas.

Even today, many of those who work with urban planning issues are not urban planners - they are rather architects or engineers. In the construction of new cities and development of old ones, the large-scale real-estate development has been prioritized on behalf of public space for people's participation (Jian, 2008:51). When it comes to the housing of Beijing families, the most common way of living today is either in a hutong area or in a compound with high-rise buildings. Traditionally, the hutong areas were filled with courtyard houses and the greatest part of the daily life (especially of women and children) was spent within the courtyard. In the 1950’s the public housing and the work unit housing schemes were established in China (Yutaka, et al. 2002:34). The public houses were owned by the government and the work units houses were owned by the companies or institutions providing housing for their employees. The public houses were often in a bad condition and therefore cheap to stay in. In comparison, the unit houses were in better condition and provided better sanitary and heating facilities. For the employees and their children, there were often medical care and schools. Today, the private owned properties dominate the market and these apartments vary in both charge and quality. Almost everything that is newly built is developed by private investors and interests and this sometimes creates a problem with the collision between private and public interests.

Most countries that have public-led planning have a professional organization that planner can accede to (Allmendinger, 2009, p. 25). Naturally planners depend on the government due to their professional status. And the government needs planners to undertake its policies. This leaves that planners, through their professional statues, are unlikely to take political stances or perspectives that are overtly status quo (Allmendinger, 2009:26). In China, the individual voice among citizens in political issues has been a sensitive question for a long time. The existence of citizen participation is therefore low and not a part of the planners’ daily agenda in China. In practice citizen dialogues are seldom made throughout the development processes. The firms that are building are doing this to earn money (private developers) or to meet a detail aim (official developers). The ultimate consumers, the residents, need to accept the result. As the users become more aware (richer and selective) the demands on the developer to accommodate to what the consumer requests grow. In capitalistic societies this development has been going on slowly for a long time, and might be profitable for these. But there is also a downside with this development. As the consumers' voice grows stronger and becomes more important in development and planning contexts, the risk for the “public interest” to be set aside grows. This a natural affect in all forms of societies when a part of the population becomes economically stronger and makes their voices heard. But with respect to the rapid economic growth that China is experiencing and all that it means to the cities, the result might lead to greater damage in this country compared to other.
In summary, according to Philip Allmendinger mean that

*Perhaps the most important aspect of planning as a communicative process, it’s basis upon participative forms of democracy, is taken as read by its proponents associated with this. Pateman (1970) has claimed that participative democracy, where there is direct participation of people in the regulation of key institutions of society and experimentation with political forms fosters human development, enhances a sense of political efficacy, reduces a sense of estrangement from power centres, nurtures a concern for collective problems and contributes to a formation of a knowledgeable citizenry capable of taking a more active interest in government* (Allmendinger, 2009:221).

From this, that conclusion can be drawn that for planners wanting to use the citizen participation within planning processes, it might be hard to do that because of the political context in China - since citizens’ thoughts are sometimes seen as a threat against the political system.

As stated above, the main development in Beijing today is controlled by private investors (affected by politicians). The developers mainly focus on building processes, and then they sell to someone who provides the apartments (for example) for the customers. Since the developers do not need to engage in the maintenance of buildings and its surroundings, they most often do not care about the quality within. The most important thing is that the buildings are esthetically attractive, they do not need to be of good quality. When building apartments and compounds in Sweden, the general focus for the life of the buildings are about 50-100 years in contrast to Beijing, where the life of one building might be 10-20 years. This difference derives from the low payment of workers, the laws and regulations of quality and maintenance and the demand from the final users. As the final users (the population) become richer – the requirements are increasing. As a result of that, the prioritizing (from “looking good” into “being good” in quality of buildings and so on) might change in Beijing ahead.

In Beijing, many well educated (such as planners, architects, engineers) have jobs which demand a lot of engagement and time. To work from 9am to 9pm or from 10am to 11pm is not unusual. Though, it is not unusual to sleep in the office during the day of work either. The work is a lifestyle for the Beijinger, and you work long days to earn money or to earn knowledge used to earn money. The pace of projects is fast, and you are often told that this or that should be finished by Monday (on a Friday) or that you are leaving for a business trip this very afternoon. This leaves the general planner with little or no time to “just think about” the actual project and let it grow into place. Therefore, it might be hard to see the whole picture of effects that one project might bring to an area. And while visiting Beijing, it is clear that many projects are developed by private investors with no connection to the surrounding environments. Beijing has got many “islands”, with gated communities for living and distinct areas for amusement and business with no links between them, except subways and motorways.
Allmendinger (2009:221) says that the most important aspect of planning is the communicative process, based on the participative forms of democracy. Thus, important to remember is that the democratic situation in Beijing does not look the same as in many Western countries. As Mason & Bolzan emphasize that

_Cultural context structure adult-child relations in different ways, so that it cannot be assumed that the meaning of 'participation' in a liberal democracy is the same as it is in a country with a hierarchical system of social relations, a predominantly communist country, or one racked by internal strife. In each of these countries the concept of citizenship structures relations in different ways, giving rise to a variety of ways in which participation is interpreted and enacted_ (Mason & Bolzan, et. Al. 2010:130-131).

4:4:6 The historical urban public space in Beijing
The traditional Chinese civilization was one of the first in the world, blooming around the Yellow River (Nationalencyklopedin, 2011-03-22). Over time, the boundaries of the country have changed and so have the capital and the emperors. Though, since 1949 the borders have been quite the same and Beijing has been the capital of the country.

In Beijing, the classical housing is courtyard houses, built for privacy and protection from fierce winds (Yanxin & Bingjie, 2006). The courtyards are designed from Feng Shui manners and have open spaces, trees, plants and ponds. The courtyard is surrounded by houses with different themes, where different generations of the family had their own space to sleep and stay. In past times, women were seldom let out from the courtyard and spent most of their time at home. Still, for socializing, guests were invited to specific areas of the courtyard – that among wealthy families often traditionally were big and included a large garden and verandas.

_Courtyard house in Beijing_ (About Cultural China, 2011 02 06)
In the ancient Beijing, the earliest arranged public spaces such as parks and squares, were aimed for the wealthier families (Shi, 1998:223) and the majority of the population spent most of their life outside the home in the streets, markets or temples. Here, the daily life with fairs and social life, took place. In late imperial times, the temples served as a scene for traditional operas and shows for people to enjoy with their friends. Children in these days (and this is still the situation in some old parts of Beijing) were allowed to play in the hutong streets. These streets were often narrow and the traffic amount was limited, hence a safe environment for children to play in (Yutaka et al., 2002:41).

The modern type of public spaces, except streets and temple areas, became a part of the Beijing city during the early 20th century. The government were influenced by the modern Western cities and wanted to arrange public parks for their citizens to enjoy (Shi, 1998:230-231). The aim with arranging these parks was mainly to achieve better health and lifestyle among the citizens, something considered to be the responsibility of the government (Shi, 1998:232). The old traditional gardens, earlier available only for the elite, were now opened up for the public, and the Zhongshan Park next to the Forbidden City became the first modern public park in Beijing (Shi, 1998:235-236).

Though, this development did not give all citizens access to the parks. They were directed primarily at the middle class and above, and this might also be the situation today. As mentioned, the impact of Soviet planners and architects affected what and how to build during the late 20th century. Many squares built after 1949 look similar to those of the Soviet Union with large hard surfaces with at strict symmetrical. Many of them were arranged in the central parts of the city; mainly build for political purposes (Li, 2003:15).

The arrangement and use of public spaces today still to a large extent focuses on traditional parks and squares of the city. Many of the new public spaces are arranged close to or in the same developing process as new municipal- or business buildings and by their location and design the public are displaced from users to observers (Yu & Padua, 2007:263-268). As mentioned above, the pace of projects in the urban environments is high today, and so is the speed of the design process of public spaces which sometimes result in losses of quality for the final users.
Zhongshan Park, 2010

Tiananmen Square, national day of China 2010
ANALYSIS
5 Analysis

In this chapter the analyses of this thesis are presented. The analyses are focused around two themes that the empirical has been sorted into:

**Children in the urban public space in Beijing:** where the empiric from observations and interviews (described in the methodological chapter) are combined to provide a description of the children's role in the urban public spaces of Beijing. This is made through links between the theoretical approaches described in the above chapter and the empiric.

**The perspective on children among urban planners in Beijing:** where the empiric mainly deriving from interview A and B (described in the methodological chapter) is described and analysed from the theoretical approach described in the earlier chapter. The empiric from the interviews is categorized and analysed to show what perspective on children that characterizes the interviewed persons, from the seven types of children's perspective described on page 41.

5:1 Children in the urban public space in Beijing

This chapter aim to show what have been found through the empirical studies of observations and interviews for understanding how children in Beijing live and move in the city. This is made through a running text where the empiric from interviews is woven in, to provide a broaden picture of what the situation looks like.

5:1:1 Children in Beijing

Children in Beijing are controlled by adults and have limited changes to make own choices and enjoy free play. But in addition to this, they are spoiled by both parents and the double couple of grandparents according to material supplies. The pressure on children to be good, to learn, impregnate all the woken time in the life of the child (Kjellgren, 2007:80). Many children feel that their first and maybe only responsibility against the family is to succeed in school and life.

*The pressure is made up by the knowledge that all children need to learn how to speak English, how to swim, how to play an instrument, have good results in sport and achieve good grades in school. Everything is learned through training courses, kindergarten and in school. This result in both a hard pressure on the child to present good results (from day care age) but also that the collective social intercourse for the child is not natural. Either, it is arranged in a strict course environment, or it does not exist because the child is most often tutored private.*

*The courses and training are not compulsory, but still they are. It is very important to not discourage the child on the starting line – because if you do not provide your child with*

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*Interview A, 2010-11-04*
During the observations I noted that, when children appear to have “free time”, it often turned out at a closer look that they did not. When children are seen skating in parks, it seems to be more training than amusing. This feeling is reinforced by the sight that children almost never comes to parks to skate (for example) among friends – only with a parent or grandparent. This derives from both the family planning policy which leaves children the only young persons in the families, but also from the fact that Chinese parents value the learning processes higher than the free play among friends. Children in China have little time for just playing around without supervision from the adults, and this to a large extent derives from the pressure on parents to raise “good children” and for the children to always present good results in sports, education and other “measurable” subjects. Thus, I cannot tell if children think of this as boring.

In excess of education and training, security is the centre of attraction for families and parents, concerning traffic and other urban factors but furthermore violence, kidnappings and even murdering – aimed at children, with focus on rich children (Lewin, T. 2010) This gives the effect that many children are driven from school to the home and are left with little space to move around by themselves in the city. Of course, this is affected by the difficulties for children to move around by themselves, with large amount of traffic, physical barriers and regulations.  

Children are sort of trapped. They spend most of their time in the closed school. Then they are driven in a closed car to the closed home in the closed compartment. They are trapped and have little or no time for free activities and social interaction with friends.

In China, children are primarily seen as children, and not as citizens. You are a child until you turn 18, and then you become a citizen And children are children from Elementary School and below, after that you are a young citizen. Legally, children are children until they turn 18, the age of dissertation is 16. At the same time, children are forced to perform and are put under a large pressure that does not exist to the same extent in for example USA and Sweden, at young ages.

In January 2011, in Swedish and international media, an article by Amy Chua was discussed (Haldesten, 2011-01-24). Chua is the mother of two children and lives in USA. In her article, with reference to her book Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother, she describes the way to succeed in child rearing. The recipe holds for example these following elements: never accept lower grades than A, do not let your children play with other children, never let your child stay at a friend’s place, and so on. Chua is raised in USA by Chinese parents and she states that the western way of raising children, with respect given

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3 Interview A, 2010-11-04
4 And Interview A, 2010-11-04
5 Interview B, 2010-11-05
6 Interview A, 2010-11-04
7 Interview B, 2010-11-05
to the child’s feelings, wishes and dreams, is an unacceptable way if you want your children to succeed. Today, most parents in China seem to obey their child’s wishes and dreams, if not visually then materially. Children of wealthy parents in Beijing might be spoiled but on the other hand, many children do live an environmentally limited life framed by school, lessons and training courses.

5:1:2 The public space and the children

As described above, the Beijing children’s lives are very strict arranged and there might be a reason to concern whether their social abilities are affected by no time for impulsive activities, but only arranged meetings with other children. They lack the chance to develop socially, and this is a concern that is discussed in the society of China today – what happens when the “spoiled” (materially) children are supposed to take care of the society (Kjellgren, 207:80)? Since most of the waken time in the life of children in Beijing need to be spent on home work, almost no time is left to spend outdoors.

The norms of where children can go and where they ought to be, differ from one cultural setting to another, due to social orders, cultural values and different interpretations of social change (Fog Olwig & Gullov, 2003:8-9). Because children’s life in Beijing are filled with activities, and they are driven to and from school and not allowed to walk by themselves since there is no place for children to be.

When you look at Beijing’s urban environments you do not find a lot of environments for children. Sometimes there are playgrounds within the compounds, but these are private. Also, you can find playgrounds within parks, but these cost money. The “real” public spaces are not design for children.8

By public space, C and D aim parks, streets and other urban official environments.

The safe and child friendly environments can be found within the compounds (and not always there either), with high security and some areas to play in, not much to see – but it is safe and that is the focus for most parents today.9

And these environments does dominate the life of many children in Beijing, and as pointed during Interview B10 most of the children do not need public spaces to visit – they need more time to spend!

When the interviewed persons are asked to identify what environments in Beijing they see as “child friendly”, the most common answer is parks or libraries and museums (as an example, Interview E and F 2011-12-03). Libraries and museum were most likely chosen as they are often safe and in addition to that the children can read and learn things in those environments to give them wisdom.11 When it comes to parks, many parks in Beijing are popular visits among residential families during the weekends and evenings. This is

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8 Interview C and D 2010-11-09
9 Interview A, 2010-11-04
10 Interview B, 2010-11-05
11 Interview F, 2010-12-03
where parents let their children walk by themselves, not carried or banned as soon as they leave the close contact with the parent. In the parks, the children's activities were separated into specific areas. These areas are often filled with activities like roller coasters, merry-go-rounds and other arrangements. Outside these activity areas, the children's activities consisted mainly of walking around with parents or grandparents, practicing roller-skates, playing the yo-yo or fishing (looking for fishes and pick them with sticks) in pounds. The parks are said to be good environments because they are *safe, clean and good for children's health*.  

Compared to Europe, children are seldom seen playing in larger groups in Beijing except in arranged practice or training. An example of activities taking place in a public space of the city is at the Central Plaza Financial Street in the financial district where roller-skating classes are held by a teacher, while parents and grandparents are watching from beside. Naturally, children of Beijing to some extent have their own relations and friends. For example, in the afternoons older children can be observed in KFC or McDonald's, two or three together practicing their home work. And, as pointed during interview A, *today's children do interact a lot through internet and cell phones – which is partly needed because they attend schools not in their own neighbourhood and therefore has got many friends living far away from their home*. The reason why many children do not attend school in their neighbourhood is that schools differ in quality and most parents sought to have their child in the “best” school, if they have the chance to. This leads to that many children are driven to a different area in the city to attend school, compared to where they live.

![Training class in roller skating at the Central Plaza Financial Street](image)

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12 Interview E, 2010-12-03
13 Interview A, 2010-11-04
As environments not suitable for children, crowded, congested and dirty places were mentioned as not good due to chaotic traffic, air pollution and lack of management.\textsuperscript{14} When moving around in Beijing, these are the most obvious negative characters that affect the life of children. Due to the large traffic amounts, children cannot (even if they have would have the time to) move around by themselves in many parts of the city. Also, the negative health impacts on children from the pollutions from traffic and industrial areas (as well as the coal firing to warm the housings) are obvious – children as well as adults have constant coughing and are spitting phlegm.

From the categories of children's environmental places (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002:158), described in the theoretical approach chapter (page 32), the following situation can be argued to apply for the children in Beijing:

- **Institutional places**: dominates the lives of the urban children. The major part of the day children spend within school or other institutional settings and if the children are engaged in sports or other training, that environment is included in this type of environment.

- **Public spaces**: dominates the time spent outdoor within the family, predominantly in parks and malls where the adults rather than the children control the activities taken place.

- **Private spaces**: are, for children living in the central parts of Beijing, isolated and limited areas with little opportunity for free play and social relations outside the family. This because they often live in limited apartments in high raised buildings.

- **Found places**: are not that easy for children of Beijing to find. Either, they are claimed by vendors, homeless persons or activities, or they are hard to visit since children seldom move alone outdoors.

- **Found / off limit places**: are seldom found or visited by children in Beijing today, partly because of the advanced urbanization.

- **Wilderness**: is only found within parks or plantings or arranged gardens within the compounds.

- **New and innovative areas**: are only available for a part of the children in Beijing (the wealthier). In China, as well as many other countries, cyberspace is an enormous resource for many children to interact and play with their friends. Though, the access to information might be limited compared to what European children can find. Innovative solutions of playgrounds (predominantly indoors) or activity houses for children and their families are popular among richer families as an excursion goal during the weekends or holidays.

In summary, children of Beijing are limited compared to children living in other contexts such as smaller cities, in the countryside. This because their daily environments mainly consist of institutional places, well-arranged public spaces or limited private spaces. To support all their needs, the ambient environments of children should hold also the other

\textsuperscript{14} Interview E, 2010-12-03
examples, as found places and wilderness. This is something that the children of Beijing in general do not experience in their daily life.

5:1:3 Then and now

Naturally, comparisons between now (children today) and then (when the persons interviewed were young) were made throughout the interviews. In Sweden, due to the focus of research and strategies from the government, the picture that childhood is only a preparation for the adult life has been replaced by the thought that the childhood and the children’s wellbeing have got their own value (Tallhage Lönn, 2000:53). In China, the development has in some ways been the opposite. Earlier, during the strict communist era, it was alright to let the children be wild and play. Now the children need to focus on other issues:

Today, most of the children’s childhood is only focused on learning and preparation for the adult world. In past times, the supply of things to play with was very limited. Now there is an extreme supply, but still limited choice because the use of time often is controlled. But earlier, when the time was free but the supply limited, there was a natural development in children's social interaction, because you had to get along with and agree with others to be able to play.15

Building material was popular to play with when I was young. Then all building material belonged to the government because there was no such private property. Today it's different. The developers are responsible for if something should happen within the building areas and children are not allowed to be there. Of course, it is also much more dangerous because of the size and paste of the development.16

If available, areas with small greenings or water was exiting. It was also exciting when the farmers brought their animals in to town (B grew up in Beijing city) for a market or something.17

Today, parts of the natural play is gone. Formerly, you could find 10 fire flies during one night. Now the children are truly impressed if adults can find any insect, like fire flies or earthworms, once.18

Furthermore, the housing conditions for children of Beijing vary between the status of the family and also of course over time:

Historically the court yards in Beijing were almost like today's gated communities. Then the development turned into more open areas (like miljonprogramsområden in Sweden) and now, the housing areas look more like gated communities or compounds again.19

15 Interview A, 2010-11-04
16 Interview A, 2010-11-04
17 Interview B, 2010-11-05
18 Interview A, 2010-11-04
19 Interview A, 2010-11-04
Because the well defined boundaries of the closed compounds, and in addition to that the high raised buildings, the natural relationship between indoors and outdoors and the city's life and the child’s is lost. 20

The life of families in new compounds is better according to supplies, sanitary facilities and so on. But the children in the hutongs have other assets,

...The children living in the hutongs has a more intact relation between the in- and outdoors and the city's life and their own. They are more close to the ground, it's just to open up and go outside. But then of course it is not a natural area that face them, it is the street. 21

And in addition to this, the streets of the hutongs do not look the same today as they did earlier. Today, many of the narrow streets are filled with cars and other vehicles, often driving fast through the lanes which of course affect the way of play for children living there. 

Pedagogically, there have been changes within the scholar system. One of them was once told to me by a professor who said that today, you have to learn students in the university how to become a person and interact socially instead of focusing on learning advanced studies. That is because at day care, they focus so much on teaching the children the advanced studies instead of learning them how to live and socialize. 22

The life of the city has got many impacts on children’s lives and movements. Even though children of Beijing traditionally always have been supervised by adults in their daily life, the children of today have an even more limited operating area.

Today children are almost never allowed to walk by themselves at any time. Parents are afraid of the traffic amounts and tensions between rich and poor which have led to violence against children such as murdering and kidnappings. 23

Furthermore, there are differences in age and on where the child lives and the social status of the family:

Teenagers do of course move around by themselves, and in the hutongs you can sometimes see children moving two and two. But most often, they are accompanied by their family or relatives. When always accompanied and protected, the children becomes isolated from the real world. 24

And this isolation affects children’s experiences and knowledge’s about their ambient environments and, as stated: When children only move and play accompanied by adults or just two and two, there is no interaction. From the limited area of the school, children are

20 Interview C and D, 2010-11-09
21 Interview B, 2010-11-05
22 Interview B, 2010-11-05
23 Interview A, 2010-11-04
24 Interview B, 2010-11-05

66
moved in an isolated care to an isolated room in an isolated home where they are supposed to study the rest of the day. Therefore, the areas of the school becomes very important for the social life of the child.25

When moving around in the hutong areas it is clear that children living there do have the chance to play more freely compared to children living in the high-rise housing compounds in new parts of the city. Children in the new compounds have both limited access to the ground level, and when reaching that level they only see an arranged garden or inner court, mainly based on the needs of adults. The arrangements might be ponds or plantings, trees and benches, but seldom open green areas, bushes available for building huts or playgrounds. Children in the hutongs might have less material supplies, since their families most often are poorer compared to families living in new compounds. But still, they have the chance to play with other children, animals and natural materials more freely as they have not got the pressure to (chance to or force to) attend training courses and extra schooling. This leaves them with more time to play and to develop their social skills, but at the same time it might affect their chances to attend higher education and get a “good job” in the future. In the lengthening, this of course stunts their chances to enhance a more wealthy life.

A fenced school yard

Boys playing in the streets of Dashilar

25 Interview B, 2010-11-05
5:2 The perspective on children among urban planners in Beijing

In this chapter, the empirical material from the interviews A and B is gone through and discussed from the theoretical approaches described earlier in this report. Material from the C and D interviews are also used in some cases. To start with, the theme of citizen participation and the children’s perspective is discussed to provide an introduction to the field of “taking the children’s perspective into the planning processes”. Following, children on the planners’ agendas are discussed and finally the planners’ (from A, B, C and D interviews) perspective on children are categorized. This is made from the seven types of perspectives identified by Francis and Lorenzo (2002) and this categorization is both evaluated and analysed.

5:2:1 Citizen participation and the children’s perspective

Citizen participation is, from a political context, a sensitive issue within the field of urban planning in China. It is absolutely clear to most people that there is no such thing as active citizen participation processes, but still it is not “official” that this does not exist.

In China, absolutely no citizen participation exists. Everything is managed through private developers who really do not care about the environment for the people that are supposed to be the users further on. It is supposed to look fine just for a while – they build, sell and that’s it. The rest is someone else’s problem. It goes too fast, people earn money to easy. They do not need to care. And when the adults have not got their right to say – why would the children? No, there is not participation, especially not with children.26

From this quote the conclusion can be drawn that the reason why citizen participation is not used does not only relate to the political status of the country. To use citizen participation does contradict the line of policy, but today politics is not all that matters in Beijing. The economy of Beijing and China is the world’s fastest growing and has changed the life of many Chinese people. This would not have happened if the government did not choose to open up the economy and allow private investors to develop large parts of Beijing. Thus, as touched in the quote, there is a problem with private investors. Their main aim is to earn money, not to provide the best environments to the people. The fact that the development from planning economy (where citizen participation was not “needed” because the public interest could always be said to be in focus) to a more market-led economy has gone so fast, all tools needed to sustain the focus of the public interest have not been created. As the line of policy does not appreciate the collection of views (especially not from groups of people) but still leaves the expansion of Beijing in the hands of private investors – the public interest is hard to maintain. And if the public interest, focusing on adults, is hard to maintain, so is the children’s.

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26 Interview A, 2010-11-04
The interview with B indicates that there might be an interest from the planners to include some sort of discussion with the final users (the citizens):

*Sometimes there are discussions about needs and what are the most important things, of course there is. But to discuss with citizens or the final users, there is never enough time to do that.*  

27

And C and D describe that they have performed such discussions:

... *Sometimes we have asked for it, but got it too late. If children as a specific group are intended to be the final user, of course their needs are taken into consideration within the planning process. The design is always adjust to the user... Since our last project, focusing on children's facilities, we have started to work on collecting research within this subject (children's environmental needs) but this is mostly focused on looking into what standards there are in the EU for example and how to implement them into China – you cannot ask a child if they 'want this or that', or 'is this is good'. The answer is always “yes”*.  

28

The discussions that are mentioned are focusing on the needs of children, if they are seen as the final users – for projects such as school yards, but the children are never seen as active stakeholders. When the focus lies on the children, it is their environmental needs and, more important, their security that are in focus.

*The most important factor for parents and teachers in the design of areas for children is the children’s security. Parents are afraid today. For cars (earlier it was bicycles – not that dangerous) and crimes deriving from tensions between rich and poor. It is sometimes illegal to take photographs of children playing in school yards, for example.*  

29

The design of schoolyards and the buildings of schools have strict guidelines from the government. These guidelines focus mainly on the size and the basic design, how the buildings should relate to each other and so on. To do anything above this, cost money and is sometimes hard to catch up with.

*Our most actual project for children are two schools, including schoolyards. One 1-6 grade and one 1-9 grade. We have one week to perform these both projects and on top of that we have other projects ongoing. You have to choose something to focus on and I have choosen to focus on outdoor areas for interaction between the children and youths, because they are most often driven to and from school in an isolated car, to the isolated school and then back to the isolated room in the house. They need to be able to “hang around” and watch other people, the interaction is important and so are the places for in official meetings. In one earlier project, we had the chance to have a discussion with*  

27 Interview B, 2010-11-05
28 Interview C and D, 2010-11-09
29 Interview A, 2010-11-04
teachers concerning what needs they could identify in the school environments. This was very profitable, but there is seldom time to do that...  

None of the interviewed persons can relate direct to the concept that children’s thoughts actively should be taken into planning processes where the project is not directly linked to them. Furthermore, the term “child friendly” has got no direct meaning to the persons interviewed. It is hard for the interviewed persons to describe what environments that might be child friendly and what the term “child friendly” mean to them. In the interview, B thus concluded that Beijing is not child-friendly. It is not human-friendly at all. It is car-friendly.  

And this can of course be said to tell something about the whole planning for the human, the children or the car situation in Beijing. As mentioned earlier, the focus for the planning of projects is for someone to earn money. Large scale infrastructure projects are more worth than projects of kindergartens and schools – if they’re not private schools for wealthy families.

After some discussions during the interviews, an understanding for child friendliness grows among the interviewed, and they can easier relate to the child friendly concept and the non child friendly parts of Beijing. For example, large traffic amounts and high raised buildings are mentioned by the interviewed persons to be “not child friendly”.

Of course it does affect children to live in high-rise buildings. It has already affected adults, who are already developed human beings. Maybe it mostly affects the feeling. The relation between inside and outside is more easy to learn and more easy to pass if you are close to the ground. In a complex it is always so clear, it is a process to get from inside to outdoors. And the lack of that feeling, the relation. It will affect the child's connection to the city life and environmental views. The qualities are higher when you live close to the ground. But of course, the standard is higher in the new complex compounds.

To live in a high raised building also affect the social behaviour. The sense of public and private is different. It is not a good environment for children; they need to be able to move from indoors to outdoors on their own behalf. If living in a complex, they are stopped by elevators and so on. The sense of space and ambient environment is different; temperature and weather are not that easy to learn. But on the other hand, it is normal to live in an apartment within a compound in Beijing – which is the way is has to be in a city of this size.

As in many other discussions, also here the focus is the security surrounding children. Traffic is said not to be child friendly majorly due to dangers but not from the point of view that cars use the areas earlier used for play or diminishing areas for human beings.
The persons interviewed that have children of their own connect many of the answers to the questions to their role as parents and the pressure that occurs with this role (to make their child the most competitive child). The persons that do not have children, mean that they have not thought of the questions before, except during projects strictly focused on children's needs – such as the design of school yards.

In China, there is no official discussion around children and urban environments that the interviewed persons have taken part of, and neither is children’s environmental needs discussed within the architectural educations according to students and teachers that I have had discussions with.

Today, there is no trend that children's need specifically is on the agenda within planning processes. But around high-rise buildings and their affect on children there are some thoughts and views. It is interesting to learn about, but the discussion is not officially ongoing.34

Within the education of planners or architects, there are too many other concerns and children's or other special groups of citizens' needs are not discussed. The interest might increase now though, because adults have more money and might demand better environments for their children and there have been some discussions about the children's perspective in international architectural organizations.35

Both A and B, and to some extent C, argue that they would be interested in a discussion concerning these subjects if it was ongoing. Thus the interviewed people mean that that they really try to focus on the children when they are the final users in a project. D means that such a discussion is not necessarily, since it is still up to the architect what to draw or not.

In the actual planning processes, the people’s needs have become down-prioritized in the ongoing huge development process of Beijing. In Beijing gated communities for rich families, great centres of affairs, shopping malls and other economy based activities and arrangements consumes the expensive ground with a high rate of exploitation in the central parts of the city and areas for the public life of the citizens become down prioritized.

Within the planning, children and elderly are sort of treated the same. They are protected and respected, but are also seen to have the same “problems” in the daily life, like limited or slow mobility.36

Many of those who work with urban planning in Beijing are architects or engineers, and this might have an effect on the way that children are handled in planning processes. Among planners, it is often argued that the urban planning is affected by so many things,
from health care and education to land-use issues and private investors’ interest. Thus, generally within the architecture and engineer fields – there is a more narrow limitation. This might give that it is easier for the planners of Beijing to go from “problem” direct to “solution” instead of analysing the whole picture of the location of for example one school and its surroundings and interact with children in the planning processes. And if this is the case, it is reinforced by the economic development which leads to more fast and hectic development processes where the solution to the “problem” is the main aim and not to develop Beijing into a sustainable society for all people.
5:2:3 What perspective on children characterizes the planners of Beijing?

The seven realms of children's perspective that Francis and Lorenzo has identified in their article (2002) are the result of European research, knowledge and experiences. It is not directly applicable to a Chinese context, and during this analyse there has occurred a problem in categorizing the interviewed planners into the different realms because they cannot be directly linked to a specific realm.

From my studies within this project I have formed the opinion that everyone holds some kind of perspective on children. Might be, that these seven realms are too few and too limited to hold/ include all types of perspectives on children. Because of this, the following chart (below) has been used to identify what kind of qualities that can be found from each person interviews and “position” this person into one or more boxes. People with an explicit commitment concerning children’s participation or children's rights, would presumably be easier to fit into the descriptions of the different realms and conclude that “he has got a romantic view” or “she works proactively with children's participation”. But for those persons that I have performed interviews with (A, B, C and D), the children's perspective is not such an important issue. They only answered the questions because they were asked to. Therefore, their answers hold parts of several realms, and sometimes parts that do not even correspond with either of the alternatives. If a statement is important to state even though it does not correspond with either alternative, this is noted within the extra box of “Other” added in excess of the seven realms identified by Francis and Lorenzo. The answers of all the oral interviews will be analysed in this part, since it will provide a slightly wider result to handle.

**Table of categorization**

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</table>

This categorization is made by me after analysing the answers given during the interviews; the interviewed persons have not faced these categories and chosen where they think they fit in. The result of this chart show that the children's perspectives of the interviewed persons are focused around the Advocacy and Needs realms, with some influences of other realms as well.
None of the persons interviewed can be said to have a Romantic view of children's participation, where children are seen as planners, since there was not actually an alternative to either of them to use children as active participants during the planning processes. Neither the Learning realm can said to be found appreciably within these interviews, by the same reasons as above – the children are not seen as able to participate on their own in the processes. Though, there have been some projects performed by others (predominantly international proponents) in China. For example during the World Expo in Shanghai 2010, when children have been activated in projects for learning about design by play and education, which can be clearly linked to the learning realm.

The dominating realms are the Advocacy and the Needs realm. In both of these perspectives, the planner and researchers are seen as suitable to identify and present the environmental needs of children. The limited ways of implementing the children's perspective into planning processes in Beijing, seems to be performed in this way. Research rather than children's views are taken into consideration, not by citizen participation but through laws or recommendations (which also are few, why planners and architects easily can omit the children's perspective during the design of projects). The Rights realm is not identified among more than one of the planners, but it is possible to change as the knowledge about children's rights become more accepted within the society and known to planners as well as other professions. To apply the perspectives of the Institutionalization or Proactive realms might be harder. These realms are the most used within children's participation in Europe today (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002:162). This because they demands a broad perspective from planners who work with children as active participants in planning projects and processes. And this will not be the reality in Beijing until the citizen participation is used more regularly in all processes and projects. And if the planners do not actively try to involve children into planning processes, they will not hold these perspectives – because that demands a broad and deep interest to this issue.

In addition to what is described above, the D interview was marked to hold an “Other” perspective. This person suggested that children should not be taken into consideration in planning processes, while they are not the specified final user. This differs from many of the other answers, who did not provide any liken thoughts. Neither are such thoughts representative in any of the described realms, probably because the realms are focused on identifying perspectives on children according to participation, not to categorize if persons mean that children’s view should not be considered.

The perspectives of Advocacy and Need, that can be said to dominate the planners’ views, were dominating in Europe during the 1960’s and 1970’s. Today the Needs realm still is used within the environmental design research (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002:161). In urban planning processes it has been replaced by the Institutional and Proactive realms. A is the only interviewed person that can be said to hold a more modern perspective on children within planning processes, but he is also the one with the most recent experiences from European studies and work. Also B stands out a bit, as she hints an understanding of the rights of children to be treated the same way as adults within urban
planning processes as well as in other concerns. Since children in China are seldom seen as adequate citizens – it is not surprising that the Rights realm is not dominating in any way.

The fact that Beijing planners hold the same perspective on children within urban planning process as European planners can be said to hold during the 1960’s and 1970’s is interesting because Beijing is now one of the worlds’ greatest cities, in one of the world leading economies. Beijing reaches to be a modern world city with everything that “all other” cities have, and at the same time hold the history that have been relevant for thousands of years, and the political context that has been relevant for over fifty years. The limitations of the Needs and Advocacy perspectives are, according to Francis and Lorenzo, that

- the importance of children’s participation as such is not recognized (Needs) and
- it is not holistic – with plans and separate places designed for children without seeing the whole picture of the life of the city (Advocacy) (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002:161).

And, as discussed earlier, the focus on the “whole picture” might be missing among many planners in Beijing, due to domination of separate private investor’s development projects. The domination of office complexes, enormous shopping malls and gated communities for living all affect the impression of Beijing’s structure. And when loosing the overall picture, it is easy to lose the human point of view. And when loosing the human point of view, it is even easier to lose the importance of perspectives on children.

*Mother and child on their way home from training classes in Resource center on the Rights of the Child*
CONCLUSION AND RESULT
6 Conclusion and result

In this chapter, the result of the analyses and gathering of information are summarized. The chapter is divided into three headings which together pose the “answer” to the main question stated in the introduction chapter: How is the child viewed upon among contemporary urban planners in Beijing, China?

6:1 What perspective on children can be identified among contemporary urban planners in Beijing?

In summary, the perspectives of advocacy and needs can be said to dominate the children’s perspective among the interviewed planners in Beijing. Francis and Lorenzo mean that in Europe, “planners for children” realm (Advocacy) has largely been replaced by other realms. The limited analysis performed in this report says that this is not the case in Beijing; it indicates that European planners compared to Chinese have moved further on in the planning for and with a children’s perspective. And this might be a qualified result, because European planners more regularly, in theory and practice, work with citizen participation overall which of course also spins over into the citizen participation among children.

Among the planners interviewed whom have children of their own (for example A) the knowledge and understanding for children’s needs was larger compared to those who do not have any children (for example B) this is not a surprise. Naturally the interest for and knowledge about children grow when you have children in your vicinity as a parent or relative.

6:2 How are the child and the children’s perspective considered in the urban planning processes space in Beijing?

Within the Chinese society, and in the lengthening within the planning discourse, children's rights, needs and views are not given a wide margin. This springs naturally from the context which constitutes the Chinese society, with cultural and political aspects. These include both by the situation of the human rights within the country (especially the freedom of speech) and the ongoing rapid economic growth.

The situation in Beijing today is that the development of the city relies on and is ruled by (to a large extent) private actors and interests. The economy is increasing at a pace unprecedented thanks to a large amount of domestic and international investors, fast design and development processes and to some extent also biased exercise of power from the government and its representatives. Due to strict policies on rights to express opinions among citizens, speeded planning processes and a great amount of private interests’ importance, the citizen participation within planning processes in Beijing is basically non-existent. This gives, that if adults are not heard within the planning processes concerning them, neither are children. Therefore, no sort of citizen participation with children or a children’s perspective, is regularly used within planning processes in Beijing.
To some extent the children's needs are taken into consideration even though they are not represented within the processes, either by themselves or a certain representative. The main “need” that is focused on is security. This is partly because of traditions, partly because of parents' wishes but furthermore because of the crime situation within the city. As shown in research, children's needs exceed playgrounds and other arranged places for children, but in Beijing – not even playgrounds are easy to find. Children are welcome in parks, but if they are supposed to run around and play – it is preferable that they do so special fenced areas filled with merry-go-'rounds, according to Beijing guidelines. The needs of children are seldom (there sure are some exceptions, but not many) a part of the design process, if they are taken into consideration it is mostly through something added afterwards (like a fence or a slide). In the design of residential compounds the security measurements is the only focus. Fences, guards and other security aspects are well-functioning and used. But the outdoor environment (sometimes designed paths through fake grass) might not be stimulating for children to run and play in compared to natural environments.

None of the interviewed persons knew any types of documents discussing the children’s perspective linked to architecture or urban planning. The only thing they could think of was regulations for school yards (size and design) that need to be followed which result in that almost all school yards look the same in Beijing.

6:3 What is affecting the perspective on children among planners in Beijing?

Planners of all countries and in all cities or municipalities are affected by the context that they grew up in, live in and work in.

The official view in China is that children become adequate citizens in the age of 18 years. This perspective on children, that they are not yet full citizens under the age of 18, constitutes the basis for all perspectives on children in Beijing. People working with urban planning are often educated in University level and are formed by the education they have got as well as the focus of their education. The education of architects, planners and engineers does not include the focus on “weak” citizens (for example children and disabled) not able to, or allowed to, be heard. The focus of the actual education is rather to keep up the rapid growth of the economy and rise the general living standards in China (mainly focusing on the cities). And when entering the professional life, the planners meet private investors that are given a wide margin to develop as long as they meet basic requirements (not focusing on the children’s perspective). These investors do not need to, or have time to, think about the citizens that are affected by their project. The focus lies mainly in earning money, not to provide good housing or good ambient environments.

As mentioned, in general it can be found in the analyses that the security of children and their education is what concerns adults the most. These are practical issues that can be researched “what is best” and that is directly applicable to the children. Special types of pedagogy in schools and high security around school yards (with high closed fences) are
the reality of Beijing today. Harder to grasp, is the needs that children have concerning their right to express their opinion and to transfer their knowledge and experiences into subjects that concerns them. To express an opinion is, as mentioned earlier, something that even adults are not allowed to do in the Chinese society. Therefore it might be hard for people to understand why and how, this should be performed among children.

But times are changing, also in Beijing. Today, more people rise their voices when being treated unfair and when something really concerns them. And if this is something desirable for the Chinese society one has to start with the children of today to reach that development further on. To reach a full functioning society with a market-led economy, someone still has to speak for the ones that cannot speak for themselves. The question of citizen participation must therefore be given more space and importance within the planning processes to provide better basics for planning with a children’s perspective.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child cannot be said to affect the daily work of planners in Beijing, by regulations, debates or in official discussions. The persons interviewed have not heard about any type of implementation of this convention into the field of urban planning and one of the persons interviewed mean that this is not needed either.

...it does not need to be discussed either because design is focused on the common sense and not what is legally or in the research. 37

This sentence is supported by Allmendinger (2009:24) who states that the connection between research and practice within architecture and planning is weak. Planners focus more on their common sense instead of facts or knowledge found by others.

And, if this is the situation, it is up to the planners of Beijing to raise the question about the children’s perspective within planning processes. The politicians and the government does of course need to point out the direction of importance, but it might take some time in this huge development for the focus to come to children within urban planning. There are many others, more direct concern, to deal with. Therefore, if the children’s perspective should be visible in the planning processes – the planners themselves need to prioritize them and be strong advocates for their opinion.

37 Interview D, 2010-11-09
DISCUSSION
7 Discussion

This discussion aims to critically discuss the result of this thesis, from the knowledge gathered during the work with this thesis. It also includes a critical discussion concerning the methods and sources used to reach the result, and what effect they might have had on this. To sum up recommendations for further studies are presented.

7:1 Criticism of the methods and sources

As mentioned in the methodological chapter, I am aware of that the selection of planners to interview is not representative for the professional society of planners in Beijing. I presupposed that this subject is not an actual issue within the field of urban planning in Beijing. And this turned out to be quite realistic. There are not many discussions concerning children in the environments of the city of Beijing. But there is a growing interest to put this subject to the agenda of discussions. Parents become even wealthier and their focus lies to a large extent in their child and its wellbeing, and this might have effects on the urban planning further on.

The fact that my interviews were performed in English, might have affected the result of my studies. If I would have had the chance to interview traditional municipal planners of Beijing, my result most certainly would have been different. Though, I do not believe that the result would have been more modern, seen to the perspective on children stated in this methodological approach and analyses. The context that my interviews were performed in (sometimes at official places, with taping and so on) might have affected the interviewed persons’ chance to express their true feelings and thoughts. Still, I have the feeling that today – more Chinese do question the Chinese society, both according to traditions and cultural phenomenon, without regret. So did most of my interviewed persons. This at first seems “good” to me, as I value the freedom of speech. But then it occurred to me that I sometimes find it scary that these persons most often show USA as the model for progress. USA’s (and sometimes, but not that often, Europe’s) situation forms the frame of what Chinese want to reach – instead of trying to develop what the background and context of China provides.

As mentioned in the description of the study process a shortage with my observation studies is that it has not been able to cover the poor families and their children’s’ activities. This is because it would take too much time and knowledge to get to know the places that they use, because they are seldom seen in obvious public places such as parks and squares in the central parts of Beijing. Furthermore, my limitations in knowledge within the Chinese language have limited who I was able to interview and talk to about the general and specific perspectives on children within the society.

The theoretical studies are wide and I have tried to find more than one reference in all themes, to provide a broader picture. Though, there are some sources that might be more colored from political and personal views than others. For example, Nic Nilsson is a representative for the Children’s right to play organization, writing about the children’s perspective. For example, his criteria of child-friendliness are quite isolated from other
aspects such as economy. Therefore, I have tried to use his theoretical approaches only as supportive or complementing others.

I have chosen not to show that much of statistic material about Beijing (according to the status of fertility and so on) since in general – statistics in China are not to be trusted (according to the Embassy of Sweden in Beijing). The tradition is that you twist numbers to seem as good as possible for the government. Today, the situation might be different, but nevertheless it might be right to take the numbers presented in the report for what they are – even though they are checked against multiple sources.

7:2 Criticism of the result

By tradition, disabled, elderly and children do not have a given place in the public areas of Beijing. Within the family and in extension the society, both elderly and children are respected. But in the city environments, they are not planned for. To change this, and not let the capitalistic development greaten the problem, the planners need to change focus and dare to develop their professionalism and keep pointing the “public interest” of the citizens not represented by strong voices. Planners cannot allow themselves to be seduced by pretty plans, money and simplistic political arguments, if so - we cannot count on a broad citizen dialogue which includes and consider the young citizens – the children.

One of the early benchmarks for this thesis is the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which actually demands from states all over the world to take children’s rights, knowledge and needs seriously. In China, the term of Children’s Rights is seldom discussed. Therefore, the result of this thesis does not surprise me. When walking in the streets of Beijing (or another large city in China) it is quite obvious that the elderly, disabled and children do not have a certain right to be there. There are enormous differences in heights, hard for children to climb and there are no actual boundaries between the road for cars and the pedestrian streets – the cars are parked where people are supposed to walk. When building new housing areas, the security is the main focus in the design of apartments and houses. The outdoor environments are important to some extent, but it is mainly the aesthetics rather than the practical use for example for children, that are in focus. These apartments are safe for children to live in, as there is a guard making sure that no one aiming to hurt the child can enter the area and that the child cannot run away. Thus, these areas do not challenge the fantasy or supply the environmental needs that children have – which urge a discussion around what is the best for children. For the actual child – what matters the most? A safe environment or an inspiring environment? This discussion, what to prioritize, is not known to be ongoing in China today. Modern researchers might argue for the children’s rights and needs (except security needs) but the official line is that adults should decide -and their main priority is the security.

The actual result of the analyses performed within this thesis, can be questioned. The research has been very limited, both in time, knowledge of how to perform qualitative interviews and in the selection of people to interview. Thus, this was what was available to do, and so it was done. To reach a broader and more quantitative result, more people need to be interviewed, representing all types of planning institutions, in the Chinese
language. As mentioned and discussed, the context that this research has been performed in is European and theory based – which of course affect the results. Though, since China has not got the tradition to either question the actual situation or to discuss this theme, it might be needed to start with a European point of view when approaching this field. Therefore, I mean that my thesis and the result of the narrow research might still be valuable because it is a first attempt to approach the field of perspectives on children in China.

7:3 Further studies

If I was to perform this study once again, and with the knowledge I have now, I would definitively chose to focus more intensively on the studies of the Chinese society in my pre-studies. If I had had a greater understanding for the context that the planners and citizen live in, I would probably be able to perform a broader analysis and results.

To study China and Chinese planners within the field of perspectives on children has been very interesting and rewarding. Thus, because of limitations in time and space, this thesis has not been able to present the whole picture of children and the children’s perspective within urban planning in Beijing. Further studies focusing on more normative approaches such as methods for producing a “child-friendly” plan or methods for planners to work actively with children’s participation in Beijing would be interesting to take part of.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, a shortcoming in my studies is that I was not able to provide a broad picture over the life of children in urban environments, as the research came to focus on wealthy children and their families. The differences for children in Beijing are enormous depending on the status of the family, according to their housing conditions and chance to attend higher education, for example. Therefore it might be interesting to look at the actions and movement of poorer children in Beijing, and come up with ideas of how to improve their ambient environments through urban planning. To be able to do this, knowledge in the Chinese language is needed in order to interact with the actual families and children to provide a useful result. Another interesting approach (which also demands good language skills) is to look at and analyse how the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is progressing in China and how this is made within the field of urban planning.

Environments that children see and use in their daily life are changing rapidly in Beijing. Therefore, a more broad stud over time is needed to provide the “whole picture” of the Beijing environments impact on children living in the city. Though, peoples minds and values are not changing as rapidly as the economical and environmental status, why it might be interesting to perform a similar study (like this) in a couple of years and analyse if and how the perspectives on children have changed and if they have – why?
7:4 Concluding remark

The connection between perspectives on children and urban planning is not clear to all planners. Not in Sweden, nor in China. In Sweden, when talking to planners and students, I find that many planners cannot tell what “a perspective on children” is. Despite this, many planners mean they do plan for children – when designing both playgrounds and schoolyards. Yes, but as discussed in this report, the width of children’s perspective goes further than that.

As the discussion with planners moves on in Sweden, many planners become interested in what I have found and want to learn more about how to handle the children’s perspective within planning. Some are self-critical and want to work more intensively to grasp the child’s perspective and use children’s knowledge within planning process. Naturally, some Swedish planners wonder why there needs to be a connection between the perspective on children and urban planning – what is the point? In China, this choice of subject is met by skepticism. It seems uninteresting and unimportant to form knowledge around the perspectives on children among planners. The traffic situation is the most important issue within the field of urban planning in China, not the children’s needs. Of course, it is not the pedestrian movements that are in focus, it is the mega projects concerning new rapid rails and advanced highways. The sustainable thinking is generally low, at the utmost renewable fuels for cars are discussed. As I preceded my studies, I did find people who were interested in answering my questions. And this must mean that there is some sort of upcoming interest to be found. The urban planning in Beijing might be able to focus on its citizens while planning the city. And hopefully, this time all citizens will be in focus. So is my wish.

A family heading to the Park of the Altar of Heaven during a weekend in November
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Photos

**Attachments**

The following attachments make up the interview guides used in the performed interviews. They are attached to provide an understanding for what focus the interviews had.

**I: Original interview guide**

**Introduction questions:**

What is your profession?

Describe briefly your job assignments (work tasks)?

**Children and childhood:**

Describe the term “Children” (What is a child to you):

What is childhood to you? Describe the term:

When you are recalling your childhood, can you imagine what kind of environments you enjoyed?

Where did you like to play?

Can you remember what you did in these kind of environments?

If you compare children’s actions today in these kind of environments, are they the same?

What kind of environments did you not enjoy?

Can you remember what you did in these kind of environments?

**Urban public space and children:**

Describe what kind of environments you see as “good” for children, in Beijing today? Examples?

What does children do in these places? How do they act?

Does children visit these kind of places by themselves

Describe what kind of space you see as “bad” for children, in Beijing today? Examples?

What does children do in these places? How do they act?

Does children visit these kind of places by them self?

Are children “allowed” to move in the urban public space alone?
Urban planning and children

In the design of the public spaces, like squares, streets and parks, do you know of any discussions with the citizens concerned? Like citizen participation?

Any discussions with children in particular?

In the urban planning discussions, are children’s environmental needs on the agenda?

Are children involved in any discussions concerning their daily environments? Are they a part of the design of the school yards, for example?

When I walk in the streets of Beijing, I do not see a lot of children moving around alone. Why?

In China, are children seen as citizens or as children. Are they a part of the citizen group, or a specific group?

What does adults prioritize the most in the lives of their children?

What about the children’s access to the urban public spaces? Despite the specific playgrounds. Are they welcome in all environments?

How would you describe the term “Child-friendly”

Do you find Beijing child-friendly?

What kind of environments are child-friendly? Examples.

A couple of years ago, in 1992, China as well as many other countries, signed the convention on the Rights of the Child. Is the implementation of this convention discussed within the planner and architect profession of China?

In Beijing, many people live in high raised buildings, of course needed because otherwise the city would be very large. Is there a discussion in China concerning children growing up in high buildings and how this might affect them?

What is your opinion?

Is there a discussion in China concerning children and large amount of traffic? A lot of cars and bicycles…

In China, when planning parks for example, are there specific places designed for children or does the architect try to make the whole area child-friendly?

What does the school yards look like? And what actions are taken there?

Finishing questions:
Have you got any children? If so, briefly describe your child's day and what kind of environment he or she is visiting.

What do you believe that your children like the most? What kind of environments?

Do you know of research concerning the urban public space and children? Would you be interested in taking part of it, if it was available?

II: Interview guide for group interview
Describe a typical project of yours. Who is involved, how long time does it take and so on.

Have you used citizen participation in the design process of any project? Have children been a part of these participation actions?

Have you during your education or profession, came into contact with discussions concerning children's environmental needs and children's experience of physical environment?

Is this something that has been a part of the discussion in the design of the outdoor environment in your projects?

Are children welcome to use all type of outdoor environments such as Streets, parks, squares, in Beijing?

China signed the convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992. Have you taken part of discussions concerning the implementation of this convention into urban planning processes?

A lot of people live in high raised buildings. How would you say this affect the children's daily lives?
III: Interview guide for e-mail interviews

Briefly describe your profession and the sort of projects that you are performing in your daily work.

When you think about your childhood, what kind of environments come to your mind when you think of the places that you enjoyed? For playing and hanging around.

Can you remember what kind of activities you performed in these environments? What did you do or play?

When you think about Beijing today, what kind of environments (in the public, like public places) do you see as suitable / good for children?

What make these places good or suitable for children?

What kind of public environments do you see as bad or not suitable for children to visit, in Beijing?

What make these places not suitable for children?

How would you describe the term "child-friendly"? From your earlier knowledge and experiences, not from the book?

In your daily profession, in the projects you are a part of or performing, have you given the Children's needs a thought in the design or structural processes?

Have you during any projects had discussions with children or their parents about the Children's need in the (actual) specific environment that is a part of one project?

If not, would you be interested in performing a discussion like this if possible? Do you think it would be possible?