[Aging in place: planning for intergenerational play]

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Preservation
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In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Science in Urban Planning

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Abstract:

“If you see a city with many children and many old people using the public spaces this is a sign that there is a good quality for people in that particular city.”
– Jan Gehl

My thesis explores the uses of playground and public space in New York City and Hong Kong (the two places I get to call home), to accommodate users from different age groups and support the exchange of sociocultural knowledge. The benefits of intergenerational interactions have been studied in social science, urban design, and planning lenses. Intergenerational studies, focus on the relationships and interactions between different age groups, parents and children, siblings, and grandparents and grandchildren. These relationships can have a significant impact on the well-being and development of individuals and communities, providing support, reducing isolation, and opportunities for connection. As the population ages and the cityscape continues to evolve, how can we promote positive intergenerational relationships in diverse settings, such as playgrounds and open spaces in public housing? This study suggests that although intergenerational interactions can be nuanced depending on cultural context—flexibility in infrastructure use, inclusiveness of placemaking, offering of a safe space, accessibility to nearby facilities, have all impacted the visitation of different age groups, and the mixing of visitors.
Acknowledgment

Thank you to my advisor, Anthony Vanky, and my reader, Sybil Wa, for their invaluable patience and feedback. Thank you, Anthony, for going through the many topic changes, and helping me stay true to a topic of self-reflection and exploration.

I am beyond grateful to my cohort here at GSAPP, with whom we have spent long nights and early mornings together, for their moral support and constant words of encouragement. Thank you to my friends who have been there since Day 1, Kirthi Balakrishnan, Michelle Chen, Lizzie Lee, Mollye Liu, Andrea Wong, Alisa Nurmansyah, and many others whom I am beyond grateful to have met in the past two years.

Last but not least, I would be remiss in not mentioning my family—my grandparents who had inspired this topic of interest, my parents for their loving support, my brother for the fireside chats, and my partner for his company. Their belief in me has overweighted my own.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract:</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The importance of Intergenerational Interactions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of Study</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Studies Background</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Hong Kong Open Space</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Hong Kong public housing</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. New York City public housing</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. New York City open space</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological Framework</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Selection</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings &amp; Discussion</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Specific Findings</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Comparison: New York vs. Hong Kong</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I.</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction
Growing up in Hong Kong, I spent the majority of my childhood with my grandparents and learning about the world through their guidance. It was the open spaces and corridors in between the public housing towers where I played hide and seek; it was the stone tables by the elevator entrance where I watched my grandparents and other children’s grandparents played Mahjong. As I moved away from home, I began to notice differences between the interaction and gathering of older adults and younger generations varied by culture, by the density of urban settlements, and by the accessibility of public spaces. As a researcher that grew up in a three-generation home, I am inherently influenced by my lived experiences and I hope to use this thesis study to advocate for inclusive placemaking for intergenerational users.

The importance of Intergenerational Interactions
The conversations around intergenerational studies can date back to the 1940s—Lewis Mumford argued the need of an organic planning concept for the urban community in time through inter-relationship between phases of life. In the 1960s, interests around development of programs and spaces to bring children and older adults together began to flourish\(^1\). Intergeneration—referring to the interactions and relationships between people from different age groups within a family—includes relationships between parents and children, siblings, grandparents and grandchildren. It can also refer to the relationships between people of different age groups within a community.

Intergeneration is an important aspect of social and family dynamics, as it can have a significant impact on the well-being and development of individuals and communities. For example, positive intergenerational relationships can provide support, guidance, 

\(^1\) (Newman et al., 1989)
and wisdom to younger generations, while also providing opportunities for older generations to stay engaged and connected to their communities. The interest in intergenerational activities continues to grow, while anecdotal reports based on firsthand experiences have probably spread enthusiasm as well.

In Asian culture and many others, particularly rooted in Chinese values, older adults are not viewed as a burden, but sources of strength and productivity with intrinsic value for all generations, as emphasized in the ritual of filial piety to respect, care, and share knowledge of one's older family members. Professor Sally Newman has also explored the similar developmental and reciprocal needs of the older adults and young childrens:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Older Adult Needs</th>
<th>Children's Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To Nurture</td>
<td>To Be Nurtured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Teach</td>
<td>To Learn from and About the Past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Have a Successful Life Review</td>
<td>To Have a Cultural Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Share Cultural Mores</td>
<td>To Have a Positive Role Model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In our generation in which life expectancy is getting higher, children are able to spend more time with their senior kins—while technology and the digital spheres are dominating the narratives of present-day culture and norms. How do we preserve and envision the future of valuable face-to-face social interaction happening in real life; how are we going to share public spaces, and embrace the exchange of sociocultural transmission, which is the key to societal stability, cohesion, and continuity of traditions?

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2 (Larkin et al. 2004)
3 (Gray & Adjaye, 2004)
Research Question

My thesis will look to investigate what we can learn from uses of playgrounds and public space to facilitate interactions and social learning, specifically to accommodate intergenerational users. With specific case studies and observations in Hong Kong and New York City, my research will walk through the similarities and differences across cultures and physical spaces, to narrate multidisciplinary perspectives in the conversation of intergenerational planning.

What can we learn from patterns of uses in playgrounds and public space, to accommodate and facilitate social interactions among intergenerational users?

Sub Questions:

a. What type of activities, and use of equipment, encourage interaction between playground users?

b. Among the facilities and amenities provided, what are the frequented equipment by individuals of different age groups?

c. How do playground uses differ or share similar adoption between Hong Kong and New York City, given the operation structure and governmental organization are very much unlike?

Significance of Study

At a young age, we learn about ourselves and interact with our world through play. Montessori education, play-based learning, and other forms of interactive learning are used to facilitate children’s experience, and are even employed in therapy to improve attention and development of play. In high-density urban environments, such as New York City and Hong Kong, conveniently accessible play spaces for most children are
usually neighborhood playgrounds\(^4\) and accessible public spaces. In this research, I strive to gain a better understanding of children's, and their caretakers', interaction with the playground and environment. From the patterns of space use, that playground designers neglect, and could benefit playground enjoyers' social experiences?

Figure 1. The population of older adults above the age of 65 in New York City (left) and Hong Kong (right) by neighborhoods and districts.

Source: Left by NYU Furman Center, Right by author using data from HK Census and Statistics Department

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\(^4\) (Chow, et al. 2013)
Case Studies Background

With island landscapes, skylines of super-talls, and high-density populations, Hong Kong and New York City are often drawn in parallel analogy. However, when one looks closer, the complex cultural differences, planning history, and contorted terrain, have all characterized the two drastically unique cities. To orient my research, a brief background on the two cities' public space and its relation with public housing are followed.

a. Hong Kong Open Space

In densely populated cities like Hong Kong, public open spaces are a key resource, playing an important role in creating leisure opportunities and spaces to connect people. However, with the limited land supply and government policy that favors development over the supply of quality open space often impacts the availability of open spaces in the dense urban core. When the Hong Kong Planning Department released their Planning Vision and Future Challenges, they raised awareness on the issue that open spaces in old urban areas are small and fragmented, sometimes being hidden and defeating the purpose as a venue for social interaction.\(^5\)

The definition of “public open space” and “recreational space” are different in terms of accessibility and purpose of use. Compared to other Asian cities such as Shanghai and Singapore, the open space per capita for Hong Kong-ers are low: at 2.7 square meters (29 square feet).\(^6\) While most of the city’s public open space is administered by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, open spaces within public housing

\(^{5}\) (Hong Kong Planning Department, 2016)  
\(^{6}\) (Lai, 2017)
complexes also supply about one third of the total public space (Figure 2). As aforementioned, neighborhood playgrounds play an important role as children’s development ground—my case study will focus on one public housing playground per city.

(Further definitions on Hong Kong’s open space terminologies can be referenced in Appendix I.)

Figure 1. Availability of public open green space to Hong Kong-ers by provider, Source: Civic Exchange.

b. Hong Kong public housing

The Government of Hong Kong has implemented a series of housing programs to offer affordable accommodation for lower-income residents. This has become a crucial

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7 Ibid
element of housing in Hong Kong, with almost half of the population currently residing in public housing either through rental or subsidies.

The primary bodies responsible for constructing public housing in Hong Kong are the Hong Kong Housing Authority and the Hong Kong Housing Society. Government subsidies help to keep rents and prices substantially lower than those for private housing. The Lands Department, Planning Department, and Building Department are also involved in public housing provision and public space management (Figure 2). With the high values of land in Hong Kong, the government agencies also manage other mixed-use activities on the public housing sites, such as parking fees or shopping malls.
Figure 2. The organizational chart of Hong Kong’s government structure and highlighting agencies that involve in open space management and housing development.

Public housing estates are frequently located in the New Territories, closer to the northern end of the city, with some older estates situated in Hong Kong Island to accommodate the early population growth. The estates are typically composed of high-rise buildings, or locally called blocks, of 40 or more storeys. Some larger estates with multiple blocks are usually equipped with community facilities such as playgrounds, open spaces, and shopping centers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Total # of Estates: 237)</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th># of Housing Estates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong Island (26)</td>
<td>Central &amp; Western</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kowloon (83)</td>
<td>Sham Shui Po</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kowloon City</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wong Tai Sin</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kwun Tong</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yau Tsim Mong</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Territories (128)</td>
<td>Tai Po</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yuen Long</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuen Mun</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tsuen Wan</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kwai Tsing</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sha Tin</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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8 (Hong Kong Government Directory, 2019)
Table 1. Number of estates per district in Hong Kong.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sai Kung</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table showing the number of estates in different districts across Hong Kong informs the decision-making process of selecting the case study sites. Central & Western only has one public housing estate in the district and the high density made this area interesting to look into as to what public space would need further improvement. New Territories with a lower density than Kowloon and Hong Kong Island, have the most public housing estates, leading to the area of focus for public housing playground site selection. Specific locations are discussed in the Methodology chapter.

c. New York City public housing

As the largest public housing authority in North America, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) is the main developer which provides public housing in New York City. Founded in 1934 as the first public development organization in the United States, NYCHA offers New Yorkers with low and middle incomes with access to affordable housing of more desirable living conditions than tenement housing. Besides the development of large public housing complexes across the city, NYCHA also manages the city’s Section 8 rental housing program, which has previously expired, to provide subsidies for renters. As the map of current NYCHA developments reflects,
most of the public housing in Manhattan is clustered in the northern end of the island, or Lower East Side, which I have chosen to focus the study area on.

Figure 3. Map of NYCHA developments in New York City, with a high density in the Lower East Side, Source: NYCHA

\[d. \ New \ York \ City \ open \ space\]

With many open spaces in New York City, including parks, plazas, neighborhood community gardens, privately-owned public spaces, etc. that offer residents and visitors places to relax, socialize, exercise, and escape from the hustle and bustle of the city. As one of the open spaces that have the city’s highest visitation, Central Park covers 843 acres of land in the middle of Manhattan, featuring a variety of spaces and

\[9 \ (NYCHA \ Developments, \ n.d.)\]
facilities, such as playgrounds, and sporting fields, to both residents and travelers. On the other hand, one of the most frequented non-country parks in Hong Kong—Victoria Park—is only 1/19 in size. Large open spaces versus small but distributed open spaces throughout the city— is a significant difference between New York City’s and Hong Kong’s planning framework.

Figure 4. Size comparison of the two frequented parks and recreation spaces in New York City vs Hong Kong —
1 Central Park (left) = 19 Victoria Park (right)
Literature Review

The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces, a 1979 documentary and book by William H. “Holly” Whyte, explores the successes and failures of public spaces in New York City as a concise, observational study of people’s relationship with spaces and how it can change (for better or for worse) when the space itself is altered\(^\text{10}\). As a study on the use of public spaces in cities, Whyte observed how people interact in public spaces, such as plazas and parks, and found that the most successful spaces were those that had the most social activity. He also identified several design elements that contribute to the success of public spaces, such as seating, accessibility, and the presence of food vendors. Whyte's work emphasized the importance of creating public spaces that encourage social interaction and support a vibrant urban community.

While most of his studies/findings are based on New York’s relationship to its own small spaces, his conclusions are comprehensive and worth studying for other cities globally. The methodology of Whyte’s study is inspiring, extensively mapping physical activities in the public realm, with time-lapse videos, film, unobtrusive observation, behavior mapping, questionnaires, personal interviews, and pedestrian path analysis.

The use of public space by intergenerational users, highlighted in different cultures, were described by Robert Vanderbeck & Nancy Worth\(^\text{11}\). Intergenerational space can be valuable to connect different age groups both in research and policies, offering insight into the transforming relationships between younger and older members of contemporary societies. Featuring studies from across the globe, scholars have looked

\(^{10}\) (Whyte, 1980)
\(^{11}\) (Intergenerational Space | Robert Vanderbeck, Nancy Worth | Taylor & Fr, n.d.)
at encounters in public spaces within Singapore's public housing neighborhoods, fisher households in southern China, and intergenerational recognition as a political practice in Finland. In the chapter where researchers focused on intergenerational and community-building efforts in Singapore's public housing, examined a co-located intergenerational leisure space within the housing complex and dissected the space as a form of the contact zone. While the preliminary observations suggest the need for further research, including surveys of the neighborhood and detailed ethnographic fieldwork to enrich understanding. The chapter concludes with the potential for innovative co-location of community and commercial facilities intergenerationally that serve as important intergenerational contact zones and the cities have the potential to enhance the quality of life for all age groups.
Methodological Framework

The methodological framework of the thesis consists of three major components:

1. Literature review
2. Site observations
3. Interviews

The methodological approach to my research was inspired by previous studies such as William H. Whyte’s The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces, where information about public space visitors is recorded for qualitative analysis. Francesco Rossini’s work on Public open space in high-density cities: the case of Hong Kong\textsuperscript{12}, inspired the methodology to record movement and changes across time by specific age groups and simplistic characters. Site observations are conducted by initial rounds of visit to determine a suitable timeframe, and returning to the four sites at around the same time (weekday early evening) to reduce variability in data collection.

\textsuperscript{12} (Rossini, 2022)
Figure 5. Left: William H. Whyte's documentation on public space users; Right: Francesco Rossini's documentation on public space by different user groups

This is a typical sighting map. We found that one could map the location of every sitter, whether male (X), female (O), alone, or with others (XO), in about five minutes, little more time than a simple head count would take.
Site Selection

This research will primarily focus on the two playgrounds in New York City, and two playgrounds in Hong Kong. In either New York City or Hong Kong, there is one playground site situated in a public housing estate, while the other playground is designed for all visitors in the neighborhood. The differentiation in management of these two types of playgrounds, one under a public housing agency, and the other being either NYC Parks or Leisure and Cultural Services Department in Hong Kong.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhoods of Focus</th>
<th>Playground Site</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>Alfred E. Smith Houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower East Side</td>
<td>SMITH HOUSES PLAYGROUND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>© OpenStreetMap contributors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hester Street</td>
<td>HESTER ST. PLAYGROUND</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>© OpenStreetMap contributors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Lower East Side (LES) in New York City is a historic neighborhood known for its cultural diversity, and records of poverty, housing movements, and ongoing gentrification. The neighborhood is home to a mix of people from different backgrounds, including long-time residents, artists, and recent immigrants. As a center of immigrant life, with many of the neighborhood's residents coming from Eastern Europe, China, and Latin America. LES has valuable insights into cultural diversity and intergenerational exchange. Jacob Rii’s “How the Other Half Lives” documented the
overcrowded living conditions in the tenement housings, and LES is the beginning ground of public housing and reforms. Conducting visits to both playgrounds within a public housing complex, the Alfred E. Smith Houses, and a hustling public space in Chinatown, offers different perspectives on users’ characteristics and the design of spaces.

In Hong Kong, Sheung Shui in the New Territories is a region in the north of Hong Kong, located between the Kowloon Peninsula and the mainland border with China. As one of the fastest-growing regions, New Territories is also home to immigrants from mainland China and recent public housing developments by the Housing Authority. Compared with an older neighborhood, Central, which is located in Hong Kong Island, the two sites in Hong Kong present mixed cultural backgrounds and distribution of age groups in the different neighborhoods.

Figure 6. Locations of the case study sites, left: Lower East Side in New York City, right: Sheung Shui and Central in Hong Kong
Limitations

During the period of site observations in Hong Kong, COVID-19 restrictions were still in place, as social distancing rules such as vaccine pass requirement to access most venues and gatherings of more than 12 people in public were slowly being lifted. The playground uses and reflection on social interaction were not representative of the regular conditions.

The open space statistics published by the government also do not offer a complete picture of the open space in Hong Kong, due to the intersecting management and ownership between multiple departments, such as Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Planning Department, Lands Department, Housing Authority, etc. Each agency has its own priority and is using the statistics for different purposes, leading to collection of varying information and differing definitions of terminology.

Findings & Discussion

Site Specific Findings

1. New York Lower East Side: Hester Street Playground & Smith Houses Playground

Bounded by Houston Street and Canal Street, a strip of public space, approximately 136,000 square feet of size, situated along Chrystie Street offers a lively gathering ground to Chinatown and Lower East Side’s residents. Within Hester Street Playground and its contiguous sporting grounds, I was able to observe chi from young children, teenagers, mid-age adults, to older adults. The infrastructure provided in the
playground includes children-friendly equipment, large open space for sports; when benches and tables are all filled, side ledges are also utilized for informal gatherings.

During my site visits, most children were accompanied by a family member, either nearby, or a few steps away by the benches, catching up with other parents. With the sporting courts in the middle, teenagers were hanging out in groups, playing handball and other activities without caretaker supervision. Older adults were located near the edge of the sporting grounds, jogging alongside, or playing chess and poker cards on the ledges. There were not necessarily interactions between the older adults and children, since the playground area is fenced, and distinct age groups were involved in different activities.

Figure 7. Picture showing two young girls sitting on the swings in the Hester St. Playground.
Figure 8. The distribution of users in Hester St. Playground (136,000 sq feet) and its nearby public space during a weekday’s early evening.

Compared to the public playground space, in the NYCHA housing—Smith Houses playground, approximately 20,150 square feet of size, has newly renovated features with adventure play facilities, and integrated seating areas in the playground. During the observation period, mostly teenagers and some children were gathering as a group, while their caretakers were standing near the entrance or by the seating area. Unlike public spaces with traditional benches, the seating areas in Smith Houses Playground were blended into the play area, offering the potential for higher interaction across generations.
Figure 9. Picture of newly renovated structures and seating area in the Smith Houses playground.

Figure 10. The distribution of users in Smith Houses’ Playground (20,150 sq feet) during a weekday early evening.
2. Hong Kong: Kau U Fong Children’s Playground & Ching Ho Estate Playground

Kau U Fong, tucked in a busy hustling street in Central, is approximately 620 sq feet in size. It is the smallest site of all four playgrounds, and the oldest, constructed in 1958. Similar to Hester Street Playground, the site is surrounded by restaurants and other commercial activities, fenced off with a single entrance. The small but mighty playground provides various equipment for different age groups, for example, swings and slides, chess tables, benches both inside the playground and outside near the entrance, as well as pebble pavement for exercise. The main users of the playground observed were older residents of the neighborhood, playing chess, as well as nearby workers having their meals on the benches. There were a few children and teenagers spotted in the corner area with designated play structures, accompanied by their caretakers nearby.

Figure 11. Image of Kau U Fong Playground’s play structure and benches.
Ching Ho Estate has multiple playgrounds situated in between its eight multi-storey towers. The playground selected for observation is one the bigger spaces at approximately 12,900 square feet, with open access to accommodate residents living in different towers, unlike the previous case studies. The space is designated to accommodate different generations of users residing in the housing estate, with one side dedicated as a children's play area—equipped with slides, covered with rubber bark, and the other side for older adults as an exercise ground. The space connecting between the two is also well-utilized to place fitness stations. During the period of observation, teenagers were also seen to be using the fitness stations and sharing spaces with the children's play area. Benches were placed throughout the space, offering an informal gathering space for neighbors, friends, and families.
Figure 13. Image of Ching Ho Estate Playground’s exercise equipment for adults.

Figure 14. The distribution of users in Ching Ho Estate Playground (12,900 sq feet) during a weekday’s early evening.
Site Comparison: New York vs. Hong Kong

Compared to New York, 40% of Hong Kong’s total landmass is public green spaces. However, the majority of Hong Kong residents only live in one-fourth of its total geographical area due to the mountainous landscape. It can take up to an hour of travel for a Hong Kong resident to reach a large country park on average. According to Hong Kong Planning Standards And Guidelines, in Chapter 4 where it discusses Recreation, Open Space and Greening, each person is entitled to two square meters of recreational open space, which is equivalent to 21.5 square feet\(^\text{13}\). New York, on the other hand, has an average of 146 square feet of open space per resident\(^\text{14}\).

Figure 14. Terrain map of Hong Kong, Source: Hong Kong Geological Survey

Although Hong Kong has a much smaller green space per capita compared to New York, pockets of parks, sitting-out areas, and playgrounds are more accessible in Hong

\(^{13}\)(Hong Kong Planning Department, 2015)

\(^{14}\)(Urban Footprint, 2019)
Kong, with facilities supporting users of different age groups. In the case study of Kau U Fong Children’s Playground, the small urban green space—equipped with both equipment for children play and adults to attend passive activities—in between busy streets in Central, is accessible to not only its neighborhood’s residents, but also for young adult workers, and children from nearby education facilities.

Figure 15. Examples of fitness equipment provided by Hong Kong Planning Department

The case studies between public open spaces and open spaces within a public housing structure also offer interesting insights. In both the Alfred E. Smith Houses playground and Ching Ho Estate playground, a higher frequency of visitation from children, who were usually accompanied by a caretaker around middle age were observed. In the public open spaces, Hester Street playground and Kau U Fong playground, more older adults were present, and formed groups with similar age users to play chess, or other passive activities.
Interviews Informed Site Comparison

Some of the interview information was able to inform the differences in the site comparison between New York City and Hong Kong. A researcher that worked closely with Hong Kong’s Cultural Services Department (LCSD) shared their sentiment—unlike NYC Parks, Leisure and LCSD in Hong Kong has a higher emphasis and division of staff on managing sporting facilities and ensuring sporting grounds availability over the general informal use of public spaces. LCSD has a rigid structure and follows strictly the Urban Design Guidelines, such as the “40/60 rule”, meaning that 40% of the playground space should be for passive use, and 60% of the space are reserved for active use, regardless of the size of the site. This explains the difficulty to have flexibility in space and equipment use as compared to the playgrounds in public housing estates, which likely has a less rigorous process and hierarchy in playground space design and administration.

Hester Street Playground and Kau U Fong Children’s Playground are both neighboring busy commercial activities in Chinatown and Central—with interviewers from both playground users sharing that they were doing grocery shopping as part of their trips to the playground visit. The responses reflect that the land use and activities outside of the playground also influence the types of playground visitors and the temporal factor of visitation.
Conclusion

With the site observation and literature reviews, it is apparent that planning for intergenerational togetherness has benefits for children, parents, and older adults. By designing public space that caters to a wide range of ages and accessibility, communities can enjoy spaces that foster social interaction, and encourage physical activity, and mental stimulation for all users.

Playgrounds and public spaces that offer opportunities for intergenerational interaction can help reduce social isolation for older adults, as seen in both the cases of Hong Kong and New York City, with a substantial percentage of the older population. The needs and available support that children and senior citizens of the city can exchange and provide, can generate benefits to the community at large. As compared in the sites across public housing playgrounds and open spaces in the neighborhood, the importance of perceived safety (enclosure of space), accessibility to nearby facilities and commercial activities, and the provision of a variety of equipment and spaces for different activities, have all impacted the visitation of different age groups, and the mixing of visitors.

Implication for Practice and Future Research

Undeniably, New York City and Hong Kong’s cultural backgrounds are unlike, and one size does not fit all in terms of intergenerational planning. For future studies to provide locational-specific strategies in public space planning, further support of pilot programs and research on existing community-based senior and child care can be beneficial.
With future possibilities to redesign or renovate existing playground spaces, flexibility and versatility of infrastructure can allow users of different age groups to be simultaneously sharing the same space and encourage interaction. In the case study of Smith Houses Playground in New York City, the large seating podium without enforcing rigid seating arrangement allows the mixing of playground users across age groups.

“Openness”—in both management agencies provide adaptability to change uses depending on shifting paradigm, and for users to enjoy the open space with an ease of flow with other activities in mind—can also increase space utilization and social interaction from different age groups. As planners, city dwellers, we all bring our unique lived experiences to our profession. Acknowledging the biases and strengths of each other, across job titles and departments, to create flexible and inclusive spaces that are adaptable to ongoing changes and local cultural differences, will help offer a well-loved resource to residents across age groups in different communities.
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Appendix I.

Open spaces are presented in various forms in Hong Kong:

1. **Public Open Space (POS)**
   a. Outdoor
   b. Accessible by anyone

2. **Public Open Spaces in Private Developments (POSPDs)**
   a. Owned and managed by private landowners
   b. Allowed to impose conditions restricting people’s access and use if deemed nuisances (e.g., refuse entry from homeless people, or foreign domestic helpers)

3. **Rural Green Space**
   a. Country parks, green belts, and conservation areas
   b. Does not count as recreational open space

4. **Countable Open Space**
   a. Located in urban and populated rural areas.
   b. Exclude the country parks, green belts, and coastal protection areas
   c. Outdoor space managed for recreational purposes by a responsible public or private body
   d. Included as Recreational Open Space

5. **Local Open Space**
   a. Small spaces, at least 500 square meters
   b. Includes children’s playgrounds

6. **District Open Space**
   a. Medium-sized sites, at least 1 hectare
   b. Intended to serve both passive and active recreational needs, including some sports facilities.

7. **Regional Open Space**
   a. Large sites, at least 5 hectare in size
   b. Intended to serve all Hong Kong residents as well as tourists.
Figure 16. Hierarchy of Recreation Open Space and Recreation Space with Corresponding Zonings\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{15} (Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, 2015)