WOMEN'S NEEDS AND HOUSING IN URBAN CHINA:
The Gender Impacts of Reform and Redevelopment
(A Case Study of Jinhua Street, Guangzhou)

by

AVERIL JUDITH HARRISON

B.A., The University of Victoria, 1988

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (Planning)
in

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

(School of Community and Regional Planning)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 1996

© Averil Judith Harrison, 1996
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Graduate Studies

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date April 10/96

DE-6 (2/88) DE-6 (2/88)
ABSTRACT

This study presents a qualitative impression on the gender related implications of the changing housing environment in urban China. China's housing allocation system is changing from a socialist method of subsidized housing allocation to one of free market sales. Inner city neighbourhoods are also physically changing under extensive neighbourhood redevelopment programs. The findings are based on a case study of a neighbourhood in Guangzhou (Canton), which is currently undergoing urban renewal and housing reforms. Thirty-eight women, representing a wide spectrum of age (22-81), marital status, occupation and housing conditions were interviewed.

The thesis examines women's housing needs according to Caroline Moser's classification of practical gender needs and strategic gender needs. Physical changes to housing such as reasonable sized apartments and access to elevators are identified as practical gender needs. The traditional housing allocation system also requires reform in order to address the practical gender needs of convenient home work journeys and access to child care facilities.

The first strategic gender need identified is breaking the traditional patrilocal living arrangement. This form of family living arrangement subordinates women to her mother-in-law and husband and limits her role in family decision making. The second strategic interest involves changing the process by which housing is allocated. Traditional patterns of allocation are biased in favour of men and are a barrier to accessibility for single and divorced women.

The findings of the study suggest that Chinese women must rely on men to access housing. Young women's choice of spouse and time of marriage is related to housing. Housing options are limited for women who choose not to marry. Divorced women are severely disadvantaged. Women are generally supportive of housing reforms and redevelopment programs but feel that they are unable to address the specific housing problems faced by women.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter I Introduction 1
  1.1 Introduction to the Issue 1
  1.2 Research Questions 5
  1.3 Structure of the Thesis 7

Chapter II Theory 8
  2.1 Conceptual Framework 8
  2.2 Application of the Conceptual Framework to China 15

Chapter III Methodology 22
  3.1 Introduction 22
  3.2 Choosing the Neighbourhood 22
  3.3 Developing the Interview Guide 24
  3.4 Choosing the Interviewees 24
  3.5 Interview Methods 26
  3.6 Analytical Approach 28

Chapter IV Chinese Housing System 30
  4.1 Historical Background 30
  4.2 Social Implications 37
  4.3 Experiments in Reform 39
  4.4 Housing in Guangzhou 43

Chapter V Practical Needs Assessment 51
  5.1 Introduction 51
  5.2 Size of Home Units 52
  5.3 Housing Design 55
  5.4 Hygiene and Health 63
  5.5 Safety, Privacy and Social Relationships in the Neighbourhood 64
  5.6 Services and Location 70
  5.7 Conclusion 80
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter VI Strategic Needs Assessment</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Introduction</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Post-Marriage Residence</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Access to Housing</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 Conclusion</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter VII Policy Implications and Conclusion</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1 Introduction</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 Policy Implications</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3 Possibilities for Internal Action</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4 Possibilities for External Action</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5 Conclusion</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1 Interview Questions</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2 Housing Conditions Checklist</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3 Housing Allocation Rules of the East China Institute of Law and Politics</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4 Guangzhou Housing Reform Policy</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 5 Heilongjiang Court Divorce and Housing Rules</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 6 Selections on Divorce and Housing Settlement Suggestions by Two Supreme People's Court Judges</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 7 A Letter to the Guangzhou Women's Federation</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1  Building Ownership Patterns in China, 1986  
Table 2  Housing Conditions in Guangzhou, 1985 and 1990  
Table 3  Housing Ownership in Jinhua Street, 1988  
Table 4  Summary of Jinhua Street Interviewees  
Table 5  Living Arrangements of Jinhua Street Interviewees

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1  Choice of Husband
I would first like to thank the School of Community and Regional Planning and the Centre for Human Settlements for making it possible for me to go to China for my research in the summer of 1992.

Special thanks go to Dr. Prod Laquian for all of his support for my research and to Dr. Michael Leaf for stepping in at the last minute. Thank-you also Faranouk for agreeing to be my outside reader. I also would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Penny Gurstein for her support in this project.

The most important thanks must go to the women of Jinhua Street who invited me into their homes and shared their stories with me. Without their willingness and openness, I may have been stuck with "a lot of men who like to talk a lot!"

I cannot forget Amy, Louis, Minru and Zhang Jie for all the help with interpretation and translation.

Of course, thanks to all of my friends at SCARP whose support and encouragement was very much appreciated.

Thanks to my family who never raised any doubts I would finish.

Finally, thanks to Martin, my favourite "decoy."
1.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the gender implications of the current urban housing system in the People's Republic of China (PRC). The research is primarily based on a case study of an urban neighbourhood in Guangzhou (Canton), in Guangdong Province. In 1992, when this study was conducted, the Jinhua Street neighbourhood was undergoing a large urban renewal project. The picturesque yet dilapidated, traditional, one and two storey housing was being demolished to make way for highrise apartment buildings. The study involved the households of thirty-eight women, ranging in age from 24-84, representing various types of marital status, employment and income. The analysis of the conditions under which these women lived provide a qualitative impression of the relationship between women as a gender and housing in urban China.

This research interpreted the word "housing" in a broad sense, following the ideas of John Turner, to include not only the physical structure of a house, but seeing "housing as a verb" (Turner: 1972). This idea thus incorporates the "process" of housing people which includes methods of housing access, administration, affordability, methods of allocation, housing conditions, design, location and provision of basic services.

The housing situation in urban China is characterized by extreme shortages, possibly linked to China's huge population and the Communist governments' housing policies. After the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, housing construction in the cities relied almost exclusively on state and collective financing. New housing was allocated by administrative organs (state, collective, or work unit) on a welfare basis, as housing was considered one of the five guarantees
Chapter I Introduction

for all urban residents\(^1\). Housing was highly subsidized, with monthly rent costing as little as a package of cigarettes. The old state managed system, while managing to deliver some form of housing to most people, carried with it all of the shortcomings of central planning; it was a cumbersome, inefficient and often corrupt allocation system, rife with poor quality construction and limited servicing. The majority of urban Chinese families today, live in housing constructed under this system.

During the past few years, essentially since 1987, economic reforms in the cities have changed the general housing policy outlook towards a greater degree of market orientation. Housing is no longer considered a welfare good (fulipin) but a commodity (shangpin). The authorities have tried to sell off and increase the rents of old and new housing to make use of private initiative and funds. At present, China is in the midst of this reform process, and thus, there now exists a confusing mix of publicly and privately owned and managed housing in Chinese cities.

But why examine the gender implications of the Chinese housing system? Caroline Moser, the most prolific writer on women and housing in the developing world explains that the role housing plays in the lives of women has been ignored by development planners (Moser: 1987:1). As a consequence, comparatively little research has been carried out on housing from a gender perspective. Moser's observation is particularly true in the case of the PRC. While copious amounts of economic research has been done on the Chinese reform process, even some of it on

\(^2\)The other "guarantees" for urban residents are food, clothing, employment and burial.
Chapter I Introduction

housing reforms, so far, neither Chinese nor Western writings have examined its gender implications. Isabella Bakker (1994:17), speaking about economic theory and planning in general and economic restructuring in particular, writes that "by silencing the experience of one half of a gendered society we are obscuring or excluding them from policy frameworks." The detrimental effects of disregarding women's experience and interests in the field of housing should be self-evident, as women's triple role make them the main users of space in housing.\(^2\) However, the discovery that planning human settlements and housing can only be done equitably and, indeed, effectively even from a male-oriented productivist perspective, when gender interests are introduced as a central factor, does not seem to have yet dawned on the majority of - mostly male - planners.

In my view, what is most urgently needed in China in the present phase of transition, in a country almost completely lacking a gender perspective, is a gender needs assessment. As specialists on gender and development, such as Caroline Moser and Kate Young have pointed out, this process has to precede any concrete planning steps, by placing the affected women in the focus of the planner's attention, in order to ensure that women are included in policy frameworks at the outset. Thus, the main purpose of this research is to give Chinese women a voice and make a first step towards filling the gap in the literature on gender and housing in China.

Aside from the very practical questions involved, such as housing design, access,

\(^2\)According to Caroline Moser, women play a reproductive role, a productive role, and a community management role. For further discussion on this, see Chapter 2, (Theory) of this thesis.
affordability, etc. the research subject is the foci of conflicting theories. Just as Bakker and Moser identify the need to separate experiences and thereby recognize the specificity of women's subordination to men, the opposite view is presented by the All China Women's Federation (ACWF), a Chinese national body which is the primary official organization representing women in China. The ACWF declares that:

"the national plan for socio-economic development serves the interest of the entire population and so everyone, including women, is motivated to work together for the common cause of economic and social development. That is to say, in socialist China, the interests of women are the same as those of the nation and the rest of the population. It is, therefore, impossible as well as unnecessary to separate indicators for women's development from the common indicators for the entire population specified in the State plan" (Hou and Li, 1988:136).

As the quote suggests, this official stance indicates the reluctance of the Chinese government to acknowledge gender differences as a central societal issue. This attitude had not been without its effects on this research. During the fieldwork for this thesis, the reaction to this topic was either amusement or at times bemusement. It was kindly suggested by some Chinese academics and officials that I change to a more important topic such as how to make housing more affordable or how to improve the supply of housing. It was interesting to discover during the interviews, that this view was not necessarily shared by women at the grassroots level.

Beyond the more general interest in gender, development and housing, there was also a personal motivation behind this research project. The inspiration for the study transpired when I worked in China with a group of Chinese planners in 1990-1991. A married colleague did not have a housing allocation. Encouraged by the prospect of qualifying for an allocated apartment
from her boyfriend's work unit, the woman married him at a young age, thus forgoing her right to time off for a honeymoon. After four years, his promised accommodation had not materialized. As a result, the couple had to hold off a wedding banquet making their relationship socially recognized. They continued to live separately. Her frustration both with her husband's work units false promises and with her own unit's refusal to provide housing grew to such a level that she went on "work to rule" in hopes of forcing her work unit to comply with her demands. This created problems in a joint project with a foreign company she was working in. The foreign consultants who worked with her did not understand her predicament and tried to have her replaced. She considered divorcing her husband as she jeopardized her future on the joint project.

This incident motivated me to explore the Chinese housing system to discover why women faced housing difficulties that apparently Chinese men did not, or at least, shouldered to a lesser degree.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the conceptual framework discussed in the preceding chapter, the following questions will be raised in this study:

- What are the practical gender needs of urban Guangzhou women, pertaining to their housing situation?
- Which of these gender needs possess transformatory potential to become strategic gender interests?
- Which strategic interests can be found in the studied neighbourhood?
- To what degree are practical needs and strategic interests met by the concrete housing scenario found in the neighbourhood and how are they affected by present housing policies and reform plans?
In order to avoid cultural bias as far as possible, the questions are answered in the light of the perception of the interviewed women themselves. It is evident that, on the basis of thirty-eight interviews, statistically meaningful results can hardly be offered. Therefore, my emphasis lies on the qualitative, not the quantitative. Lisa Peattie, writing about the need for qualitative data in housing studies urges that:

To understand the processes of housing and the invisible structures which shape those processes we need stories which correctly represent the World out there into which housing programmes intervene (Peattie 1983:231).

It is equally evident that by the mere fact that an analytical model developed by Western feminists is used, cultural bias of some extent is unavoidable. On the other hand, feminists believe that women can unite around certain strategic aims irrespective of their cultural and social backgrounds (Young 1993:155). Furthermore, the frequently used accusation of Western neocolonialist "value-imperialism" when applying feminist ideas to a non-western country, not always used on a disinterested motivation, does not really sound convincing in the case of the PRC, whose official propaganda has always considered women's equal rights and a fundamental break with Confucian patriarchal traditions a cornerstone of its ideology. The conceptual framework applied in this research is therefore only taking this ideology at face value.
1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The second chapter of this study provides the conceptual framework for the analysis of women's housing needs in urban China. It contains important definitions and examines the debate on identifying gender needs and interests. The theoretical framework is then applied to China whose traditional society and socialist history provide interesting comparisons to the framework.

Chapter three describes the methodology used for the research, including a description of the case study approach as well as the methods for carrying out the interviews. Certain problems associated with doing research in China are discussed.

The fourth chapter is a simple description of the Chinese housing system and an introduction to the case study neighbourhood. The fifth and sixth chapters examine and analyze the case study findings. In chapter five, a gender needs assessment examines the practical needs. Special attention is given to practical needs with transformatory potential, those which lead to serving strategic needs. Following that, chapter six on strategic needs deals with the potential for those needs to be met by current housing policies.

The final chapter explores the policy implications and the prospects of those policies to change and improve the situation, particularly against the background of economic restructuring and reform. It contains a number of internal actions which the Chinese government can implement to address the study findings. It also suggests some external actions, which can be implemented by the international community.
2.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A. Gender vs. Sex

This thesis is based on the gender-oriented conceptual framework originally developed by feminist researchers in the 1970s. This approach which can now be considered established practice among feminists, looks at social, cultural and economic phenomena in terms of gender, i.e. the social relationship between men and women against the background of a deeply ingrained culture-based tendency to discriminate against the latter, rather than in terms of sex which emphasizes and hereby narrows the discussion to the biological differences between women and men (Moser 1993:3).

This paradigm shift has been mirrored by the creation of the concept in development studies of Gender and Development (GAD) rather than that of Women in Development (WID). Since the mid 1970s, it has became clear to development workers and researchers, that an isolated view on women rather than on women in their relationship to men tended to consolidate and reinforce the traditional order of female subordination. In contrast, the focus on gender carried with it from the outset the aim to address the prevailing structural inequality between men and women in specific cultural settings (Young 1993:139).

B. The "Specificity" of Women's Gender Interests

The fundamental justification of a gender-centred approach to any research is the conviction that the oppression of women is "specific;" that it is independent of other social determinants such as class, caste, race etc., even though correlations between these factors
invariably exist. This specificity spurs specific gender needs that cannot be adequately appreciated by the traditional male biased analytic models (Moser 1987:12; Moser: 1993:15).

This approach contrasts with the Marxist view that looks at human society and its injustices exclusively in the context of class, namely the question of the control over the means of production (Molyneux 1985:239). Under Marxism, the establishment of a classless society will at the same time abolish the patriarchal system, a view which has been and still is the prevailing one in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

As the consequential Marxist will therefore discard gender as an analytical tool, so will the other dominating ideology of the 20th century, neo-liberal capitalism. For a system of thought that revolves around the idea of profit maximization through the free and state-unimpeded competition of the agents in a market economy, gender must be anathema to an even greater degree than to socialism, which at least concedes that the subordination of women is a reality to be addressed by a socialist revolution.

C. Identification of Women's Gender Interests

Feminists perceive the sexual division of labour predominant in basically all existing

\[1\] Molyneux praises the Nicaraguan sandinista revolution for its recognition of the specificity of women's oppression. At the same time, however, she seems to concede the resemblance to the theoretical foundations of state socialist countries: Possibly because of her closeness to Marxism she fails to clearly criticize the one-sided class fixation of Marxist ideology. However, she does quote some critical voices on the record of socialist countries but abstains from a personal comment (op. cit.:229).

\[2\] The same applies to most other economic theories such as Keynesianism; see Bakker in Bakker:1994:4 and Elson in op.cit.:38.
Chapter II Theory

societies as the chief cause of gender inequality (Molyneux 1985:228). Moser argues convincingly that the present status quo is described best in terms of the "triple role" of women as a gender (Moser 1987:13.; Moser 1993:27). Those roles are the "reproductive" role, i.e. the raising of children, the "productive" role as workers in paid labour, usually secondary to men, and thirdly, the work in "community management," mostly in the form of joint provision of certain necessary services on the neighbourhood level. This contrasts sharply with the one-dimensional function of men as primary agents in the "productive" sphere.

Once this fundamental difference is recognized, it follows logically that women as a gender have needs and interests different from men. Here, Molyneux' widely accepted differentiation between practical and strategic gender needs (Molyneux 1985: 232; Moser 1987:2, Moser 1993:37 and Young 1993:153) comes into play.

Practical gender needs are those which are easily identified. They are felt within women's current roles and conditions and include basic human needs such as housing and clean water. These needs are formulated from the concrete conditions that women experience within the gendered division of labour. They are practical in nature, concerned with improving working conditions at work and at home.

Strategic gender needs are much more difficult to identify. They vary from culture to culture and deal with power and control. Strategic gender needs are feminist in content and in the level of consciousness needed to strive for them. They cover needs such as escape from domestic violence, access to and control over credit, and equal wages. In other words, strategic gender
needs are those that serve to overcome woman's subordination to man; they are geared toward changing society, not toward making it run more smoothly. These gender needs must be addressed in order to make significant changes in women's roles and to overcome their subordination.

The above definitions include "housing" as an example of practical gender needs. But if one uses John Turners definition of housing which include issues of affordability and method of allocation, then housing can also be seen as addressing strategic needs. This research will examine the Chinese housing system for its abilities to address both practical and strategic gender needs.

Recently, a noteworthy evaluation and further clarification of this theory has been contributed by Kate Young. She first argues against the identification of needs as practical or strategic and argues that such categorization of needs "neither allows recognition of the potential dynamism of a given situation, nor of the ways in which very practical needs of women are closely enmeshed with their need for structural change (Young 1993:156). She asserts that the concept of strategic needs should be replaced by the concept of strategic gender interests in order to distinguish more clearly between such prosaic wants as access to clean water or adequate shelter and the requirements necessary to change the basic fabric of society (ibid:154)3.

Saskia Wiering (1994:839) claims that the distinction between practical and strategic needs is theoretically unsound. She dislikes Moser's distinction of the two needs, particularly Moser's assertion that the distinction relates to a question of analysis (strategic needs formulated from an

3It should be noted, that Molyneux in her 1985 article on Nicaraguan women invariably speaks of practical and strategic gender interests, not needs (Molyneux 1985: 232f.).
analysis of subordination whereas practical needs are formulated from concrete conditions). As both needs relate to women's roles in society, Wiering feels that a distinction based on analysis is not viable. She also claims that the distinction is empirically not tenable and that it contains hierarchical overtones.

Kate Young does make a point which throws the analytical framework initiated by Molyneux into sharper relief: the idea of "transformatory potential." According to this concept, the core question to be asked is, which practical needs have the potential of being transformed into strategic concerns?

This question averts two potential risks arising from the practical/strategic needs/interests discussion. First, it ensures that the concept is not used statically as a rigid dichotomy losing contact with the feminist goal of ending female subordination. Moser aptly observes that meeting women's practical gender needs does not necessarily help to further strategic gender interests; it might even act counterproductively, by making women's plight more bearable under the existing order, thus only consolidating the present sexual division of labour (Moser 1987:29). Secondly,

4In Moser and Peake (1985), Moser even seems to attribute to the fulfillment of practical women's needs, the general tendency to reinforce the traditional sexual division of labour and disqualifies this category as "not feminist." In her later work she seems to take a 180 degree turn by stating that practical gender needs are instruments to achieve strategic gender needs (Moser 1993:89). It appears likely that this statement was made with the tacit recognition of the concept of transformatory potential. It remains unclear, whether Moser has thereby changed her categorial system into one that only incorporates needs with a transformatory potential in the category of practical needs. This study takes a wider view of practical needs, first looking at practical needs indiscriminately, with a subsequent attempt to isolate practical needs with a transformatory potential from those reinforcing the sexual division of labour.
Chapter II Theory

the concept of transformative potential helps to identify those practical needs which are valuable from a feminist and not just a generally "humanitarian" perspective. The former can be associated with the WID-approach, the latter with the GAD-approach to development. The concept of transformatory potential takes into account that practical and strategic needs/interests are two spheres which partially overlap and not a dichotomy in the true sense of the word.

The key idea of transformatory potential is that it examines practical gender needs with an aim to both improve women's position in a sustainable way and to empower them to become agents of change. Thus, transformation becomes a process and not a goal. Analysis of needs and interests is the first step in this transformatory process.

Unlike Wiering, I feel that the distinction between practical and strategic gender needs is quite useful, particularly in societies where policy makers are gender blind. It is relatively easy to identify solutions to practical gender needs, as the needs themselves, by definition are easily observed. Therefore, the distinction allows the "blind" to see how "simple" it can be to address practical needs. If the practical needs have transformatory potential, it may potentially lay the groundwork for strategic needs to be addressed. Policy solutions for strategic gender needs however, which challenge society and gender relations, which are obviously more difficult to implement in male dominated societies. For those with a "vision" of gender sensitivity, the identification of strategic needs allows a deeper examination of constraints and obstacles to identify means of addressing needs and overcoming constraints. A gender needs analysis should be used as a planning tool to help policy makers carry out a thorough gender analysis which
Chapter II Theory

should logically be part of mainstream policy research.

D. The Gender-Blindness of Housing Policies and Planning

The existing case study material supports Moser's view that human settlement and housing planning in the Third World has been almost completely gender-blind. Why was the relationship between gender and housing left off the research agenda for so long? Irene Tinker argues there are three reasons. The first is that early women in development projects were concerned with the economic activities of women and did not explore where women carried out their work. The second reason is that the development community focused its study on rural communities which excluded housing studies from research funding. The third reason is that housing was considered an issue for a household and not an individual. In other words, women's particular needs within the household were ignored (Tinker: 1993:64-66).

Related to this issue is the tendency to use the household as the main unit for collecting statistical data and for planning (Moser 1993:15). This approach invariably leads to male bias, as the household "head", the chief source for information for census officials and planners, is commonly assumed to be male. This proves in many cases to be incorrect, as an increasing number of households in the developing world and, in fact, in the western world are headed by women. This fact is almost universally ignored by planners (ibid:17). But even if, for the sake of argument, this assumption which is in itself deeply patriarchal, is deemed correct, information by the male household "head", mostly being absorbed by his productive role, will often be distorted or misinformed as to the needs of women as the primary users of space in housing.
(Young 1993:117). Women as the group most profoundly affected by housing planning due to their triple role are thereby excluded from and ignored by the planning process. It is therefore imperative to gender sensitive planning in this and many other fields, to disaggregate the household further on a gender basis (Moser 1993:15), as has already been pointed out in the preceding section.

The male-biased development planning approach tends to almost universally ignore the triple role of women and to encourage the following misguided stereotypes: first, that households consist of a nuclear family of husband, wife and two or three children, and second, that there is a clear sexual division of labour according to the traditional pattern. This gender blindness extends from a very basic practical needs level, such as housing design to a more sophisticated level such as - possibly inadvertent - discrimination in the provision of housing loans on income and employment criteria impossible to meet for most women-headed households. Studies have shown that as housing programs have been implemented in poor communities, women have often been unable to obtain credit to purchase land or materials due to their irregular income or inability to participate in "sweat equity" programs (Falu and Curutchet 1991:32).

2.2 APPLICATION OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK TO THE PRC

A. Gender in the PRC

When dealing with gender issues in the PRC, it has to be borne in mind that, until only one and a half generations ago, Confucianism was still the accepted societal model in the minds
of the larger part of the population (Stacey 1983:104.). This "state religion" has been described
by Stacey as an exceptionally authoritarian and explicit variety of patriarchy (Stacey 1983:59-62).

The unusual degree of oppression of women in China has been well documented by Stacey
and Croll including well-known abuses against Chinese women such as foot binding, infant
drownings, and bride kidnapping (Croll 1978:12-48 (chapter 2); Stacey 1983:38-59). Certain
traditional phenomena, such as patrilocal and matrilocal marriage and family patterns will be
referred to, when relevant, in the central chapters of this study.

Marxism continues to be the ideological backbone of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP),
the current dominant force in PRC-society. Marxists believe that the abolition of gender
inequalities will come as a byproduct of revolution and cannot be seen as an antagonistic
contradiction central to achieving the Marxist paradise. This strongly suggests that the PRC, like
its equivalents in other (formerly) socialist countries, has not liberated Chinese women on account
of its fundamentally flawed theory which disregards the specificity of the oppression of women
(Stacey 1983:182). Indeed, the remarks by a representative of the ACWF quoted in the
introduction, proves that this one-dimensional view has sunk in quite deeply.

However, with further study, the situation in China becomes more complicated. Unlike
in the case of their Soviet counterparts, radical feminism has played a considerable role in the
history of the founders of the CCP. Its first generation of leaders, notably Mao Zedong, were
radicalized around women's issues well before discovering socialism. During the May Fourth
Movement in the 1920s, a movement of radical feminism intertwined with anarchism blossomed
among the urban elite, the results of which also affected the leaders of the fledgling Communist Party. Although the basic tenet of the importance of class struggle in Marxism was never abandoned, Mao's strong focus on voluntarism allowed the Party to focus from time to time on nonantagonistic contradictions in the superstructure, such as the relationship between men and women (Stacey 1983:74-76).

This relatively promising outlook from the feminist view waned after the communists took power first in their respective guerilla bases and later in the entire country in 1949. This is shown clearly in the different marriage laws that were enacted first in the rural CCP base areas in 1931 and 1934 and later in the PRC in 1950. The first law in 1931 has been described as an affirmative action programme on behalf of women, particularly with regards to child custody, alimony and property settlements after divorce. However all later codes gradually retracted from this privileged treatment of women (Stacey 1983:160-165). After 1949, the CCP entered a stage of "democratic patriarchy" and, after the collectivization programmes of 1956 and 1958, began a period of "patriarchic socialism" (terminology taken from Stacey 1983).

The reasons for this digression are complex and this paragraph only hints at a few factors that might have been particularly powerful. Stacey suggests that, given that the communist revolution in China was largely a peasant revolution, the CCP had to compromise with traditional, i.e. patriarchic views, in order to retain the peasantry as its chief power base. Hence, in the wake of the land reforms after 1949, land was redistributed among the poor peasantry without destroying the traditional order of patrilineal succession and patrilocal family structures, thus
establishing a democratic patriarchy for the many by destroying the few "big patriarchs." Ironically, this reconstructed the material base for the bulk of the population which had been dramatically eroded by the economic upheavals in the preceding hundred years.

Another reason for the vitality of male domination might be the decisive role of the People's Liberation Army in PRC power politics which bears strong fraternistic characteristics. Another detrimental factor to the development of feminism might have been the Great Leap Forward (GLF) in 1958-59 which, in its drive to recruit women into the labour force, communalized household work by establishing communal canteens and public childcare facilities on a large scale. These steps which, despite being mainly motivated by the productivist frenzy of the CCP, addressed a number of feminist concerns. The disastrous failure of the GLF discredited these concerns in favour of traditional family life with its unbalanced sexual division of labour (ibid).

However, like other socialist countries, the PRC enshrined gender equity in law, especially in the fields of family law and law of succession. This has had little effect on female empowerment. The CCP nomenclatura, the PLA and other key areas of power continue to be bastions of male domination of PRC society.

The Chinese case confirms what has been found in other socialist countries, namely, that respect for women's gender interests tends to be well ahead of capitalist societies in theory, especially in legislation, but tends to remain strongly patriarchal in practice (Peake 1987:129-133). It has to be conceded, however, that eliminating one of the core elements of a society embedded
in an exceptionally resilient tradition dating back over two thousand years has been and remains a task of awe-inspiring magnitude. There is no doubt that Croll’s assessment of the CCP’s achievement as one which bettered the situation of Chinese women beyond recognition compared to only fifty years ago (Croll 1978:331) is basically sound. This is also Stacey’s view who remarks poignantly that the "...new democratic patriarchy and patriarchal socialism secured for most peasant women enormous gains over their status in pre-Communist family and community life, but as subordinate daughters rather than equal sisters of fraternal Communist men" (Stacey 1983:256)\textsuperscript{5}. According to Stacey, it would therefore be ahistorical to overlook the advances women made under socialism (\textit{ibid;} 248).

B. Peculiarities of Contemporary PRC-Society Shaping the Conceptual Framework

Some specifics of present day PRC-society warrant certain modifications of Moser’s assumptions at the outset. For example, the one-child policy, first instituted in the mid-1970s makes it evident, that Chinese planning assumptions will not be based on a nuclear family with several children. It will certainly be based on families with just one child, as any other approach would counteract the present policy to sanction harshly any violations of this policy.

Secondly, and similarly to the former socialist societies in Eastern Europe, in the PRC, female participation in the productive economy is the norm rather than the exception. This may contradict Moser’s observation that almost all planning for housing is based typically on a

\textsuperscript{5}A similar conclusion is drawn for urban women on p. 240.
household shaped by the patriarchal sexual division of labour, i.e. the man being the "breadwinner", whereas the woman is primarily concerned with rearing the child and running the household. However, it remains to be seen whether the present housing system in China actually takes into account the high percentage of women doing paid work.

Thirdly, the PRC has been undergoing substantial economic reform since late 1978. These reform steps have been described by official party propaganda as the transformation of the former communist command economy to a "socialist commodity economy" (shehuizhuyi shangpin jingji) and since 1993 to a "socialist market economy" (shehuizhuyi shichang jingji). This transformation, as will be shown later, is having, albeit belatedly, its effects on the housing system. Despite the fact that this gradual shift from "public", i.e. state control, to the encouragement of the "private" has been entirely internally motivated, it bears a certain resemblance to the so-called Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), imposed by the IMF and other World Bank bodies on a number of developing countries since the debt crisis of the early 1980s (Young 1993:33). In fact, it can be said that the Chinese reform process since 1978 constitutes the greatest structural adjustment programme ever undertaken by any country since the concept came into existence.

The gender implications of SAP have been perceived as extremely detrimental to the cause of women's gender interests by most researchers (Bakker 1994:1-4; Young 1993:36-39) particularly since government support is seen as an indispensable factor to achieving strategic interests such as ownership rights to housing and to combat the increasing "feminisation of poverty." This diagnosis has also been made in the case of housing privatization programmes
following a withdrawal of public funds for state-run housing in formerly socialist countries like Guayana (Peake 1987:135). The latter case shares certain features with the process in the PRC. This study tries to give a first glimpse of what the present housing reform in China as part of the overall economic reform process holds in store for Chinese women.
3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the methodologies employed for this research, examining both the research and analytical approach. The case study method, which focused on a neighbourhood in the city of Guangzhou, was selected to meet a number of objectives. As mentioned in the previous chapters, there exists a limited number of case studies exploring the relationship between gender and housing, with a notable absence of any China examples. Thus, the first objective is to address this gap in the literature. Second, the case study provides a profile of a Chinese neighbourhood incorporating the residents, the housing stock, the structure of the neighbourhood and the nature of the housing problems. Third, the method allows the women in the community to illustrate the gendered impacts of the Chinese housing system by sharing their stories of the Chinese housing system.

The steps in the research process included selecting a study site, developing an interview guide, choosing people to interview, and gathering data. The case study uses numerous data-gathering techniques such as participant observation, interviews with key informants, notes on chance encounters and content analysis of documentary material. The analysis approach involved coding the interview results and categorizing them into practical and strategic gender needs.

3.2 CHOOSING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

The neighbourhood chosen for this study is Jinhua Street, one of 15 administrative blocks located within the Liwan district of old Guangzhou. Jinhua Street is representative of many old Chinese urban neighbourhoods in several regards. The population density is high, building quality
is poor, road access and green space is limited and pollution, particularly air quality is a serious problem. The Guangzhou Planning Bureau recognized these issues and identified the area for a zoning plan in 1981, but it was not until 1988 that a program of redevelopment and renewal was formally agreed upon (Wei and Qiu 1992:53).

Zhongshan University in Guangzhou selected the Jinhua Street neighbourhood for research as part of the Asian Urban Research Network project led by the Centre for Human Settlements at the University of British Columbia under a grant from the Canadian International Development Agency. The five Asian universities participating in the research network each choose an inner-city neighbourhood for comparative study. Researchers from the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) at Zhongshan University are actively involved in the redevelopment process of the neighbourhood, which is being carried out concurrently with a program of housing reform. Consequently, Jinhua Street presents an interesting study site for it is not only a neighbourhood undergoing significant physical change, but one that is experiencing structural changes in the method in which housing is distributed.

Another factor contributed to the selection of the Jinhua Street Neighbourhood for the case study. Located far from the government controls of Beijing, Guangzhou is considered to be more relaxed, creating an easier environment in which to carry out social science research methods. The research team from Zhongshan University voiced their interests in applying social science methods to the neighbourhood study in an attempt to augment Chinese physical planning which traditionally employs architectural and engineering methods. Guangzhou was therefore considered to be the most accessible for conducting qualitative interviews. Some limited research on the area
had been carried out by Hong Kong researchers which provided some background information on
the district prior to renewal. More importantly, this experience meant that the neighbourhood
leaders were accustomed to the presence of researchers in the area.

3.3 DEVELOPING THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

An interview guide was developed in order to gather qualitative information on the housing
needs and influence of housing on Chinese women (see Appendix 1). The interviews were
structured around seven themes: the family, housing history and conditions, impressions of
housing and the neighbourhood, home and work relationship, child care facilities, women’s
organizations and housing reforms. There was no particular order of issues and the wording of
questions changed from one interview to the next. Some of the questions were closed to gather
factual information, while others were open-ended and led to longer discussions about feelings and
impressions.

A checklist of household amenities was also created to note the physical conditions of the
housing (see Appendix 2). The checklist included housing design, interior design, amenities such
as appliances and furniture, and indicators of air and water pollution, water and sanitation
conditions, etc.

3.4 CHOOSING THE INTERVIEWEES

With an introduction letter provided by the CURS, I met with the leaders of the Jinhua
Street Neighbourhood Committee. A woman cadre, responsible for women’s issues became the
Chapter III Methodology

Neighbourhood Committee liaison and she introduced me to the workers in the various Resident’s Offices. Each Resident’s Office received a list of the categories of women to interview and they helped to arrange meetings. The study identified six categories of women based on marital status and family type. These categories are young single women (under age 30), older single women (30 or older), married women living in an extended family, married women living in a nuclear family, divorced women and widows. The extended family was further broken down into three sub-categories, based on whether the woman was a mother-in-law, daughter-in-law or a married woman living with her natal family. The women selected lived under a variety of housing conditions, under different types of ownership and had assorted types of employment.

The rationale for these categories were to reveal how marital status affected Chinese women’s access to housing and whether different types of living arrangements after marriage played a role in addressing gender needs. To illustrate the impacts of housing redevelopment and reform, it was necessary to include women living in both old housing and the newly redeveloped housing as well as those living under different forms of ownership.

When choosing the first interviewee, there immediately surfaced a number of problems some of which persisted throughout the field work period. The first issue was the initial reaction of the women running the office. When I explained the rationale behind the project, the female worker responded, "Why don’t you talk to men instead, we have a lot of men around here who really like to talk?" I mentioned some of the special housing needs of women, and noted that divorced women in particular could face housing difficulties. The response was a laugh and a comment about "those silly women," implying that they deserved their own fate.
Chapter III Methodology

The second issue was time. The office worker suggested that it would be impossible to do the study as all the women in the neighbourhood would be working during the day. I offered to return in the evenings which evoked the response that the street office was not open at night. To get around the impasse, the interviews began with elderly, retired women. At other resident's offices, the workers were younger and more cooperative, even arranging evening meetings.

The third issue was the willingness of people to participate in this study. In general, the women were extremely cooperative and seemed to enjoy talking about themselves and their housing situation. However, some women, in particular divorced women, refused to be interviewed, likely an indication of the social stigma associated with divorce in China.

Apart from the women interviewees, a number of key informants were interviewed. These people included the workers responsible for women's affairs in the Jinhua Street Neighbourhood Committee, some workers at the various residents office, and city planners responsible for the redevelopment plans for Jinhua Street. Also, Meng Weina, a well-known Chinese feminist was interviewed because of her familiarity with the Guangzhou housing situation and the gender impacts of housing.

3.5 INTERVIEW METHODS

Once permission to enter a home and conduct an interview had been granted, I chatted with the whole family. Frequently, a mother-in-law or husband appeared suspicious of the interview and it seemed as if approval had to come from them before the formal interview could begin. The general intentions of the project were discussed and the interview guide which was written in
Chinese was passed around. When everyone seemed comfortable, I suggested moving to a private location.

The biggest problem associated with the interview was finding a private place in which to conduct the discussions. In small homes some measuring only 10 square metres, this proved to be quite a challenge. In the new homes, there was usually a separate bedroom, but although it was convenient, people found it a bit odd to invite a foreigner into their bedroom. The solution for the old homes was to use the *gelou*, the loft which was jerry-built above the main floor. The *gelou* usually had a very low roof and was used only for sleeping. While it provided a private location, being up high, it was also extremely hot, and the fans used to cool the air, made a loud noise which impeded the taping process.

The second problem associated with the interviews was the curiosity of other family members. It was not so much the topic of the interview which was so curious, but the visit of a Chinese speaking foreigner. One solution to this problem was to bring along a decoy, another Chinese speaking foreigner who remained downstairs entertaining the family while the interview was conducted in the attic. This technique was useful in two regards. First, the interviewee appeared to be at ease, knowing that the people downstairs were not listening. Secondly, the decoy was often able to gather information about the house that the women did not know about. For example, because many women had only moved into their housing after marriage, they did not know much about the history of the building. The husband, often born and raised in the house, could tell stories of how his father had purchased it or how they had inherited it from relatives. During the interview, I often shared her own housing experiences with the interviewee.
Chapter III Methodology

Personal anecdotes helped to make the interview more of a sharing of stories than a formal interview.

The interviews were taped, primarily to assist me as I was working in a second language. Although Cantonese was the mother tongue for most of the women, almost all were able to converse with me in Mandarin. However, some people found it easier to express themselves in Cantonese, so a graduate student from Zhongshan University provided translation assistance. The explanation given for the use of the tape recorder was that it was purely due to my poor language skills, emphasizing that the tapes would not be used for any other purpose. Nobody seemed concerned with its presence and apart from curious children, it was usually ignored during the interviews.

It was also explained that pseudonyms would be used for confidentiality. I felt this to be a necessary precaution, although like other researchers in China, it was done with some reluctance. Ann-ping Chin (1988) explains that:

In China, names give meaning to a person. He is not just an Andrew or a Samuel. He is "tranquil" (jing) or "resolute" (jin); he is a "cloud followed by a dragon" (yun) or one who "holds on to his humanity" (shou-ren). A person's name is what his parents and his grandparents expect of him, and, later on, perhaps, what he expects of himself. Thus to give him a new one arbitrarily, ... is, in a way, to take away his essence.

3.5 ANALYTICAL APPROACH

The 38 interview transcripts were coded and grouped by themes. The findings were grouped according to practical gender needs and strategic gender needs. The practical needs were then further analyzed to see if they had transformatory potential to address strategic needs.
Chapter III Methodology

Because the number of interviews was small, the relationships between variables were not analyzed for their statistical significance. Analysis was done in terms of themes which indicate trends which may exist in the population of urban women in Guangzhou. The checklist of amenities was used to produce an inventory of facilities available in housing as well as providing evidence in support of anecdotal information about housing conditions and the needs of the residents.

Background reading was gathered, translated and analyzed for its content and explanation building was used to examine the trends. The result of the research is a detailed description of the housing needs of the women in Jinhua Street.
4.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter gives a simple overview of the Chinese housing system, an introduction to the housing reform program and its implementation in Guangzhou, the case study city. It also provides an introduction to some of the gender issues imbedded in the housing program.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the housing system was not immediately changed to a socialist model, one characterized by low rents and high subsidies. In the urban areas, a large number of privately owned houses continued to exist, many of which were rented at a cost of 6%-10% of the average household income (Gai 1991:97).

It was only in the mid-1950s that the system was revised dramatically by two major policy changes, which significantly lowered rents. In 1956, the major part of privately owned houses in large cities were expropriated. In Shanghai, for example, 60% of all housing had been privately owned before the campaign, 70% of which was rented to tenants. After the socialist transformation movement, the former landlords were allowed to retain one unit under 150 sq metres for their own use (He et al 1990:84-85), while the remaining apartments were put under state or collective ownership (Chu and Kwok 1990:646). The confiscated homes were then nationalized and rented at artificially low prices. This expropriation campaign came following a general policy shift which drew China's economy closer to that of the Soviet Union. In the case of housing, this meant redefining housing as a welfare good to be provided by the state instead of a commodity to be purchased in a market economy (He et al 1990:82).

The second major policy change in the 1950s, was a reform of the maintenance system of
state employees, which replaced payment in kind by payment in money. In order to lighten the burden to state finances caused by this change, the rents for state employees were fixed at 0.13 yuan per square metre. This decision induced other work units to lower their rents also, to gradually approach the level of rent for state employees.

A. Rental System and Pattern of Ownership

Average rents in China remained unchanged for a few decades, although some regional variations did exist. Rents in Guangzhou were double the price at 0.26 yuan (RMB) per sq metre, while, in other places, rent was virtually non-existent sometimes as low as 0.02 yuan per sq metre (Zhang 1992:97). However, even "higher" rents in Guangzhou meant that the average housing expenses accounted for only 1.27 percent of household expenditures (Guangzhou Real Estate 1990:11).

The majority of urban residents rent their housing, although according to the 1982 Chinese constitution, three kinds of property ownership are regulated: state owned, collectively owned and privately owned (Zhang 1992:24). The majority of rural inhabitants live in privately owned housing while the reverse is true for the urban areas. According to Table 1 only 15.8 percent of the urban housing stock in China is privately owned. The rest is split between various forms of public ownership, managed by government housing bureaus, state owned or collective enterprises (work units).
Table 1 Building Ownership Patterns in China, 1986

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>In cities</th>
<th>In towns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4676.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>2833.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Bureau</td>
<td>421.8</td>
<td>9.02</td>
<td>325.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-owned enterprise</td>
<td>3083.4</td>
<td>65.93</td>
<td>1995.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectively owned enterprise</td>
<td>420.6</td>
<td>8.99</td>
<td>211.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privately owned</td>
<td>738.7</td>
<td>15.80</td>
<td>292.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint venture</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign owned</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Zhang 1992:25

**B. Housing Allocation**

The socialist method of housing distribution is to link housing to place of work. Under the state housing policy, work units are officially obliged to provide housing for their employees. If the work unit is unable to do so, then local housing management bureaus must assist. In order for a work unit to provide new housing for its employees, it must apply to the appropriate ministries for permission to build the required number of apartments (Huth 1992:82). The ministries compare the request with others and if accepted, approval is granted. The ministries then make recommendations to the State Council, the chief administrative organization of government in China. The State Council rarely deny requests for housing construction, however,
the approved floor areas are seldom the amounts requested.

The work unit takes its official permission to the Municipal Bureau of City Planning and Management, who sends out a team to examine the proposed building site for possible conflicts with the city's construction plans (ibid:84). When the Bureau agrees to the plans, a permit is issued, giving the construction company chosen by the work unit the right to purchase construction materials.

In many cases, a work unit will not have its own land and must rely on the Municipal Development Company to build housing. In this situation, the Municipal Bureau of City Planning and Management provides the land and decides how many units to allocate each work unit. Often many work units end up sharing building space.

(i) State verses Collective Units

Aside from being a complicated bureaucratic process, the housing allocation system in China is also not equitable. As housing access depends wholly on the type of work unit to which an applicant is attached, those who work for key state units or profitable enterprises have a much better chance to obtain good housing than those in small units or unprofitable ones. Despite claims of an egalitarian society, an occupational hierarchy has always existed in China. This stratification is most clearly evident in the difference between state and collective enterprises.

Prior to the reforms, state firms had the ability to provide housing for their employees, whether they achieve economic success or not. If a state firm loses money, the state would make up the deficit (Tsui 1992:45). Thus, those people assigned to a state unit would be adequately
housed. Other benefits made to workers in state firms include disability pay, paid maternity leave, subsidized child care, retirement pensions, and health insurance for employees and their dependants (ibid).

In comparison, the collective enterprises have been unable to match the benefits of the state firms. Not only were wage levels set at a lower rate, but benefits were limited. While some larger, financially successful collectives were able to provide some sort of housing, the smaller street factories and workshops had nothing to offer. State enterprises are dominated by men while women account for nearly half the work force in collectives (Bauer et al: 1992, 356). Many collectives were actually set up during the 1960s and 1970s specifically to create jobs for women. Thus, women working for collectives must find their housing elsewhere, either from a father or a husband's housing allocation.

(ii) Allocation Point System

Within the work unit itself, the process for determining which employee receives housing is very complex. When families are in need of housing, they approach the housing allocation committee of their work unit. Officials visit the applicants' existing housing, examine the conditions and make a preliminary decision. The housing allocation process is formalized through two point systems, one which determines who receives access and the other determines the area and location of the housing (Zhang 1992:90).

Points are based on job rank, seniority; the current housing situation of the applicant, family characteristics, housing access for the applicants' spouse and other conditions. The "other"
category takes into consideration the applicants' compliance with the single child policy and various political considerations. For a detailed example of a point system used by a Shanghai unit, see Appendix 3.

Once the points have been calculated, the executive office of the housing committee publishes a list of all applicants and the number of points allotted to each person. A public hearing is sometimes organized. The executive office sends a final proposal to the Housing Allocation Office which makes the final decision and formally publishes the "winners" list (ibid: 95).

The manner in which the housing stock is allocated is interesting for a number of reasons. The first is that it indicates the existence of an occupational hierarchy and associated job prestige. This point is the very foundation of the gender inequalities in the Chinese housing system. Many studies have shown that women are more likely to occupy lower positions than men (Loscocco and Wang: 1992; Bauer et al., 1992). Women occupy only 10 percent of cadre or leadership positions in government organizations (Loscocco and Wang: 1992). Women are concentrated in the service industries and in the commercial sector; yet even when there are high concentrations of women in higher paid industries, the women usually occupy lower status positions such as secretaries or workers.

This system which virtually eliminates women from accessing housing from their own work unit is not considered by Chinese men to be discriminatory towards women, but just a fact of Chinese society. Even when a woman is unbiasedly offered an apartment, it would be only
natural to compare the space allowance given by her husband's unit. As Chinese women tend to marry men older than themselves, the men are likely to be at higher positions and therefore eligible for larger apartments, as for every higher level of job ranking one additional metre of housing space is allocated.

Some units do not allocate housing according to a point system. A survey of thirty work units in Shenyang revealed that only one treated men and women equally in allocation. Thirteen units explicitly gave priority to men and only special consideration to women in particularly difficult situations, while sixteen assigned housing to men only (Honig and Hershatter 1988:141). Even in certain textile factories where the majority of workers are female, it was reported that housing preference was given to men. The factories' rules stated that "housing will be assigned to male workers who have worked for five years and to women workers who have worked for fifteen years; men who have worked for two years and get married can be assigned housing, but women [who get married] will not be eligible" (ibid).

The second point relating to this system of housing allocation is that due to the connection between housing and work, the work unit holds an incredible amount of power in determining the quality of life of its employees. Since the leaders of the unit are frequently on the housing allocation committee, these people wield much influence and are open to corruption. While this position may appear desirable, one member of a housing allocation committee wrote an article entitled, "China's Worst Job: Allocating housing." He complained that while trying to allocate 30 apartments available for 100 candidates, his colleagues "came to my home every evening to
Chapter IV Chinese Housing System

explain how desperately they needed the apartments. They often wept loudly. I was very shaken by their visits ... " (Ji 1988:12).

4.2 SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The social implications of the Chinese housing system are enormous and affect virtually every urban inhabitant in China. A few of the outcomes of the system include competition amongst siblings, the time between legal and social marriage, and influencing the choice of marriage partner.

A. Competition Amongst Siblings

The options for a married couple who do not want to wait for a housing allocation are limited to living with the family of the bride or the groom. If the parents have two rooms, one might be turned over to the married children. Unfortunately for young couples today, many of whom are children of the 1950s "baby boom," they are in competition with four or five siblings for the extra room.

Traditionally, a woman moves into her husband's home after marriage. While some men do move to their wives' home, this is considered unusual. This has significant implications for the women, because sharing an apartment with in-laws results in not only a lack of privacy, but also subjugates the women to a position of subservience to her mother-in-law. Thus, stronger pressure is placed on women to marry and move out to leave space for their brothers. Popular short stories describe the deviousness of brothers arranging marriages and job transfers for their siblings in
Chapter IV Chinese Housing System

order to create more room for themselves in their parents' home (see Liu Xinwu:1981; Wang Anyi: 1984).

B. Legal verses Social Marriage and Housing

A Chinese marriage is a two step process. Officially, a couple is married when they have registered their marriage at the marriage bureau. The couple are eligible to put their names on a list for housing only after being registered. Meanwhile, in the eyes of society, a couple is not married until a formal banquet has been held. Due to the housing shortage, a new apartment is unlikely to be immediately available so the couple will delay the formal banquet until the housing is ready. The time period between these two events can last several years. A marriage survey in early 1980s in Beijing, found 26,000 newlyweds waiting for a housing allocation. A symposium in Shanghai in 1982 revealed that the need to produce a marriage certificate to get housing was spurring marriages and that "hasty" marriages were becoming more and more common (Hooper: 1985 200). Sometimes couples give up during this waiting period to look for a new partner with better housing prospects. A new phenomenon in divorce applications shows an increasing number of people who have never lived together. The government blames this on the "weak foundation" of the marriage, rather than housing pressures (Conroy 1987:66).

C. Choice of Partner

Chinese women are forced to take economic and social conditions into consideration when selecting a marriage partner. As the previous section on housing allocation indicated, housing options are not plentiful, and therefore, marriage is "a unique opportunity to improve one's living
quarters (Honig and Hershatter: 1988). The following cartoon shows a young woman throwing a winner's wreath towards a group of young men. She aims towards the man with housing even though he is crippled, and avoids the men with money, education and good looks.

Figure 1 Choice of husband

Translation: Large bank account, Good looking, Good education, Has housing. (Culture and Life: 1982)

4.3 EXPERIMENTS IN REFORM

In the light of the housing crisis, an urgent need for reform in the area of housing policy has been recognized by both the government and a number of academics. Rental reform is seen as the key element for the privatization of housing, as higher rents would provide incentive for home ownership and provide a wider revenue base for further public housing expenditure. The reforms include the sale of public housing to sitting tenants and the provision of new housing for sale on the open market.
A. Rental Reform

In order to reduce the increasing burden of housing subsidies, attempts to increase rents gradually have been made in various test cities. Ideologically, housing will no longer be considered a welfare good; rents will be raised to reflect the commodity value of housing units or at least to cover the cost of management and maintenance.

A reform pilot programme occurred in the late 1980s, in four mid-sized cities: Yantai, Bengbu, Tangshan and Shenyang. Although privatization of dwellings was the core of the experiment, rents were also raised. The success of this measure however, turned out to be extremely modest. In Yantai, while in the course of the reforms the city increased its annual revenue from tenants from 2.5 billion yuan to 38 billion yuan, this increase was largely generated through the issuance of housing vouchers (Yang and Wang 1990:44).

These vouchers granted city dwellers who were waiting for a home, the right to rent units in newly constructed buildings. This omission accounted for 37.12 billion yuan of the total, thus actually decreasing the revenue from rents to less than 1 billion yuan. Although the remaining rents were raised to a modest 1.28 yuan per square metre (ibid), they were still well below the estimated effective cost of 1.5 yuan (Cai and Liang 1990:97). It was estimated by the State Council in 1988 that the rent for 1 sqm should be 1.56 yuan (Chen 1988: 83). Based on the average sized unit, this would require more than half the monthly wage of an urban worker, indicating a need for the wage system to be adjusted as well.
B. Privatization

Aside from rental reform, it was hoped that privatization of housing will also benefit housing development in a number of ways. First, it should provide more funds to be available for residential construction. Second, it will allow the state to recover a higher percentage of its investment, thus enabling the existing housing stock to be better maintained. Third, as higher percentages of income are being spent on housing, it will reduce the demand for domestic consumer products, which is presently more than the economy can provide (Chen 1988:78). Fourth, home ownership will provide a sense of pride and responsibility on part of the owner to better maintain the property, encouraging the quality of the housing stock to improve.

Since 1988, following a policy statement by the Central Committee of the Communist Party (He et al 1990:82), large scale privatization programmes have been carried out in a number of cities. Early home sales programs showed sobering results. In a 1988 campaign, Xi'an put 10,000 flats on the market of which only 1,100 were sold. Only 484 of the buyers were individuals, all others being work units depleting their funds to provide urgently needed housing for their members. Only 25 out of these were ordinary salary earners, all other individual buyers were retired high level cadres, owners of small private enterprises or citizens supported by overseas Chinese relatives (Zhang 1990:90).

The reasons for these failures is obvious; despite the general rise of incomes, average earnings and savings are simply insufficient to buy homes at market prices. Moreover, industrial workers and state employees which make up the bulk of the city population did not participate in
the economic upturn as strongly as other groups, like farmers in the vicinity of cities and small entrepreneurs. One author points out that the average savings of urban relatives have topped 2000 yuan (Xu 1991:3), however, at 1990 construction prices, this would buy less than two square metres of floor space.

C. Selling Below Construction Costs

Since 1989, selling homes at a fraction of the original construction cost has been the rule in China. Computing the "market price" of housing in a planned economy is a fruitless exercise as many building materials still form part of the general state plan and have fixed prices. The 1990 construction price of 1200-2500 yuan per square metre would require an average worker to pay 100 years' salary to buy a 50 square metre flat (Zhang :ibid). Even this relatively high price does not yet take into account the cost of land. According to the constitution, private ownership of land is prohibited and all land in the cities is owned by the state. Even though the possibility of acquiring leaseholds of land has been made legal recently, thus spawning a real estate market in the large cities, the old system of gratuitous land allocation by the administration continues to exist alongside. Leaseholds are largely made available for industrial and commercial development, particularly to enterprises with foreign involvement (Barton 1990:23-25).

In cases where homes were sold on a large scale, prices per square metre covered only about 10% of construction costs. In Yantai, prices as low as 150 yuan per square metre are charged indicating a return on construction of about 1% or less (Yang 1991:91). The soundness of this strategy is hotly debated among experts. While some accuse this policy of betraying the
very principles of economic reform (He et al 1990:83; Cai and Liang 1990:96-97), others contend that preferential prices are the only solution to bring about lasting improvement to the housing sector, and absolve the government from onerous maintenance charges (Yang 1991:91; Zhang 1990:90).

4.4 HOUSING IN GUANGZHOU

This study focuses on a neighbourhood in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province, which is situated at the mouth of the Pearl River in southern China. The main city is composed of seven districts, having a population in 1991 of 3.6 million. When the suburban district and four rural counties are included, the population of Guangzhou reaches 6.02 million people (Lau 1995:115).

Concentrated within the central Guangzhou districts are a mixture of administrative, commercial, financial and industrial activities. The new areas of Guangzhou, primarily the outer districts and suburbs, are characterized by booming construction and rapid development of large high rises in industrial or residential zones. In contrast, the inner districts have been described as haphazard, with old low rise dilapidated housing mixed in with factories and commercial establishments.

The old area of Guangzhou spills out into four inner city districts: Dongshan, Haizhu, Liwan and Yuexiu, covering an area of 54.4 square km. Within these districts, the average building coverage is 60 to 80 percent (Yeung et al 1992:246). The high population density in the inner districts combined with the industrial and commercial concentration have resulted in extreme
housing shortages, traffic congestion, and land use conflicts within the old areas of Guangzhou.

The housing problems in Guangzhou stem from historical housing investment programs. In the 1950s, certain key cities were chosen for massive industrial investment programs which allowed for housing development. Guangzhou was bypassed by the program, and received little investment. In contrast, Harbin, a city with the same population as Guangzhou at the time, was targeted and received a housing program five times that of Guangzhou (Howe 1968:93). In the mid-1950s, the per capita living space in Guangzhou was only 3.51 square metres (*ibid*).

An additional problem in Guangzhou came as result of the appropriation campaign of the 1950s. Policies introduced in the 1980s gave the right to the former private owners to claim back their housing. Many of these owners are overseas Chinese, and while this has helped some families, particularly those whose overseas relatives have given them the housing, it has at the same time created troubles for those families who moved into the housing in the 1950s and are now being evicted (Luo 1992:1).

By the end of the 1970s, increasing population pressures and decades of negligible housing investment saw the inner city of Guangzhou in very poor shape. When economic reforms were instituted in 1979, housing construction picked up. Over the next eight years (1979-1987) work units built 300,000 square metres of housing for their employees, the same floor area that had been constructed during the previous 29 years (Huang *et al* 1990:4). Table 2 shows a marked improvement by 1990 in most categories. However, the quality of housing was still low as shown by the fact that 35 percent of the households were still without a private toilet.
Chapter IV Chinese Housing System

The 1990 poll revealed that 11 percent of all Guangzhou households had less than four square metres per person. Seventeen percent of the residents had to share a water source, while 35 percent either shared a toilet with more than one family or had to rely entirely on public toilet facilities. In 1988, a survey of Guangzhou residents discovered almost 70 percent of the people surveyed were either not at all or not too satisfied with their own housing (Shi 1991:33). Given the above statistics, the high level of dissatisfaction is not surprising.

Table 2 Housing Conditions in Guangzhou, 1985 and 1990, sample of 300 families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>1985</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 4m /person</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconvenient (1)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av. RFA 4-6m /person (2)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av. RFA 6-8m /person</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 8m /person</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water - private source</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- shared source</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet and shower</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet (no shower)</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared toilet</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood toilet</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen - private</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- shared</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>-47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- no kitchen</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Households with difficult conditions and less than average living space are called *kunnanhu*, literally "households with housing difficulties." Less than 5 square metres per person qualifies a family for this designation, while those with less than 2 square metres per person are considered households with special housing difficulties (*tekunhu*). Since 1986, the Guangzhou Municipal Government has developed a number of programs to address the housing needs of these households. The Guangzhou Office of the Difficulty-Surmounting Housing (*jie kun ban*) had plans to build 40,000 units between 1991 and 1995.

The municipal government also requires housing builders to provide units to those with difficulties. They have given land, cash grants and loans to a number of work units with large numbers of workers with housing difficulties. Those units which can afford to build housing with their own funds must follow a regulation to give 30 percent of the completed units to *kunnanhu*. Real estate companies as well must sell 10 percent of their units to the Guangzhou Office of the Difficulty-Surmounting Housing at cost (Lau 1995:124).

Despite these measures, by 1989, another city census added almost 15,000 families to the "particularly difficult" group with a total of 62,700 families in inadequate housing (Luo 1992:1). To make matters worse, it was reported that between 1988 and 1992, 38,000 couples had married, of which 10 percent were in their thirties. These couples had already delayed marriage because of having no access to housing and they were still waiting.
A. Guangzhou Housing Reform Plans

A survey in 1991 revealed that 86 percent of the surveyed group were in support of housing reforms (Shi 1991:34). Guangzhou developed a municipal policy to carry out housing reform in 1989, but it was not implemented until 1992. The policy has three main objectives: a) to change the high subsidy - low rent system, b) to increase housing development and c) to encourage urban redevelopment. Guangzhou's housing reform program will begin with commercializing the housing stock. Public housing which is currently owned by work units or the housing management bureau, will be sold to the tenants. The selling price is dependent on a number of factors, most important of which is the floor area. Minimum price controls will be set and there will be two payment options: instalments or lump sum payments. Preferential prices will be granted if full payment is made within one year.

The policy allows owners to resell their property at market price five years after the final payment, but only back to the original owner (work unit or housing management bureau). If neither group is interested in the holding, the owner can sell on the open market, but he or she is required to hand over 20 percent of the profits to the original owner.

To encourage tenants to purchase their housing, rents will be increased gradually, with subsidies of 40 percent to be provided by the tenant's work unit. For those who cannot afford to buy, a minimum annual rent of 20 yuan per square metre will be charged, and this payment can be later used towards a down payment. It is hoped that the policy will enable "difficulty

For a complete translation of the Guangzhou Housing Reform Policy see Appendix 4.
households” to receive a priority to purchase, and it recommends the establishment of financial organizations to guarantee the improvement of the housing needs of those families.

Finally, a new allocation system will be created after employees have purchased their public housing. Afterwards, the work units will cease to be responsible for housing.

B. Jinhua Street Redevelopment Program

The case study neighbourhood of Jinhua Street is a typical neighbourhood in inner Guangzhou. There are two major policies that are influencing the housing in this neighbourhood. The first is the citywide housing reform plans, described above and the second is a massive redevelopment project, which will result in the destruction of the traditional housing to make way for modern apartment buildings.

The population density of the neighbourhood averages 67,000 people per square km and reaches 150,000 people per square km in some sections (Wei and Qiu: 1992). The average residential area per person in 1989 was 5 square metres per person, with many housing difficulty families in the area.

One of the unique characteristics of the neighbourhood is the high number of privately owned apartments. as show in Table 3, 85 percent of the building area is occupied by privately owned apartments.
Chapter IV Chinese Housing System

Table 3 Housing Ownership in Jinhua Street, 1988

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Ownership</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Number of Houses Area (m²)</th>
<th>Building Area %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>23875</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas Chinese</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7974</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>2770</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>183701</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3080</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>215550</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Wei and Qiu 1993:54)

The majority of the privately owned houses are low, single-storey homes built out of brick and wood. More than 50 percent are over 40 years old and 10 percent are considered unfit for occupation (Yueng et al: 1992). One of the reasons for the poor quality of this housing is the low elevation of the neighbourhood, which is only 7-10 metres above sea level. The area is prone to flooding.

The Jinhua redevelopment plan will tear down all of the old houses and replace them with multi-storey apartment buildings. Of these, two thirds will be nine stories and one third will be above twelve stories, most around 21 stories high. During this process of redevelopment, 25,000 people will have to be removed. The former owners will either be financially compensated or given a new home in a new building. The remainder of the houses will be sold according to market prices. The market buyers will have priority in choosing an apartment and the former owners will have the second choice.

The redevelopment plan will also reduce the industrial land use and will increase the
amount of green space. These activities will help to address the reputation of Jinhua Street, a
eighbourhood which is notorious for having the shortest life expectancy in Guangzhou and high
incidence of respiratory illnesses.

C. Conclusion

The poor conditions of Jinhua Street can be seen as a direct result of the Chinese housing
system. Poor quality housing and crowded conditions are typical characteristics of Chinese inner-
city neighbourhoods. This situation has given rise to the housing reform program and the program
of redevelopment. The following chapters based on the interviews with women in Jinhua Street
will reveal some of the gendered housing needs and interests and will evaluate the reform and
redevelopment programs for their ability to address these needs.
5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the physical features of the housing in Jinhua Street to illustrate the practical gender needs of the women in the neighbourhood. It covers issues such as size of housing, design, high rise versus low rise, hygiene and health, neighbourhood safety, distance to work, and child care services. These issues are identified as gender needs because they affect women differently than they do men. The thirty-eight women interviewed ranged in age from 18-84, categorized into groups as shown in table 4.

Table 4 Summary of Jinhua Street Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Interviewees</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Age range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young single (under 30)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older single (30 and over)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married mother-in-law (extended family)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>53-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married daughter-in-law (extended family)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married sister-in-law (extended family)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married daughter (extended family)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30-46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married in nuclear family</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated / Divorced</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30-48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50-84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A variety of housing type and ownership patterns were also considered. The interviews included 24 women living in old housing which was due to be torn down. Sixteen of those families owned their housing, while eight rented. There were 14 women who lived in new high rise developments, five of which owned their home while the other 9 rented.
5.2 SIZE OF HOME UNITS

The most obvious housing problem in China is that of available floor space. Because of the enormous population density in the cities, cramped housing conditions are the norm. Guangzhou is one of the worst affected cities in this respect.

A. Interview findings

The interviewed women's housing situation revealed very small units being occupied at high densities. The average available floor space was 5.25 square metres per person, very close to the average of five square metres in Jinhua Street (Wei and Qiu 1992:53). Apart from the few women enjoying a generous amount of living space, meaning on average 50 square metres for four people, lack of space was the first complaint made by women living in old housing. In the new apartment blocks, the relative improvement in floor area was the first positive aspect noted by the interviewees. In all cases, additional space was mentioned as the most significant improvement to those in new housing.

Lack of space was related to inner family conflicts and, more often, conflicts with neighbours over common facilities. People involved in conflicts lived in old housing, where many interviewees had to share a kitchen with at least one other family. In all cases but one, the affected people also had to share use of a public toilet.

The most extreme example of space shortage in an old house was the case of Lin Yi, a 25 year-old single woman with poor health, living with her extended family of eight in a 10.8

---

1As noted in the methodology chapter, unless otherwise noted, all Chinese names used are pseudonyms.
square metre apartment with a loft on the second floor of an old building. When asked if there were any good aspects about living there, she answered irritated: "Good? Nothing is good here. Just imagine if you lived here!" The poorly ventilated kitchen downstairs was shared by eight families, sending smoke upstairs into her family's windowless apartment. Not surprisingly, poor air quality was her second complaint. To make matters worse for Lin Yi's family, another family had to pass through their living room, to reach their own apartment.

Not much better was the living arrangement of Feng Xuehua, a 34 year-old vegetable seller who lived with her husband's extended family of eight. In contrast to Lin Yi, she at least enjoyed the luxury of a private room of six square metres, sharing it with her husband and six year-old daughter. The space shortage in old housing creates a sense of claustrophobia with bicycles and motorcycle, including spare parts stored in the living room. Boxes were piled on bunk beds used to store clothing, books and other personal materials.

The case of Lin Yi and Feng Xuehua contrasts dramatically with the improvement in the living conditions of those who moved into new housing. Liu Cheng lived with her husband and daughter in a 28 square metre apartment. Before her marriage and moving into this apartment she lived with her parent's family of eight in two tiny rooms. When she was young, she slept in the same bed as her parents. It was not until one of her brothers married and moved out, that she finally had her own bed in which to sleep.

A welcome improvement was also experienced by Zhang Jing, a 35 year-old with a daughter but whose husband lived in Hong Kong. After moving, living space for five people in her family almost doubled from 20 to 36 square metres. She, like others, profited from the city
rule that at least five square metres had to be allocated per person in the new apartments, no matter how little per capita floor space existed before.

The "winner of the draw" was undoubtedly Guo Wen whose family of five moved from an 18 square metre apartment in her parents-in-law's old home to a staggering 65 square metres unit in one of the newly built blocks. She belonged to the affluent new class of "private business owners," working in her father-in-laws' restaurant. Her family was only one of two of the forty interviewees who could afford a new apartment at the prevailing market price. Her affluence was symbolized by the fact that she could pay a hefty fine of over one thousand yuan for having a second child - a son.

Although the women in the new apartment blocks generally expressed satisfaction about the enlargement in living space, occasionally, the new surroundings were still found insufficient for their needs. Feng Minglin, for example, a 28 year-old worker, sharing a 36 square metre apartment with her husband, daughter and father-in-law, had to sell her washing machine, because there was simply not enough space in the combined kitchen-bathroom.

B. Gender analysis

Adequate space is a basic human need central to human dignity, a primary concern in all human settlement planning. However, as the home is typically the domain of women, the physical dimensions, location, and structural quality impacts the way that women lead their lives. The women interviewed revealed that they were strongly affected by the small apartment size and were disproportionately disadvantaged by the lack of space.

Two particularly telling examples were the cases of Chen Jian and Zhang Hua, both
working mothers in their thirties, who shared old housing between six and seven persons respectively. Both complained about disruptions to family life due to the multiple use of rooms. Both said it was hard for the children to find a place to study and, when the children went to sleep in the same room, other activities, such as having a conversation, watching television or listening to music became impossible. Because of this, their husbands developed the tendency to leave the house, when the children were sleeping or the noise got too loud.

Thus, the lack of adequate space left the affected women to look after their children alone whereas the husbands found alternatives to the space problem outside the house. Clearly in these cases, lack of space reinforced the traditional sexual division of labour. Given the women's traditional role as primary manager of the household and children, the interviewees were also disproportionately affected by conflicts over shared facilities. The conflict over these triple roles, combined with the fact that they were the primary users of space, resulted in not meeting the need for adequate space in almost all old and many new apartments.

Thus, the need for more space is a central practical gender need. Following that assertion, the question has to be answered, whether this need has transformatory potential. It can be argued that more generously sized apartments will make household work and child care easier and less time consuming. This effect would, at best, help women balance their triple role better and could therefore consolidate the traditional sexual division of labour, rather than weaken it.

5.3 HOUSING DESIGN

A. Layout

As already mentioned in the preceding section, conflicts over communal facilities such as
kitchens and water sources were frequently quoted as major disadvantages of living in old houses. The kitchens used by several families in these buildings were also very small. This was also the case where actual living space was well above average, like Yuan Meili's house of 110 square metres, inhabited by five persons. The family's kitchen of just three square metres, shared with her brother-in-law's family was too small to avoid conflicts. Aside from the problem of size, kitchens in old buildings often presented a health problem. All of them were situated on the ground floor and usually lacked proper ventilation. The constant use, demanded by the great number of users, combined with the smoke-prone Chinese custom to stir-fry dishes in an open wok, increased the already considerable air pollution.

In contrast to inhabitants of old houses, interviewees in the newly constructed buildings expressed satisfaction at having their own bathrooms and kitchens. However, the designers of those new buildings had evidently ignored one basic requirement of Chinese households in the 1990s, the provision of adequate room for refrigerators and washing machines, now owned by all but the poorest rural households.

Chen Xiaohua, a 61 year-old retired teacher, living in a 45 square metre apartment with her husband and her son's family, knocked down a wall between the kitchen and built a roof over the balcony to accommodate the family's fridge. The same extension was made by other interviewees; such a solution is common practice in many Chinese cities, including Hongkong. This design flaw also affected Feng Minglin, a married woman of 28, whose move to a 36 square metre apartment with a combined kitchen/bathroom forced her to give up her washing machine due to lack of space.
Chapter V Practical Needs Assessment

Given the dense population, space for new housing is also restricted. Nevertheless, the limited area set aside for kitchens and bathrooms must be seen as a major design flaw in the new developments. In the cases of Chen Xiaohua and Feng Minglin, just one more square metre would have made an enormous difference. However, the lack of regard for adequate kitchen space is a general trend in Chinese residential building architecture. In the Ju'er Hutong project, a well-documented new housing complex in Beijing, average kitchen size was only 2.5 square metres, although the average available space per person was considerably larger at 12 square metres than in the new buildings in Jinhua Street (Liu 1993:32). The planners of Jinhua Street obviously considered it acceptable and normal that refrigerators are kept in the living room and not in the kitchen, as often happens in older buildings in China. Although this practice might have partially served as a display of status in the past when refrigerators were still rare\(^2\), it was mainly sheer necessity, because kitchens were used communally and therefore unsafe or too small. To the new tenants or owners of new apartments - having just acquired one much more sought after status symbol - this practice clearly proved to be an inconvenience.

B. Height and Lack of Elevators

In 1992 when the interviews were conducted, about 20 nine-storey buildings had been completed in the Jinhua neighbourhood. According to the redevelopment plan, about two-thirds of the new apartment buildings were designated to be of this type, while the remaining one third were to be multi-storey buildings ranging from 12 to 22 storeys (Wei and Qiu 1992:58,61).

\(^2\)Television advertisements for refrigerators still frequently show happy families and friends, admiring the new acquisition in a prominent place in the living room.
Chapter V Practical Needs Assessment

Roughly one third of the interviews were conducted in the new apartment buildings.

The nine-storey buildings where interviews were conducted had all been designed without elevators. This was surprising, because according to prior architectural design rules in China, elevators had to be installed in every building containing more than six floors. Clearly this omission poses tremendous problems for families with young children and, in particular, the elderly.

It came as no surprise that complaints about the lack of elevators were aired by families allocated units on high floors. These complaints outnumbered any other criticisms of informants in the new buildings. One of the worst affected was Chui Hua, a woman of 78 years, who had never been married. She had been assigned a 15.5 square metre apartment on the eighth floor. Because of her declining health and the exhausting long walk down to the streets she rarely left the apartment. She relied on neighbours and workers from the Resident’s Office to get her daily necessities from outside, but said that her relationship with them was rather loose. Because of the unpopularity of the high floors, the eighth and ninth floors in her building were still partially unoccupied. Isolated and lonely, Chui Hua was the most obvious victim of an allocation process that favoured owners of private housing and buyers at commercial rates.

Although representatives from the housing reform office insisted that they tried to allocate the elderly to the lower level apartments, the study revealed other examples of retired people living on the upper floors. Housing on the higher floors increased the dependence of elderly inhabitants on younger relatives. Luo Qun’s parents-in-law, 70 and 80 years of age and very frail, had been allocated an eighth floor apartment. Although not yet socially married, she took the bus
daily to Jinhua Street to look after them, which made it impossible to do paid work. She did not know her in-laws' new neighbours.

In two cases, elderly inhabitants of new housing were living on a lower floor, which made life for them easier. Feng Minglin, the woman who had to sell the family's washing machine, chose a first floor apartment because her 70 year-old father-in-law had a bad leg and was unable to climb stairs. Similar considerations had motivated 79 year-old Liang Zimin - who, like Chui Hua, had never married - to choose a second floor apartment. Liang Zimin was able to choose a lower floor unit because she had owned her previous housing in Jinhua Street which was demolished to make way for the new development. According to the redevelopment guidelines, she was given priority to choose. She expressed satisfaction at being well looked after by neighbours and friends. It is questionable whether these contacts would have been similarly close if she had been living on the eighth floor, like Chui Hua.

Elderly women were not the only ones suffering from the cost-cutting design of the new buildings. Zhang Jing, 35, lived on the fifth floor with her daughter and her parents in their early sixties, and reported that one of the problems in the new house was carrying the heavy gas containers upstairs when they had to be refilled. Because she was not in very good health, the family had to rely on her 61 year-old father to carry the container up and down stairs.

Despite the inconveniences associated with higher level apartments, many elderly interviewees also complained about first and second floor apartments, particularly the bad light conditions, noise and safety problems. The problems associated with low level apartments caused Feng Minglin to express disappointment at having had to choose a dark first floor apartment on
account of her father-in-law, with very little chances to move up to a higher floor in the future.

All interviewees expressed the wish to live between the third and fifth floor. The higher floors were considered undesirable because of the lack of elevators; the lower floors were resented because of safety problems, noise pollution and the lack of sunlight. Thus, the omission of elevators, aside from creating practical difficulties for the inhabitants of higher floors, also considerably narrowed the spectrum of desirable apartments in this building, potentially increasing the occurrence of conflicts over allocation. Conflicts over adequate compensation for old housing were one of the main factors for prolonging the development, significantly increasing costs. Wei and Qiu also warned of vertical social stratification in the new buildings due to the lack of elevators, another possible source of conflict in the future (ibid:63). This situation is arising because the former Jinhua Street property owners will select the more favourable lower floors while the former renters will be left with the undesirable higher levels.

These consequences make it very likely that the short term cost of not including elevators in the construction planning will be more than offset by the cost of conflicts over allocation, slowing up the redevelopment project, as well as future conflicts between disgruntled tenants. In this light, omitting elevators has not only been deeply inconsiderate but also a very shortsighted move.

Another problem in the new buildings was noise from nearby factories and construction work. The major cause for this disturbance was supremely ironic. When asked what she disliked about living in her new fifth floor apartment with her nuclear family, 35 year-old Liu Cheng
answered, "The noise from the elevator factory next door."

C. Gender Relevance of Design

Although the majority of informants expressed satisfaction with their new surroundings, the interviews also revealed several striking design inadequacies ignoring practical gender needs. Adequately sized kitchens and bathrooms are obvious practical gender needs since it is women who do most household chores. The same applies to convenient access to higher floors through elevators and the technical and legal conditions for redesigning living quarters according to individual needs.

All these defects affect women disproportionately. This is particularly evident for high rises without elevators whose effect on women is significant. Firstly, it isolates the elderly and on account of a longer life expectancy, this group is primarily made up of women. Secondly, it increases the dependence of elderly persons on other family members, and often this responsibility falls on women in the family. Thirdly, and maybe most importantly, the greater physical and emotional dependence of elderly parents on their off-spring reinforces patrilocal family patterns, as parents of a son will be less able and willing to let his family live by itself. In the age of the one-child policy, parents of a son will be much more likely to rely on their son's family, especially their daughter-in-law, to live with and support them.

Whereas appropriate space for cooking and family hygiene - necessary for coping with women's roles within the traditional division of labour - are practical gender needs without significant transformatory potential, convenient physical access to housing and self-help are practical gender needs with a potential for greater sexual equality. The latter can be seen as part
of the general need for adequate space, which has been identified as a primary gender need. It is
crucial for home-based, family run businesses, such as the dumpling wrapper production of Wang
Lizhen or the family shop of Tian Yilin. Jeopardizing these private businesses would also probably
hit the women involved harder than the men, as they would have greater problems finding
alternative employment than the male members of their family. Future employment would be less
likely to balance their roles as well as their present one did. Tinker notes that planners often
overlook the use of the home as a place of production, as housing is associated with a place to
escape work (Tinker 1993:71).

The former, conveniently accessible housing, reduces the dependence of parents-in-law and
parents’ on care giving by female relatives and in-laws, generally facilitates and shortens
reproductive work and lessens dependence on male help. Comparably convenient access also plays
an important role in achieving social equality by preventing horizontal social stratification in the
new buildings. Social inequalities in housing tend to be gender inequalities, as women in
vulnerable positions, such as divorced mothers and elderly single women are often the last in the
line for allocation of adequate housing.

When analyzing Jinhua Street housing design in gender terms, it can be concluded at this
point that whereas the new apartment buildings score better than the traditional buildings on
adequate space, they lag far behind in accessibility. Taking into account that the new buildings
all provide individual kitchens and bathrooms, it is fair to say that they are superior to the old
buildings in terms of mere practical gender terms. However, it is doubtful whether they are
superior in regard to practical needs with a transformatory potential.
5.4 HYGIENE AND HEALTH

Jinhua Street inhabitants have the lowest average life expectancies in Guangzhou. This is related to health hazards, such as air and noise pollution, poor hygiene due to the high population density and the high humidity in many buildings, caused by the frequent flooding of this low lying area. The improved cleanliness of the new buildings was clearly recognized by both inhabitants of the new and old buildings. Complaints about pollution and poor hygiene were made by all owners and tenants of old buildings.

Ma Wenli, a 36 year-old worker, living in a 10 square metre house with her husband and five year-old daughter, complained that the building was too damp and the roof leaked. Like several other women, Ma was scared by the great number of rats, probably attracted by the nearby vegetable market. Another woman was afraid to leave her five year-old daughter alone in the house because of the large rats. Ma and others also complained about the dirt in the street and her high-rise building neighbours who threw rubbish on her roof. Other frequent complaints were about noise, bad air, insufficient daylight, flies and smelly public toilets.

However, not all health hazards had been eliminated in the new buildings. Despite generally better ventilation, air and noise pollution remained a problem, according to some informants. Although some of the most polluting factories in the neighbourhoods, such as a cable factory, were to be relocated to the suburbs, the major part of industrial facilities will probably remain in the area (Wei and Qiu 1993:58). Therefore, the environmental problems of the neighbourhood will only have been partially solved by its redevelopment. On the other hand, it is undeniable that substantial progress is made by filling up the low level area, creating some
green space, and the more generous spacing of the new high rise building. The new apartment blocks therefore address the practical gender need of health and hygiene better than the traditional buildings. These needs are identified as gender needs because women's reproductive ties to the home mean that they are more dependant on housing and therefore disproportionately affected by poor hygiene in the neighbourhood.

5.5 SAFETY, PRIVACY AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

A. Interview findings

To a certain extent, personal safety and privacy are interrelated. The closer people live together in stable neighbourhood patterns the more difficult it becomes for people intent on theft or burglaries to enter the neighbourhood and individual dwellings unobserved. On the other hand, those who desire a greater degree of privacy must accept a greater risk of crime as a price to pay for more privacy and therefore some degree of anonymity.

Livingston and Lowinger, in an examination of mental health in China, made the following comparative observations on privacy in China and the US (Livingston and Lowinger 1983:17):

"In China, given the physical limitations of housing, traditional values about the interrelatedness of family members, and socialist values about working together to achieve the development of the country as a whole, privacy is not a priority for practical as well as philosophical reasons."

They contrast this approach with problems of isolation and loneliness of the population of the United States, which is forced by the structure of their society into privatized nuclear units. The authors thereby imply that privacy is neither desired by nor considered particularly
It is doubtful whether this romantic view can be upheld in a 1990s Chinese urban neighbourhood. All except three of the women interviewed who lived in larger extended families expressed the desire to live in smaller, nuclear families. On the other hand, a consistent feature of the old neighbourhood was the close relationship among neighbours. Despite occasional conflicts over common facilities, all women interviewed considered their close connections with neighbours as a generally positive aspect of their lives. Visits between neighbours were frequent and inhabitants of one alley knew each other by name. Even Lin Yi, who lived in the worst conditions in her 10.8 square metre family apartment, praised the good relationship with her neighbours whom she had known for decades.

Two aspects of this close-knit community were found particularly positive. Thirty-six year-old factory worker Chen Jian liked the fact that children could come and go easily and made many friends in the alley. She was afraid that life for them might be more lonely in the new apartment blocks. Tian Yilin, who, on account of her husband’s store, was particularly interested in safety from theft, said that in such an environment, guards were not necessary as the neighbours watched who entered the alley.

Close neighbourly relations and the aspect of safety were particularly appreciated by older women. Ma Xiazhu, a 59 year-old retired mother-in-law who lived in one of the best-kept traditional houses mentioned that the close relationship with her neighbours was typical for her mother-in-law’s and her own generation but was much looser in her daughter’s generation. Zhu Huajiao, a 50 year-old widow was torn between giving up the excellent relationship with her
neighbours and exchanging her damp, dark house for a more comfortable modern apartment. There was a strong tendency among older women to place the familiarity and ensuing safety of the environment above any practical advantages of the new apartments.

Zhong Xianu, a 84 year-old widow, living in a century old 15 square metre house with her single daughter, commented:

"I like one storey housing. The style is familiar to those villagers who migrated to Guangzhou from the same villages. I am very satisfied living where I am. I know the neighbours very well, because they are all from the same rural area."

Liang Shunmi, 53, living in a 60 square metre house with an extended nine member family, was even more outspoken:

"I like my neighbourhood. Relations with our neighbours are very intimate. I feel happy living here, because it has many advantages. It is safe, because neighbours take care of each other. There are very few robberies and burglaries. Everybody knows everyone; we are just like brothers and sisters."

Despite the clear preference for retaining the social structure of the neighbourhood, not one of the interviewed women appeared willing to put up any significant resistance to the redevelopment plans. Yuan Meili, who lived in the largest of the old buildings, expressed this attitude poignantly remarking, "I know all my neighbours. Probably many of them won't live together again (after redevelopment). This is up to the government to arrange."

The different quality in neighbourly relations is the most striking difference between the new and the old buildings. Almost all of the women interviewed in the new apartment blocks said they had a friendly but distant relationship with their neighbours. One of the causes of this phenomenon was design but this was probably not the only cause. The fact that all of the
Chapter V Practical Needs Assessment

inhabitants had moved in recently also played a role. There was a feeling that a lasting qualitative change had occurred. Chen Yimei, the wife of a getihu garment workshop/factory owner, one of the few women who lived in a new apartment that had been purchased, linked this change directly to housing reform. She noted that: "Because this is a commercial house, we have not much contact with each other. But we know each other."

However, the loosening of relations between neighbours *per se* was not perceived as negative. Some women were content with having a close relationship with the neighbours on their floor but not on others. It also seemed that the younger women had fewer problems adjusting to this change. Guo Wen's comment, a 28 year-old mother of two, whose financial situation allowed her family to buy an apartment at market rates and circumvent the one-child rule:

"No, we don't know our neighbours. We come upstairs and shut the door. This is not like before, when we were very familiar with our neighbours ..."

Younger and middle-aged women in old housing were not preoccupied with finding new friends after having moved. Li Ahong, 46, who had good, but not very close relations with her neighbours in the old neighbourhood did not expect any problems about getting to know the new neighbours in the apartment blocks. Relative isolation, however, was perceived as negative, when it was the result of inconvenient access to the new apartments. Chen Yimei, for example complained that her mother hardly came to see them, because she had difficulties, climbing the nine flights of stairs to her apartment.

Quite a different story in the new apartments was safety. For those living on lower floors and not inconvenienced by the absence of elevators, safety was perceived as the main problem in
the new buildings, but even Chen Yimei on the ninth floor felt safer after having installed a balcony alarm. Feng Minglin, living on the first floor with her disabled father-in-law, put bars on the windows. Deputy department head Lin Dazhu, who lived on the sixth floor, said that her neighbours agreed to install a safety door on the first floor in the stairwell, after a fourth floor apartment had been broken into and many items stolen.

Other complaints related to frequent bicycle thefts and feeling unsafe walking in the neighbourhood at night. It was felt necessary to install safety locks and one woman suggested that the neighbours should get together to hire a guard.

B. Gender Analysis

Personal safety and freedom from violence are practical gender needs with transformatory potential. They are prerequisites for women to carry out their traditional roles and for ensuring gender equity. Although the interviews showed that the traditional housing was considered significantly safer than the new apartment blocks and that lack of safety was a major complaint in the latter, none of the women complained about any violent crimes having taken place in the redeveloped area. Problems of theft and burglaries were keenly recognized, but self-help remedies, such as safety locks and doors were being introduced.

It appeared that safety problems in those buildings were recognized but not considered as a major disadvantage that could tip the scale against a new apartment in favour of prior housing. However, it is quite likely that safety concerns will increase after completion of the redevelopment which will drastically change the social environment and the degree of anonymity.

One aspect of the redevelopment, which had not been part of the original plan, might...
increase the risk of violent crime against women and of crimes against property. In order to generate funds for the redevelopment, a number of high rise buildings were to be erected, to increase the number of apartments that could be sold commercially. The population density in the area will therefore increase by approximately 25% (Wei and Qiu 1993:58,63). This aspect, together with the inevitable social stratification caused by combining state/unit allocated and commercially purchased housing, and the loosening of neighbourhood control will all contribute to a potential increase in crime.

It appeared that no significant precautions against the risk of crime were taken by the developers. There were no security installations, such as physical barriers against burglaries on lower floors, security doors. Most of the new buildings did not provide services such as security guards with one notable exception. This approach, surely motivated by cost considerations, necessitated initiatives by the neighbours themselves. An education department purchased a seven-storey building for its teachers. They had organized a security gate to be built at the entrance to their compound. Although the interviewees seemed to cope reasonably well with the safety problems by taking the initiative on their own, the fact remains that safety issues were not resolved in the new buildings.

An interesting result of the interviews in this context was that very close relationships with neighbours were not considered necessary. Younger women tended to be more satisfied with the greater degree of privacy in the new buildings than older women. However, the results of the interviews were not consistent enough to establish either family privacy or strong neighbourhood relations as a clear gender interest. This is maybe a reflection of the present transformatory stage
5.6 SERVICES AND LOCATION

Each neighbourhood has its own service centres and workshops, such as kindergartens, primary and middle schools, a theatre, library, as well as cultural and health centres. Commercial services are also offered, managed by the district government, providing coal delivery, food delivery, market stalls and small restaurants. Conveniently situated services, such as shopping facilities, health and child care services, as well as convenient access to work locations has long been recognized as practical gender needs crucial to enabling women to balance their gender roles.

One of the curses of Jinhua Street in terms of population density and pollution, its central location, was also partially a blessing, as it eliminated transportation problems for most women. All women stressed that the neighbourhood allowed convenient access to all major facilities, such as markets and public transport. Some retired women also commented on the convenience of having a public park nearby where they could go to for morning qigong or taiji exercise.

A. Distance to Work

Due to the central location of Jinhua Street, most women did not have to travel far to get to their work. The majority took between ten and thirty minutes by bicycle to get to their respective work units. The longest distance a woman had to travel was one hour.

Although, distances to the women's workplace were comparatively short, there was a tendency for women to travel further than their spouse, although this tendency was not very marked and there were two cases where the husband had a longer journey. These cases were
interesting, because they suggest how living arrangements, specifically family patterns can influence gender equity. Ma Wenli, the woman who complained about her neighbours throwing garbage on her roof, was one of the few women living matrilocally after marriage in the house inherited from her father. She took a 15 minute bicycle ride to her unit, whereas her husband had to travel 25 minutes. Ma Xiazhu lived in a 60 square metre house with her husband, two daughters, a son-in-law and a grandson. Of all the household members, her son-in-law had to travel the longest distance to work, at least 50 minutes by bicycle\(^3\), whereas she and her daughter only took 20 and 25-30 minutes on foot, respectively. The assumption that matrilocal and uxorilocal living arrangements were beneficial to women's access to her workplace was confirmed by looking at patrilocal family patterns. The most extreme disparity in commuting times was the case of Chen Jian, a factory worker who lived with her husband and child and her brother-in-law's family in a house inherited by the brothers from their father. She had to undertake a one-hour bicycle journey to her factory, whereas her husband only took ten minutes. She perceived this as unfair.

All the work-unit allocated apartments inhabited by the interviewees were allocated by either their husband's or father-in-law's unit. It comes at no surprise that this favoured men in regards to length of work journey. Liu Cheng, who lived in a nuclear family, had to travel about half an hour to the shop where she worked as a sales clerk. She emphasized that in compensation for his much shorter journey to work her husband was doing more housework than she. Although

\(^3\)His unit was to provide a motorcycle in the future: considering Guangzhou traffic conditions, it was doubtful whether this would significantly shorten his commuting time.
this was the only case of this kind, it is nonetheless important to show that a stereotypical view on gender roles would be inappropriate in today's urban China.

Nevertheless, there was a clear indication that those women who lived in either their parent's, their own house, or a house jointly owned or rented with their husbands, had more convenient access to their workplace than women who did not. Positive examples of this kind were Guo Wen, who had bought an apartment with her husband (15 minutes), Liu Yanzhen, who owned an apartment together with her husband (five minutes), bought for the couple by Hong Kong relatives, Lin Huadong, a 39 year-old single woman living in her mother's private house (ten minutes) and Lin Dazhu who had been allocated an apartment by her and her husband's unit (ten minutes). There was not a single case of a woman living in her parents-in-law's or husband's house, be it owned or unit allocated, who had to travel a shorter distance than the male household members.

B. Child Care

Twenty-one of the 38 women interviewed were employed on a full-time basis, although the percentage of unemployed was greater than expected. Of the 28 women in the sample who were not retired, seven were unemployed. This relatively high percentage of unemployed women might have been caused by the fact that during the first two weeks of the project, interviews were conducted during the daytime. Clearly at this time of the day, most of the interviewees available were either retired or unemployed. When the main interview time was shifted to the evenings, the percentage of retired or unemployed women decreased. However, even on the basis of the actual composition of women interviewed, it is evident that convenient and affordable child care facilities
Chapter V Practical Needs Assessment

were crucial in order to balance the paid and unpaid portions of women's work.

Most of the mothers sent their young children to some form of daycare, some of them even to boarding institutions. Availability and cost of child care facilities turned out to be a major difference between women who had work units and those who had not. But somehow, almost all of them managed to enrol their children in daycare facilities. Of all the women interviewed, only one had to give up her job beyond the usual three to five months maternity leave: Yuan Meili quit her job after her daughter was born and was planning to send her daughter into the state-run daycare facility to find a new job after four years.

The six year-old daughter of 24 year-old Liu Cheng, whose husband's unit provided the family's housing, attended her unit's kindergarten for 120 yuan a month. Their daughter only came home two nights a week, a routine she began at age three. Liu expressed no concern at this situation at all. On the contrary:

"This is a good way to train my daughter's character and not to be spoiled. She also learns to be independent, like washing her face and brushing her teeth by herself. She also learns to play with other kids . . . My daughter likes it there."

- Cheñ Jian, the factory worker who had to commute an hour to her unit, first placed her five-year-old daughter in her unit's nursery school but had changed to her husband's units' kindergarten recently because no fees were charged by that unit. This was the only case where the husband's unit was used to provide child care facilities. In all other cases the child attended the mother's unit.

However, there was a strong tendency to use one of the ten nursery schools and the kindergartens in the neighbourhood, run independently from work units. This was partly the case
because units did not provide daycare facilities and partly because it was considered more
convenient to have children attend daycare close to their homes. There were both state-run and
privately run nursery schools. The state-run schools were more popular, as the private institutions
had a reputation of having insufficient space and poorly trained staff, often run by a grandmother
in her home.

Available space in kindergartens did not seem to be the main issue, although a lack of
kindergartens was targeted by the redevelopment plan as a problem (Wei and Qiu: 1993) and some
women said that it was difficult to get into some of the child care facilities. The chief problem was
finding affordable daycare. According to one woman, state-run nursery school was hardly cheaper
at 100 yuan per month. Zhang Jing, an unemployed mother, whose Hong Kong husband was sent
her 1000 Hong Kong dollars a month, a very substantial sum by local standards, had little trouble
to afford the 110 yuan charged by a local private nursery school she had chosen for her adopted
daughter. This situation also applied to Feng Minglin whose husband, a taxi driver, had one of
the most coveted jobs in China. On his salary of at least 1000 yuan per month, she had also been
able to afford a nanny when her daughter was very young. However, on account of an almost
unlimited supply of cheap labour from the countryside, hiring nannies seemed to be an option also
to women with lower household incomes. Chen Aijia, for example, whose household income did
not exceed 600 yuan, was planning to hire a nanny from the countryside first before sending her
soon to be born child to her unit's nursery school.

Child care costs were harder to afford for 36 year-old worker Ma Wenli, whose nuclear
family’s household income was 600 yuan and whose unit - in contrast to Chen Aijia - did not
provide child care facilities.

The interviews showed that there was a demand for child care facilities at a very early age which was not adequately met. Lin Dazhu, who held the same position as her husband as deputy department head, took advantage of the maximum maternity leave of five months on full salary and a further seven months on 75% of her salary. She had to send her one-year-old son to her mother when she returned to work. Apparently, adequate child care facilities were not yet available for this age bracket. Liu Yanzhen, an accounting clerk, was in a similar situation. After having exhausted her unit’s maternity leave opportunities by collecting full salary for three months and 70% for four additional months, she relied on her co-residing mother-in-law to look after her daughter.

Lacking access to child care formed one more part of a vicious circle affecting divorced or separated women. Qiu Ling, 35, who left her husband’s countryside house to return to her mother’s home had given up her job when she moved to the countryside. Since her divorce, she had received no alimony payments from her husband and being unemployed, was neither eligible for unit-provided child care facilities nor had she enough money to pay for daycare provided on a commercial basis. Nevertheless, she managed to get her daughter into daycare, because a friend of hers who was entitled for a place transferred it to her.

Huang Shuyi, who had recently separated from her husband, was not as lucky in this respect as Qiu Ling. She earned about 200 yuan working in a factory, whereas her husband, working in a private enterprise, made approximately 1000 yuan a month. After they separated, she moved out of her parents-in-law’s home and back to her mother; her husband refused to
contribute to daycare costs. Huang was unable to raise the money and had to rely on her mother to look after the child.

Married women who did not have a work unit had problems getting access to child care facilities, like Tian Yilin who was working in the family hardware shop. Like Qiu Ling, she was lucky to have a friend who provided a boarding place for her son from the age of three for the unit-subsidized fee of 45 yuan a month. The two years before her son turned three, however, no spot was available for her son. During this time, her family moved to her mother’s house for two years to get additional family help in child care.

Another important factor, which seemed to affect school enrolment, was the problem of household registration (hukou). Spouses from different hukou do not necessarily "unify" their registration when they move in together. According to the informants, registration of hukou was a very cumbersome bureaucratic process. The hukou of children followed that of the mother and, in patrilocal families, was different from their actual residence. Feng Xuehua, who had kept her countryside registration said that her six-year-old daughter had severe problems enrolling in a primary school because she also had a countryside hukou. Besides these difficulties, she would have to pay a 1000 yuan entry fee. For the time being, she sent her daughter to a "character study class" for about 30 yuan a month. She remarked that it was very difficult to change her registration.

In a few cases, child care continued to be provided at home. Guo Wen, who had two small children, sent her two-year-old son to daycare, whereas her three-year-old daughter was looked after by her mother-in-law at home. Guo stressed that the only reason for this unusual arrangement
was the fact that her daughter did not want to be away from home and would cry the whole day if she had to. Although this is perfectly possible, it is also quite likely that administrative hurdles would make it difficult for a second child\(^4\) to gain access to such facilities. This was very likely for school enrolment, for which Guo was expecting to pay extra fees in addition to the fine of several 1000 yuan she had to pay when her son was born.

C. Gender-Analysis

The accessibility to the workplace and availability and demand for child care facilities was one of the most helpful aspects to establish the practical gender needs in the neighbourhood. They also provided valuable insights into relevant strategic interests, which will be discussed in the beginning of the next chapter.

Convenient access to women’s workplace was shown to be an important practical gender need, as most women were employed and had to do the major part of housework at the same time. Physical access to paid work is necessary for women’s empowerment and therefore a practical need with strong transformatory potential. It is argued that women’s roles in unpaid reproductive work are often considered an unlimited resource, always available in addition to women’s roles in the paid work sector as the labour market and economic planners deem fit, placing unreasonable demands on employed women and leading to a very questionable kind of liberation. However, it is equally true that the empowering effects of employment and the vital contribution of a woman’s income to household needs can also lead to enlightened husbands, such as that of Liu

\(^4\)It should be noted that the "second" child in this case was actually the two-year old son, who was nevertheless treated as the "first" child when it came to child care services.
Chapter V Practical Needs Assessment

Cheng who, in turn for having a shorter journey to work, did a greater portion of the household chores than his wife.

The same categorization within the gender needs framework can be made for child care services. There was a clear demand for full day child-care services from a very early age onwards. Reliance on traditional sources, like on family members within a multigenerational extended family, typically the mother-in-law, was surprisingly small even in cases where this family pattern was still followed.

The interviews also showed that the traditional exclusively unit-based allocation system could be detrimental to women's interests. Not belonging to a work unit was particularly harmful to divorced women as they were neither eligible for separate housing nor for child care places. The local privately-run services were certainly useful in providing a remedy. But because of their high cost, they were only available to wealthier women, usually those living in a functioning marriage.

The effects of the shortcomings of this system were considerably mitigated by the impressive flexibility of the mothers involved. The main strategies were using personal connections (guanxi) to gain access to child care services or changing living arrangements, such as temporarily moving the whole family or the child to the grandparent's home. Hiring nannies from the countryside was a growing trend.

Despite a clear indication that some structural factors, such as the role of units and an increasing toll on private family funds for child care services, worked to the disadvantage of women, it has to be made unequivocally clear that the degree of employment and the availability...
of child care services remain two features of Chinese society clearly superior to Western countries from a feminist perspective. This often remarked upon fact (for example Livingston and Lowinger 1983:25) continues to be accurate. There is probably no Western industrialized country which offers full day child care from the age of two to almost all families requiring such services. The same favourable comparison applies to women's participation in the workforce.

The present situation also compares favourably with earlier periods of the PRC, according to some of the interviewees. Zhong Xianu, 84, whose memories predated the founding of the PRC, found that life was much harder in the old days and that she had to look after her children herself. Ma Xiazhu, 59, who reared her children in the late 1950s and 1960s said that, in those days with an income of 30 to 40 yuan a month, kindergarten was too expensive and her mother-in-law had to look after her children. During her youth, maternity leave was only 56 days. This had also been the length of maternity leave for 64 year-old Chen Meizhu and even 46 year-old Li Ahong, which shows that improvements in this child care have been made since the reform policies began in the late 1970s. Chen Meizhu's experience also indicated that traditional attitudes were stronger in the earlier decade of Communist rule, she was refused daycare from her unit because she had a mother-in-law to look after her children.

5.7 CONCLUSION

Not only does the institutional process of housing allocation impact the way women can lead their lives, but also the physical dimensions of the housing, its location, structural quality and symbolic value (Muller 1990:43).

Muller's observation was found to be true in Jinhua Street. The physical dimensions of the
housing had an enormous impact on the way the women lead their lives. The small size of the apartments created conflicts, many of which had strong impacts on the women. High rises without elevators had an isolating effort on the elderly people living on the top floors. The poor ventilation of the old homes had more serious health impacts on women who spent longer hours in the homes, particularly in the kitchens. Improvements in all of these areas will address some of the practical gender needs of the Jinhua Street women.

Allocated housing from a husband's work unit was shown to put women at a disadvantage for it often required a longer home to work journey. The neighbourhood also did not have sufficient child care services, although it was noted that there were more opportunities available in Jinhua Street than in Canadian neighbourhoods. Changes to the allocation system and an increase in affordable child care spaces will both work to improve the lives of women by addressing their practical needs.

Tsui Ming (1992) describes the traditional pre-liberation Chinese neighbourhood as one organized with *gemeinshaft* relationships. The housing system, linking work and housing placed families in close proximity to their colleagues. The neighbourhood design, with single storey housing shared by co-workers provided intimacy and solidarity. The heat drew people outside and with open doors, the rigid boundaries between family and community were weakened. The recent addition of high rise apartment building threatens to destroy the *gemeinshaft* relationships. The social context which developed out of the traditional neighbourhood form will likely disappear under this new urban landscape, giving rise to weak neighbourly relationships closer to a *gesellschaft* society. This is a society which is based on contractual rather than familial
relationships.

This is a step backwards for Chinese communities. Safety was identified as a need with transformatory potential to address strategic interests. When the women feel safe in their neighbourhoods, it improves their position in a sustainable way and empowers them to become agents of change. This allows them to seek the betterment of their lives in other ways and provides the opportunities for them to meet other strategic needs. Unfortunately, the redevelopment plans are actually making the residents feel less safe than before.

In conclusion, this chapter has revealed that women's practical gender needs are in large being addressed by the housing redevelopment program for Jinhua Street. The housing reform program, however, has little to offer in addressing these practical gender needs. The reform program will play a larger role in addressing the strategic gender needs identified in the following chapter.
6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the Chinese housing system in terms of meeting women's strategic interests. This study identifies two primary strategic interests. The first strategic interest focuses on living patterns and is concerned with breaking the traditional patrilocal living arrangement. This chapter reveals how this pattern subordinates a woman both to her husband and to her mother-in-law and limits her role in family decision-making. The second strategic interest involves changing the process by which housing is allocated. Traditional patterns of allocation are biased in favour of men and are a barrier to accessibility for single and divorced women. The transformation of the interests will lead to a change in gender relations and the structure of subordination.

6.2 POST-MARRIAGE RESIDENCE

The choice of post-marital residence in China is important for it determines the role that the woman will play in the family. Moving into an established extended family usually means that women will not be empowered and will have a low level of control over their lives. Living in a nuclear family creates the potential for a more equitable share in the decision-making process and more control over family resources.

An important issue regarding residence in China is the hukou or household registration system. This system of population registration was developed in the 1950s and was essential for not only establishing identity, citizenship and proof of status, but also for obtaining basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. The important distinction for this system was the fact that it divided the population into either an "urban" or "non-agricultural" designation or a "rural" one.
Chapter VI Strategic Needs Assessment

Only those who were designated as "urban" had the rights to those basic needs. While the state assumed direct responsibility for the urban residents, the rural residents had to rely on their own resources or those of rural communities or collectives (ibid.). While this system is not as controlling as it once was, particularly since food and clothing rations are no longer necessary, it still is significant for accessing housing. This section will show that maintaining or gaining an urban hukou is used strategically by many Chinese women.

A. Living Arrangements and Family Relationships

Research on family patterns and living arrangements in modern China has shown that there are four post-marital housing options: neolocal (a nuclear family), matrilocal (in the family home of the bride), patrilocal (in the family home of the groom) and others (Tsui 1992). The patrilocal tradition has remained the dominant pattern in rural China, particularly in the south. The same has been found to a lesser degree in big cities. Davis-Friedman (1991) argues that, whereas patrilocal residence in the countryside continues to be the desired living arrangement, in the urban areas it is more the result of necessity rather than choice due to the acute housing shortage. She also observes a tendency in the cities to provide shelter for those family members most in need rather than to the son and his family.

Other research has shown that single women think that the best post-marital housing option is neolocal, but once married many decide that living in an extended family is more convenient. When given a choice to live in a matrilocal or patrilocal extended family, many women would prefer to live matrilocally (Tsui 1992:204). The government is also keen to promote matrilocal living arrangements. To promote the one child policy, newlyweds are encouraged to live with the
family of the bride, to quell fears that a single daughter would leave parents without any support in their old age.

(i) Daughter / Mother-In-Law Relationship

One cannot discuss patrilocal living arrangements without mentioning the mother and daughter-in-law relationship, traditionally the most difficult relationship that a Chinese woman has to endure. Before 1949, marriage was referred to as "finding a mother-in-law" rather than a husband. Today, women have the protection of the law and social independence, however, due to housing shortages and traditional patriarchal patterns, many must live with a mother-in-law for some time. The husband is put in the middle of this relationship in times of disagreement and must choose between wife and mother. Many marital quarrels are blamed on mother-in-law and daughter-in-law troubles.

Traditionally, the mother-in-law had the dominant female position in the family, and looked for methods to control the daughter-in-law. Although this continues in many households, the government has placed the burden of improving the relationship on the daughter-in-law to respect the mother-in-law, take care of the elderly and preserve domestic harmony (Honig and Hershatter: 1988). The women's federation has responded to this issue by holding classes to educate young couples and smooth over the relationship troubles.

(ii) Interview findings

The family patterns of the women interviewed were extremely varied and complex, however, there were a few clear trends. First, most of the women lived patrilocally. Second, a neolocal structure was the preferred family arrangement. Third, those who lived matrilocally did
so for various reasons. Finally, there did exist generational differences in preference for family structure.

Table 5 Living Arrangements of Jinhua Street Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Widow</th>
<th>Divorced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patrilocal</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matrilocal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neolocal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Sons</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With own brother</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With husband’s brother</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of women lived in extended families, with only six married women living in a three-person nuclear family (neolocal). All other married women lived either with their husband's parents or brothers' family. Only two lived with her own mother. The reason for this arrangement was because one had a husband in Hong Kong and was waiting to immigrate. The other worked for her family business run out of her parent's home. All of the divorced women had returned to their natal home. All of the young single women also lived with their parents. The two elderly single women, both in their seventies had their own apartments.

Several remarks by the women themselves, often made in a very matter of fact manner, showed to what extent patrilocal living arrangements were taken for granted. Feng Xuehua, for
example, lived in a typical patrilocal extended family of eight.

"My husband only had sisters, so, when he married, he had a place to live. My mother remarried after my father died, so she had to move to her new husband's home, which was assigned by his work unit. In Guangzhou, if a family has many sons then housing can be very difficult."

She meant that it was certain that her husband's sisters would move out after marriage so he was not concerned for finding space for his bride.

None of the single women interviewed anticipated living with her parents after marriage. This was taken for granted even by those who did not yet have a marriage partner in mind. However, these women also noted that the move to the husband's home was not what they would prefer. All mentioned feeling very attached to her mother and they were not happy about moving away. They were afraid of having conflicts with their new mother-in-law. Worker's from the resident's committee noted that every year they mediate disputes between these two groups, and usually it is the elder one who complains of mistreatment. It should be noted that most women interviewed did not have any problems with their mother-in-law but all knew someone who had to "put up with it."

Conroy (1987) asserts that a bad mother and daughter-in-law relationship will lead to marital troubles and may cause divorce. However, Chinese statistics reveal that 70 percent of all divorces occur in nuclear families (Women of China 1987:171). It is possible that living in an extended family helps to reduce marital conflict by lightening the financial and housekeeping burden of young couples.

A few women did comment on the positive aspects of extended families. Chen Fusheng,
single, 25 and living with her extended family, had never considered any other living arrangement.

"I have never thought of living by myself. After marriage, I will live in my husbands' house. I don't have any married friends who live with the wife's parents. It will be good to have my mother-in-law there when we have a baby."

Liu Yanzhen, 27 years old, was living in a recently purchased 60 square metre apartment with her husband and her parents-in-law. She worked as an accounting clerk while her mother-in-law looked after her daughter, which she considered to be very convenient.

These examples show that when multi-generational living arrangements were found preferable, this was not due to different "values," as Livingston and Lowinger and many others profess, but to the simple fact that women had difficulties balancing their roles in a society that has not compensated them for their greater participation in the workforce with a more equal sexual division of labour in the household. Multi-generational arrangements were necessary to provide child care through mothers-in-law, thus creating not only a sexual but a combined sexual-generational division of labour.

In summary, most interviews made in this study strongly suggest that breaking the patrilocal multi-generational family tradition probably constitutes the primary strategic interest for housing for women in southern urban China. Only nine out the thirty-eight women interviewed did not live in an extended patrilineal family, comprising of three generations. This figure includes three "double-nuclear" families whose structure is closer to an extended family. According to Livingston's and Lowinger's (1983) assumptions, the remaining women should have been
rejoicing at their luck to live in such a traditional setting, ensuring that the "terror of privacy" would never strike them. Contrary to this assumption, evidence that women preferred living in their own place in a nuclear two-generation family was overwhelming.

All but three other women living in an extended family expressed the wish to live in a nuclear family and have her own apartment. Interestingly, life in a nuclear family was even considered preferable by women in multi-generation households that seemed to function quite well. Zhang Hua, living in a patrilocal multi-generation household with her husband and ten year old son found it convenient to have her parents-in-law look after her ten-year old son. There was also sufficient space for the seven member household in the 100 square metre old house. But despite the relative convenience of this living arrangement, she would prefer to have their own apartment. Because of the high property prices, she considered this alternative an "impossible dream." Zhang used a Chinese idiom, heard several times during the interviews to describe her housing situation: Xiang zhu hao, tong zhu nan (Living separately is good, living together is difficult).

It was interesting to hear the opinion of women from the mothers-in-laws' generation on nuclear families. A retired widow, Chen Meizhu, 64, who lived in a ten-person extended family in an old building said that she would like to be assigned two sets of apartments in a new building which would enable her to live by herself but next door to her children. Zhu Huajiao, a 54 year old widow who had two adult single children living with her, did not find having the whole family live together a very appealing idea. She found living in a four to six person household preferable. Of her three daughters, two had already married and moved away. These examples show that
women-in-law's willingness to spend their retirement looking after grandchildren and running a household for their double-income children is not unlimited.

Lin Huadong, 27, was torn between marrying her boyfriend in the countryside and staying with her parents in the city. Her mother tried to use tradition as a means to break free and lead a western style retirement life.

"My mother does not want me to marry so soon, because she can use my help. My mother says that girls have to marry out (nu haizi yiding yao jia chu qu). I wanted to marry a few months ago, but my boyfriend said he did not have enough money to buy a house. My sister wanted to live here after she married, but my parents wouldn't allow it. It's the same with me. They said, we both are elderly people and we live here very comfortably and conveniently. If a young couple is living with them, it would be impossible to avoid conflicts."

Thus, the combination of the one-child-family and of patrilocal family patterns might ironically free those couples who "only" had a daughter from living in cramped housing conditions after their children get married. However, it is impossible to establish from the few interviews conducted, whether living without at least one child and family has become a prevailing preference among urban China's elderly or whether the majority of couples without a son will dread being left alone after their daughter "marries out." Since the one child-policy was only instituted in the 1970s, it is probably still too early to examine its social effects on the welfare of elderly parents in a meaningful way.

Apart from the few examples quoted, which show extended families in a positive light, all other women believed that living in a neolocal family was the ideal living arrangement and that living in extended families had many disadvantages. This was expressed by single women living
with their parents, married women living in extended families and those few who had achieved this goal. This shows that nuclear family living arrangements, independent of the parents’ generation, based on joint ownership or tenure, is not only the chief strategic gender need of urban women from a feminist perspective, for reasons analyzed in greater depth below, but also the desired preference of the interviewed Chinese women themselves.

B. Patrilocal Living Arrangements and Divorce

In the event of divorce patrilocal living arrangements prove to be disastrous for women. Two of the three divorced cases had moved to their husband’s home after marriage. The third case had been allocated work unit housing which will be discussed in the second section of this chapter. After marriage, Qiu Ling followed her husband to his countryside home. Soon after their daughter was born, her husband was arrested because of fraud charges and sent to prison for three years. During that time she moved back to her mother’s home in Jinhua Street. After he was released, he came to the city, tried to make up with her and convince her to have a second child since the first one had been a daughter. She refused and he became abusive and violent. He left the city but refused to contribute any money towards his daughter’s upbringing. He tried to gain custody of his daughter so she could work in his village and offered Qiu Ling money if she agreed.

After it became clear that the relationship with her husband could not be mended she agreed to a rushed undisputed divorce which in China does not require court involvement. She received no right’s over her husband’s parents house nor any official title to alimony payments for his daughter.
Qiu Ling was lucky on three counts. First, that her mother still had room to accommodate her and her daughter. Second, she felt relieved that she did not have younger brothers and sisters "who were disgusted" with her despite her divorce. Thirdly, she had not changed her Guangzhou household registration when she moved to the countryside. Therefore, she and her daughter were registered as city dwellers which allowed her to reside there legally.

Nevertheless, she was desperate when the interview was conducted. She begged the interviewer to help her take her case to the authorities, especially the administration and the court in her husband's village. Although she had consulted a female lawyer who confirmed her right to alimony payments for her daughter, she did not have any trust in effective help through official channels. Nor was she aware that she had any legal right to child support.

It would be tempting to discard Qiu Ling's problems as an unlucky case typical to traditional patriarchal attitudes of the countryside. Proof that the same problems arise in an urban setting was the example of Huang Shuyi. Huang Shuyi moved to her husband's parents home after marriage and immediately experienced a poor relationship with her parents-in-law. When she was pregnant her father-in-law declared, "If it's a boy I will give ten yuan lucky money for the baby, if it is a girl I will give five yuan." After the birth of her daughter, the relationship deteriorated. The abuse continued and when her husband refused to stick up for her, she moved back to her mother's home. Her husband who earned five times as much as she did in a private enterprise did not offer any support payments. Two years after she left and despite the unlikelihood of reconciliation, she was still uncertain whether she wanted a divorce, because she dreaded the gossip among the other female workers in her factory.
Chapter VI Strategic Needs Assessment

Huang Shuyi is an example of using one's household registration strategically. She maintained her registration at her mother's house after marriage, despite moving to her husband's home. When her mother's home was torn down and replaced, they were allocated extra space because of Huang Shuyi. When her marriage failed she was fortunate that she had not changed her registration.

Women who were living in functioning marriages knew about the vulnerable position of divorced women caused by the present housing system. Several of them said that the only chance to divorce a husband was to have a natal family to go back to. Li Weihong's comment was short and brutal, but accurate, "Divorced women usually return to their natal family. They are always despised by people; they feel uncomfortable."

C. Effect of Housing Reform on Family Patterns

The interviews reveal that housing reform will not have a significant impact on family patterns. Due to the high cost of market housing, all family members will contribute to the purchase and thus preserve the extended family structure. Some families rely on overseas relatives to purchase housing for the entire family. Extended patterns are also preserved through the redevelopment process in Jinhua Street. Families who owned housing are given new apartments with the same floor area as the former housing based on the idea that all former residents will move into the new housing.

6.3 ACCESS TO HOUSING

The following section examines women's access to housing in urban China. It first explores issues of ownership and affordability which are important issues given the policy move
towards greater private ownership. It then examines rental or allocated housing which is presently
the most common access to housing. The difficulties experienced by single women and divorced
women will be examined.

A. Ownership and Affordability

(i) Interview findings

The main thrust of the Chinese housing reform programme is the encouragement of private
ownership. To a lesser extent, increasing rent of state owned housing to a commercial level has
been advocated. However, selling housing at anything resembling market prices has been
extremely unpopular with the major part of the population used to paying next to nonexistent rents
in the past forty years. Therefore, many work units have switched to offering subsidized sales to
their employees, partly based on mandatory savings plans for their employees and partly co-
financed by the state.

It comes as no surprise that most of the women agreed that buying an apartment would be
the best solution to their housing problems but found it unrealistic to afford the price. Of the
women interviewed who lived in privately owned housing, only five had purchased housing under
the new system. Out of these, two had bought a 65 square metre apartment at a market price of
130,000 yuan, which they had paid for in just two instalments. This was almost exactly the market
price in some Beijing developments in the same year, which ranged from 2500 to 3000 yuan per
square metre (Wu Liangyong et al 1993:25-26). The other three apartments were bought at highly
unit-subsidized prices at 4,000, 6600, and 10,000 yuan respectively.

Even the subsidized purchase prices were still considered very high by the interviewed
women. Lin Dazhu, whose family had used all their savings even had to borrow from other family members to scrape together the 6,600 yuan required. Liu Yanzhen, who lived in an apartment bought for 10,000 yuan with her husband and parents-in-law, also considered the price quite expensive. She also erroneously called it a "commercial (commodity) house" (shangping fang), a term used to refer to housing sold at real market rates. Her family was lucky to have Hong Kong relatives who paid for the apartment. Liu Cheng and her husband had bought the apartment that had been assigned by her husband's work unit at a very preferential price of 4,000 yuan. In none of these cases, commercial loans were used.

The financial situation of the women interviewed made it clear that buying homes at a market rate was completely unrealistic as all women disposed of a monthly household income of less than 1,000 yuan a month. The lowest-household income was 300-400 yuan, the most frequently quoted ranged between 600-700 yuan. Buying a market price apartment would have cost these families over ten full annual household incomes.

Therefore, those women's reaction to the question of how housing commercialization would affect them verged between the amused and the irritated. Lin Yi, the 25 year old single woman living with her extended family in a 10.8 square-metre old house summarized the problem realistically:

"Buying a house isn't so easy! In China, if you are a regular worker, you won't be able to buy housing in your lifetime. My father has worked for many years and still lives like this. The only way out is to do business. But when you have saved enough money for a house, the price has doubled."

Lin Yi also pointed out that her married brother who was living in the same apartment had
Chapter VI Strategic Needs Assessment

no chance to buy an apartment even though he had a comparatively high income as a taxi driver. As he was not a member of a work unit, he would have had to buy housing at a full market rate.

This hopeless situation depressed the younger women like Luo Qun, 28, who had already registered her marriage and was resigned to move out of her present temporary housing in with her almost senile parents-in-law: "We would like to buy our present housing. But now we are just "drifting along aimlessly" (guo yi tian, shi yi tian)."

(ii) Gender analysis

There is little doubt that joint purchasing by husband and wife of housing is preferable to allocation from a gender perspective. Both high costs and low income levels make women's financial contributions vital to property acquisition and, to the women interviewed, were a considerable source of pride and a feeling of self worth. With divorce, the family home forms part of the property to be divided up which gives women a greater chance to continue living in it, particularly when she has a child who is still a minor, or at least entitles her to a monetary compensation.

In the case of allocated housing, women have virtually no housing rights if the landlord is the husband's work unit, which is often the case. Therefore, Liu Cheng's who contributed financially to the purchase of their apartment assigned by her husband's work unit, would see her rights increase decisively in case of divorce although she was probably not aware of this byproduct of their purchase. Even with joint tenancy, women's rights are not necessarily protected, as it is largely up to the landlord to decide whether and with whom he or she wants to uphold the lease

95
This conclusion only applied to newly and jointly purchased housing, however. Old housing passed on from generation to generation is still almost exclusively passed on to a male heir. The only exception in this study was the house of the 59 year-old widow Ma Xiazhu who had three daughters and no son. Her different family situation had evidently shaped her attitude towards gender equity in the field of housing. When asked whether the present housing system was fair, she answered:

"Personally, I feel the system is all right, since my daughters have a place to live. I know that usually, men have more opportunities to get housing. They have an advantage. Men are always at an advantage in this society. Of course, this is not right. I know that women and men have equal inheritance rights. Even though I have three daughters and no son, I will still protect my daughters and try to help them receive fair treatment."

However, considering the present economic circumstances of average households, acquiring ownership will hardly become a solution offered to a large proportion of the urban population. In fact, due to the explosion in urban real estate prices since the late 1980s, affordability has considerably decreased compared to the situation one decade earlier. In the mid-seventies an average house cost about three to six annual incomes (Davis-Friedman 1991:40). For the women interviewed, the typical cost would have been ten annual household incomes. Liang Zimin had bought a house with three other single women in the 1950s for just 500 yuan.

This shows that even if building credit was made available on a large scale, most people would not be able to afford to purchase their own housing. Private housing will largely be

---

1 See for this the excerpts from legal texts in the next section.
available either to those who work in units that can afford selling apartments at a fraction of their market value, or by the newly rich private entrepreneurs, or to people with overseas relatives.

The government does try to a certain extent to help people under particularly difficult housing conditions to acquire ownership. Households living in particularly difficult housing conditions (*kunnan hu*), i.e. household with less than 2 square metres floor space per person, were entitled to buy subsidized housing at 500 yuan per square metre. Although this is a substantial subsidy, if market prices of 2,500-3,000 yuan are considered normal in the year 1992, the resulting price was still well beyond the reach of a typical *kunnan hu* and well above the three examples of unit-subsidized sales quoted in the preceding section. For example, the *kunnan hu* of Lin Yi, would have had to pay 20,000 yuan to buy an apartment at the guaranteed minimum of five square metres per capita in the new apartment blocks. Considering both the fiscal problems of the Chinese state and the economic situation of the vast majority of its people, urban private ownership of housing will remain a luxury to most for a long time to come.

### B. Rental Housing

Having established that the vast majority of urban women will continue to rent housing, it becomes necessary to examine the gender implications of the present allocation system. At this point the case study was confronted with a major problem. Because Jinhua Street was a traditional neighbourhood in the city centre, privately owned housing occupying 89.9% of all housing by far outnumbered rental housing (Wei and Qiu 1993:53). This was atypical, for in most Chinese cities, the privately owned share of the housing stock comprises only 20%-30%. To redress this imbalance to a certain extent, an effort was made to interview women living in rented apartments
and thus 44 percent of the sample came from rental housing.

This section discusses gaining access to housing through the rental system. First, however, it explores the options of single women who are usually denied access to rental housing. Then it examines work unit allocated housing and finally how that allocation process influences those who divorce.

(i) Single Women

The Chinese family is based on what has been termed the model of "trinity" in Chinese culture. The trinity is made up of family, sex and children, none of which can be dispensed with in a proper family (Li and Feng 1992:133). The importance of the family dates back to Confucian ideals and still is upheld in modern China. For example, the chairwoman of the Tianjin Municipal Women's Federation believes that "a priority for any woman's development is to have an ideal family. A family is the cell for society, and thus the more civilized the family, the more civilized the society" (Cao 1992:10).

Thus, as society regards the family, and not the individual as the basic social institution, China's housing policy also subscribes to this model, so an unmarried person who has not yet "formed a family" is not formally recognized (Li and Feng 1992:133). Women's journals document stories from readers such as a 42 year old single woman who wrote: "The most serious difficulty in my life is housing. Even a bird has a nest. Is marriage the only way to solve this problem?" (ibid.).

It is assumed that all women will marry and eventually leave their parents' home. Given the housing shortage and the previously mentioned tradition to have women move into their
husbands' home, a single woman with a brother can inhibit the brother's ability to marry if she continues to occupy the space that he expects to have for his own family. An anecdote from one survey described a 33-year-old unmarried woman living in an extended family of eight. She felt guilty for sleeping in the front room which she knew they wanted to convert into a living room. She had low self esteem, and felt that she could not argue very strongly for viewing her choice of television programmes as it could irritate her brother and his wife (Lull 1991:75).

(ii) Interview findings

Eight of the interviewees were single and apart from the eldest two in their seventies, the ages ranged from 25 to 39, all considered "old maids." All of the younger women lived in their parent's homes. Some of them wanted to live on their own but this was not feasible since none of the work units had dormitories for single women. Some married women's units had dormitories but they were considered temporary shelter for women from outside Guangzhou and not apartments for single women. Sometimes the temporary dormitories were available to divorced women. Dormitories were described as terribly small, dark and very inconvenient, without washing or cooking facilities.

All women with one exception noted that it was very difficult to get housing from their unit if one was not married. The single woman who had been offered an apartment by her unit was Li Ahong, a 39 year old teacher. She preferred to stay in her separate first floor apartment in her parents' house, since her parents lived abroad and her brother's family lived upstairs. She had the best of both worlds, having privacy yet living close to her family.

In 1984, Communist Party Secretary Hu Yaobang, formally recognized "old maids" as a
societal problem (Honig and Hershatter 1988:83). At that time, Meng Weina, a well-known Guangzhou children's and women's rights activist, was in her late twenties and adamant about remaining single. She felt pressure from her family to marry and formed a club with other single women to discuss living on their own. When Hu Yaobang made his announcement and called on the Party, women's and worker's organizations to help "old maids," she contacted the Federation of Labour Union at her work unit and asked for assistance to develop a hostel for single women. She remembered that when they talked about this "the people said we were crazy," and they were refused support. Eventually the club dismantled, and their dreams of having equal access to housing, clubs for single women and the right to their own residence registration, so as not to be subordinate to their parents, went unfulfilled.

A decade later, many young Guangzhou women still share those dreams. Qian Yingying, at age 26, is single and lives in her parents' 10 square metre home. "I am already so old to be living with my parents and having them look after me. I'm embarrassed about it." "If I had money, I would buy a house. I want to be independent," said Ye Ying, another single woman. She noted that "my brother and his wife treat me well, but I know sometimes old maids are despised by their family members." A young married woman commented that many of her friends were still single and they had to live with their parents even though they were reluctant to do so.

In spite of these comments, the desire to move away from home was not universal. Lin Yi, the women in the smallest house remarked: "I would be unable to live independently. Because I am the youngest child, I have always depended on my parents for everything." Chen Fusheng, a 25 year old ticket seller felt that she could not live without her family, noting: "I certainly
(iii) Gender Analysis

For those women who could envision themselves living independently, housing reforms do offer a small opportunity to realize these ideas. However, the high costs of this alternative make it unreal as a real option for most women. Meng Weina comments:

"It seems to me that the contradictions have been relieved a bit and the idea of single women living independently is not as shocking as it used to be. Now, with other alternatives, women can rent or even buy housing, however, it still seems unfair, because they would have to use all of their salary to pay the high rents."

Considering the prevalence of patrilocal family patterns, a single woman in need will be more likely to be told to stay with her parents when she is not yet married and wait for a husband.

C. Unit Allocated Housing

As mentioned in chapter IV, housing allocated by work units gives priority to those in higher positions and those with seniority. Men are typically higher ranked than women, which essentially denies women access to allocated housing.

(i) Interview Findings

Of the nine women who live in rental housing, seven lived in apartments provided by work units. Of these, only one was a joint tenure arrangement, because both tenants worked at the same unit at the same level of seniority. The assumption that this was a very rare exception was confirmed by the divorced doctor's example. Yan Qinghua was not allocated an apartment on a joint tenure basis, even though she worked at the same work unit as her husband. Because he held a higher position than she did, tenure was awarded to him exclusively. Not surprisingly, the other
six women depended on their husbands or fathers-in-law, who had sole tenure. The other two women rented their apartments from the city, represented by the housing administration office (fangguan ju).

The interviewees' response to the question whether work unit-housing was allocated equitably were usually of two kinds. The first type was epitomized in Ye Ying's comment, a 33 year old single women living with her brother-in-law:

"Our work unit does not have many houses to be allocated. They are either very small or you have to be a leader. In our unit, it does not make a difference whether you are a man or a woman, it's the same difficulty."

The second kind of answer, which was more common, perceived a clear discrimination in the allocation process. This response was usually elicited after the interviewee first asserting that allocation was equal and just depended on a work unit member's position. Chen Jian, for example, who worked in a work unit but had to share a house with her brother-in-law's family, was aware that allocating housing based on seniority indirectly disadvantaged women. She noted, "My unit assigns housing to men first, according to rank and almost all high places are held by men. Maybe a woman gets something when she has a high position or her husband is unemployed."

A confused line of reasoning was put forward by 25 year-old Chen Fusheng. Her example showed to an extreme degree a tendency in many interviews to give the "politically correct" government-line answer first and then to considerably qualify the statement.

"In my work unit, all the cadres have housing. The workers are getting it gradually. Housing opportunities are equal. If housing has been assigned to a husband, the wife won't get housing. Men are considered before women."
Zhang Hua, 37, who lived in an extended family of seven in her husband's uncle's home, was told by her work unit that she was not eligible for housing, because, being taken care of by her husband, she had no housing difficulties. She felt, "If you are a female worker, you have practically no chance to get a house."

(ii) Gender analysis

The interviews showed quite clearly that there is a clear male bias in the allocation procedure of unit-provided housing. The main allocation procedure by units followed a mix of allocation based on seniority and, to a lesser degree on need. The former procedure, although gender-neutral on the surface, puts a woman at a disadvantage in real terms because few women achieve higher positions in their work units due to traditional patriarchal attitudes and the burden of their triple roles. The latter procedure also does not seem equitable.

Allocation procedures used by the housing administration for state owned housing in the community studied were not available when this study was conducted. However, information contained in the excerpts on legal issues involving housing allocation and divorce, suggest that it is more likely for women to co-hold tenure when the landlord is the state and not the husband's unit.

C. Allocated Housing and Divorce

The marriage law of 1950 gave Chinese women the right to divorce. Immediately following the promulgation of the new law, many women took advantage of it to escape from arranged marriages. Soon however, the momentum died, and the introduction of a lengthy mediation process and social pressures, made divorce very difficult to obtain for the next few
decades (Honig and Hershatter 1988:207). In the 1960s, divorce was granted for "legitimate reasons," political differences being considered the most tenable.

In 1980, a new marriage law was passed, which for the first time, recognized "an absence of love and affection" as a primary criterion for dissolving a marriage. Whereas the 1950 law stated that if mediation failed, then a divorce might be granted, the 1980 law said it should be granted (Croll 1983:83). Even when both parties agree to separate, attempts at reconciliation are made to ensure that divorce is the correct solution (Conroy 1987:57). When both parties agree to a divorce after mediation has failed, the neighbourhood marriage registration office issues a divorce certificate if it is certain that neither party is being coerced into the decision. If however, only one party agrees to separation, the case is passed on to the local people's court as a contested divorce. If both parties agree, but there are conflicts over property or child custody, then the case is again passed on to the courts.

How common is divorce in China? Chinese statistics are contradictory and confusing, for they often only record the number of divorces that were settled by the courts, disregarding those resolved by the neighbourhood marriage registration office, which claim to equal the number of court cases. Recent statistics suggest that 900,000 cases were settled by the courts in 1992, quadruple the amount processed in 1980 (Xu 1993:1). In Shanghai, divorce cases accounted for one third of all cases handled by the local courts in 1986 (Honig and Hershatter 1988:210).

The recent increase in divorce can be attributed to several factors. Immediately following the law of 1980, the increase was associated with an awareness of rights; people suddenly became aware that divorce was an option. Another factor is that people had married for dubious reasons.
A study of newlyweds revealed that 60 percent of those surveyed, lacked "real and spontaneous" love for their partners, and had married because they were the right age, had been introduced or felt that one "had to be married sooner or later" (Li 1985:21).

Another reason for the increase in divorce is the breakdown of marriages formed during the Cultural Revolution. During this period, 17 million urban youths were sent to the countryside to "learn from the peasants," in a series of political campaigns. Many of these people faced tremendous difficulties returning to the cities when the campaigns ended, some having spent 15 years in the rural areas. Those who had married rural people saw divorce as a means of moving back to the city, while others saw a quick marriage (and then a divorce) to an urban resident as a hope of regaining an urban registration permit (Honig and Hershatter 1988:210). The latter is an example of a "hasty marriage," which also includes marrying for other material gains such as housing. Hasty marriages are blamed for almost half of all Shanghai divorce applications (Hooper 1985:204).

Tsui Ming (1992) contends that "unlike the situation in the United States, divorce in urban China causes little financial problems because housing, child-care, health insurance, and education are either provided free of charge or subsidized by the government." Her observation is contrary to the findings of this study, which found housing to be the most significant problem faced by women contemplating divorce.

(i) Interview findings

The results of patrilocal living arrangements on divorced women have been discussed earlier in this chapter. Women are particularly disadvantaged when they live in housing which
has been allocated from their husband's unit, particularly when tenure is only granted to the husband.

The example of Yan Qinghua's is a common story among divorced women. Yan was a hospital doctor who had been married to a senior doctor from her hospital for 16 years. He was promoted to be hospital director, and they were assigned a new 70 square metre apartment by their work unit. When she discovered he was having an affair, they divorced but he refused to give up the apartment. She moved out with their two teenage children and returned to her parent's overcrowded house. At the time of the interview, she was living in a 20 square metre pingfang, assigned temporarily while her parents' house was being torn down. Despite many complaints to her work unit to reassign her an appropriate apartment, she was told that their housing had been assigned only in her former husband's name because of his higher position as president of the district hospital and that nothing could be done.

Like Qiu Ling, Yan's husband refused to pay alimony for his children. Yan put her children through high-school and college using her own financial resources. To add insult to injury, her husband took his young girlfriend to live with him in his apartment. Although this was a violation of work unit rules and led to his demotion, he was still allowed to keep his apartment.

Yan's story is interesting in several respects. Firstly, it shows that patrilocal marriages are not restricted to traditional privately owned houses inherited by male offspring. The work unit housing allocation system also favours men and leads to female dependence on male controlled housing which hardly differs from traditional housing arrangements.
Chapter VI Strategic Needs Assessment

(ii) Legal Responses

The courts face a problem in settling property in divorce cases, particularly housing. The problem is that many courts feel that the sole right to dispose of the housing lies with the proprietor, (the state or the collective), and not with the court. They feel that court interference in these matters lacks a legal basis and infringes upon the rights of the owners. There are no laws dealing with this problem, nor any policies or guidelines to assist the legal decision makers. However, recent articles by legal professionals indicate that they are beginning to accept some responsibility for dealing with the housing problem.

A judge at the upper level People's Court of Zhejiang province believes that if the housing problem is not addressed, then people will continue to seek divorces, but will be forced to remain living together afterwards, resulting in "an increase in the number of homicide, rape and similar cases" (Ding 1992:21). Therefore, to retain social stability, he recommends four principles:

1. Court intervention only when an agreement cannot be reached.

2. If the contract existed before the marriage, then the housing should revert to the original tenant. If however, it was entered into after marriage, then both are considered joint tenants. But, if the housing belongs to a work unit, then the housing must go to the party who is the employee of the work unit, no matter when and by whom the contract was formed.

3. To protect the legal rights and interests of women, the courts should give special attention to the problems and needs of them when making their decision.

4. The court should order the party who gets the housing to pay the other party a certain sum in compensation or deduct a certain amount of property share of the favoured party.

There is a considerable amount of disagreement among decision makers. The Jiao District
People's Court in Wuxi notes that dealing with housing in divorce cases causes four areas of trouble. First, the negotiations among the five parties are extremely time consuming and "cost a lot of blood, sweat and tears." Secondly, even if one party is told to move, the actual housing shortage denies them of an alternative, requiring an eviction notice to be served. Third, they feel they cannot refuse a divorce simply because housing is a problem, as it goes against the spirit of the marriage law. Finally, since divorce cases form the bulk of all civil law cases and because so many carry with them housing allocation problems, the system is overloaded and the speed of adjudication is hampered (Li and Li 1992:29).

Thus, the Jiao District People's Court argues that since housing is not a piece of joint property, it is not within the jurisdiction of the divorce court. They insist that the tenancy rights are the responsibility of the couple and the landlords, and the courts should refuse to deal with them when adjudicating divorce cases. This is a logical argument; however, it is strongly biased in favour of men. The rights of women who live in their husband's housing will be neglected following this approach. Other courts see the housing issue differently. In Heilongjiang province, the courts have issued a set of rule to deal with housing and divorce. (see Appendix 5) Also, legal guidelines have been written by two Supreme People's Court judges, whose advice has semi-official status. (see Appendix 6) They recommend that the courts address the housing issue but if, however, housing proves too difficult to settle, the court should adjourn the divorce, settle the housing problem and later resume the case. If no agreement can be reached by the parties or their work units, the court can adjourn the whole case until an out-of-court settlement is reached (Ji 1991:543). This is the solution used by the courts in Shenzhen, where divorce is not granted until
the housing problem is solved (Li Shulin 1992:2). These decisions are potentially harmful because they can protract divorce proceedings indefinitely and thereby undermine the freedom to divorce.

The Heilongjiang rules while noting the importance of the interests of women and children, are also biased in favour of men. The fifth rule, which suggests that a person is satisfactorily housed if they have returned to their parents' home for over six months, will work against women. They are the ones who are forced out, sometimes physically, and with the backlog of civil cases, the six-month period may pass before the situation can be disputed in court. Nonetheless, the suggestions made do reveal that various provincial courts and the supreme court are dealing with housing issues in practice and are attempting to understand the housing needs of divorced women.

(iii) Gender Analysis

This shows that compared to allocated housing, joint ownership is much more beneficial to women in gender terms. It also reveals that husband-tenancy through his unit is the least desirable method of accessing housing from a woman's viewpoint. On the other hand, they also indicate that at some courts, gender awareness pertaining to housing issues is growing. The legal argument that the court can tell the landlord with whom to continue the leasehold after divorce, clearly aims at improving the rights of women. There is a strong tendency to favour pragmatic solutions, not necessarily in line with legal logic. Considering the prevalence of patrilocal family patterns, when a woman divorces she will be told to return to her natal family as opposed to a man in a similar position, who might remarry and be expected to provide housing for his new wife.
6.4 CONCLUSION

This study identifies two primary strategic gender interests for women in Jinhua Street. The interviews reveal that women feel strongly about living in a nuclear family arrangement. Patrilocal residence adversely affects women’s needs to convenient access to the workplace and is generally detrimental to the inner family power balance. If it is necessary to live in an extended family, they would prefer to remain with their own parents, rather than moving in with the family of the husband. The study also noted that although this was the view of the majority of women, there were those who felt that an extended family arrangement did help them to balance their roles, particularly in terms of child care.

The second strategic interest, that of improving the housing allocation system, also was identified by the interviewees as an important step towards dealing with gender discrimination in the Chinese housing system. This issue will be addressed by the housing reform program which will have a particularly positive impact on women who will divorce.

The interview examples of divorced women confirm Caroline Moser’s and others’ view that independent rights to ownership and tenure to housing are crucial factors to achieve gender equity. It is likely that dependence on a husband or father-in-law for housing, be it through the traditional system of private ownership with a patrilineal inheritance pattern or through the work unit-allocation system based on hierarchical position, prevents many women from seriously considering divorce and therefore impairs the freedom of divorce enshrined in the 1950 and 1980 marriage laws.

This chapter has also revealed how Chinese women use the hukou registration system
a strategic manner. Many do not change their registration after marriage, which helps their parents gain access to larger apartments under the housing redevelopment program. It also acts as a form of insurance if the woman should divorce in the future.
7.1 INTRODUCTION

As the preceding chapters have shown, housing redevelopment and reform in Jinhua Street have brought about improvements in the quality of housing on a technical level but have not addressed some of the gender concerns of the old system. Addressing gender needs was not a goal of the Chinese housing reform program, yet substantial improvements have come about as a by-product of improving the quality of housing. These results are comparable to the results of development projects during the early days of the women’s movement when simple construction projects met women’s needs on a practical level but did not address their strategic needs.

7.2 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This research has identified three areas which result in policy recommendations. The first is raising awareness among women in the community. The second requires reform to the housing allocation system to become more flexible and gender equitable. The third is implementing simple housing design changes to address practical and strategic gender needs.

A. Raising Awareness Among Women in the Community

It is important that Chinese women not only are aware of their rights but also know the steps to take when those rights are not being met. Women in Jinhua Street knew very little about the housing reform process. Everyone was aware that the old houses would be torn down and former owners would be allocated a new apartment, but none of the interviewees had a good understanding of when it would happen, how much space they were entitled too, where they would live in the meantime, etc. Chinese planners should develop a better means of dispersing information to educate the public and should provide contacts where the residents can raise their
One resident suggested the lack of awareness was because typically men administer housing related documents. It is important for Chinese planners to ensure that all family members understand the processes which will occur in their neighbourhoods. Ignorance of the reforms and redevelopment opens the door to potential conflicts if plans are misunderstood. Some young women had actually delayed marriage until they could help their parents qualify for an extra 5 metres of space, yet were unsure that this drastic measure was necessary. Many people who had built lofts illegally were yet to discover that this space might not be included in their space calculation for the new apartments. Such blind faith in the government does not help serve the interests of many of these women. Those who know their rights are more able to fight for them.

The women also required further knowledge in other areas. Very few knew where they could gain access to legal advice in case it was necessary. When facing divorce many women are afraid to take the case to court and are convinced to settle the divorce "amicably" outside the court system. The research has shown that women are less likely to receive a favourable settlement outside of court. Within the legal system, there is evidence that judges are trying to provide fair treatment for women.

The media attention focused on the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women should have resulted in a better understanding on women's rights. This, combined with the new women's law of 1992 should empower women by educating them to understand their legal rights. It is important that Chinese women have an understanding of their rights deeper than just the ability to quote a few slogans.
B. Improving Allocation System

The market oriented housing policy helps women who are financially secure however it also leads to the feminization of poverty, having negative effects on the divorced, elderly and single women. Help for these groups is not possible without access to public funds such as credit programs or subsidized purchases. Of course, the reforms are not being instituted on a purely market system but the existing programs to subsidize the purchase of unit-owned housing benefits those who already have housing. The study showed that many women in difficult situations were not able to afford even a subsidized house.

Therefore, the policy recommendation is to reform the housing allocation system to make it more gender equitable. The recommendation is to lower the importance of the seniority and job rank of the employee and allocate housing simply on the basis of need. Special consideration should be given to divorced women with children, young married couples and older single women. If a unit has an ample supply of housing, rather that giving senior level employees access to a second or even a third apartment, single employees should have the right to room together.

Another recommended change to the allocation system is to ensure that both husband and wife are jointly registered as residents, even in unit-owned housing. This acts in the woman's favour in decision-making regarding the housing. More importantly, it acts as insurance in case of divorce.

The final recommendation to the allocation system is to be flexible to accommodate diversity in family size. The housing reform system allocates new housing based on the family size. While this helps to preserve the existing family structure which is desired in some families,
it does not allow for extended family to break down into smaller units which is equally desired by other families. In some cases, the younger members of the family prefer to branch out on their own, however the policy forces them to retain the existing structure. The new policy should recognize that preferences are different and that choices should be available to create a mixture of family size and housing type. The policy should help facilitate nuclear families which is the most preferred option.

C. Design Improvements

Newly designed buildings, primarily high rise apartments with private kitchens and toilets are desired by most women but there are improvements in design which can still be made. The recommended policy is to ensure that elevators are built in high rise apartments. This will improves access for its residents and will reduce the isolation experienced by elderly residents living on the upper floors. It also enables elderly parents and the handicapped to visit friends and family who live on the higher floors. Given China's aging population it is important to consider issues such wheelchair access.

-Chinese policy makers should also recognize growing concerns with safety. As traditional neighbourhoods break down, women will feel less safe in the community. Design improvements to recognize these safety concerns should be implemented. Security devices such as guards, locks or gates will make the neighbourhood safer.

The above policy recommendations will help to eliminate gender inequities in the Chinese housing system. The following section discusses some possibilities for action which will contribute to realizing these policy changes. The actions are divided into two groups, those which must come
7.3 POSSIBILITIES FOR INTERNAL ACTION

As with any radical shift in policy, the major push for change must come from within. The following suggested activities are actions that the Chinese government could take to improve the situation of women and housing in China.

A. Strengthen Women's Organizations

The All China Women's Federation (ACWF) is the national body which represents women's interests. At the beginning of economic reforms in the early 1980s, it primarily organized women in government sponsored political campaigns rather than represent the interests of women to the government. In Jinhua Street few women knew about the work of the ACWF and those that did say that it was not an organization they would go for assistance. Appendix 7 contains a translation of a letter from a Guangzhou women begging for assistance in finding housing. The official response was that the ACWF could not assist. The main finding of the research was that this was not an organization which the women trusted as it was perceived as an extended arm of the government.

However, the ACWF has made attempts to make itself more relevant to urban Chinese women. In the mid-1980s they opened legal counselling offices to advise women suffering from abuse and those worried about property and child-support after divorce. These actions are appropriate and should be encouraged, supported and expanded. The lack of awareness of these services in the research findings shows that there is much work still to be done.
Chapter VII Policy Implications and Conclusion

The second type of women's organization is independent women's groups. While in 1992 there were few independent groups, anecdotal evidence suggests that more groups are forming to address women's needs. Wang Meina established a group in Guangzhou in the 1980s to address the housing needs of single women without much success and little recognition. It will continue to be difficult for independent groups to become established as the government is keen on suppressing special interest groups outside the framework of official mass organizations. Efforts to set up independent unions and other independent worker groups have been criticized as being counter-revolutionary.

Some universities are developing women's studies programs and studying the political action taken by women in other countries. This has the potential to develop future leaders of women's groups. Women's studies programs will foster research into gender issues in China and will confront gender discrimination in Chinese society.

B. Allocation Methods

The Chinese are already taking action to solve some of the social inequity in regard to housing. The work of the Office of Difficulty-Surmounting Housing, giving priority to those living in the worst conditions is to be commended. However, it is necessary to add divorced women and older women to this category if they are in need of housing, although it will likely be very difficult to convince work units to do so. It is unlikely that internal changes will be made to address these issues. Changes should also be made to reduce the importance of seniority and job rank, however, since it is the senior officials who decide who receives housing, it is also unlikely that this reform action will be taken. This is primarily due to the reasons discussed in the previous
Chapter VII Policy Implications and Conclusion

sections, that women's groups do not have a strong voice and the government system is immobile.

C. Education and Training

The final potential action within China is to improve planning education and the awareness of leaders to address gender issues in housing and other sectors. The government should ask the ACWF to develop gender sensitivity training for leaders. More planners and cadres should be sent abroad to be exposed to housing programs in other countries.

D. Strengthen the Judicial System and Rule of Law

The judicial system should be strengthened to give judges better guidelines on how to rule on housing disputes. The system must be reformed in order to exclude arbitrariness in legal judgements. It is important that the public believe in the authority of the law, trust the legal system and its effectiveness. Judges should be trained also in gender issues. The government should be more proactive to ensure that more women become judges.

7.4 POSSIBILITIES FOR EXTERNAL ACTIONS

Other countries also have a role to play in improving the situation of Chinese women and housing. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the West must not decree changes to China.

A. Development Assistance

All urban development cooperation projects should ensure that gender issues are taken into consideration in both project design, content and participation. All data gathered must be disaggregated to expose gender inequalities.
Chapter VII Policy Implications and Conclusion

B. Financing

If development projects come with international financing, a certain percentage of the funds should be set aside for housing loans to women. As this study has shown, housing reforms favour those with money. Simply the increase of available units on the open market creates the opportunity for groups of young people to purchase housing, but again, this option is only available to those people with higher salaries. The combination of low income and high prices make it evident, that housing reform cannot be carried out on basis of gender equity without state subsidies to women in need. A credit fund should be set up to address the housing needs of divorced and single women.

C. Training of Planners and Leaders

Training programs that are developed for Chinese leaders and planners should include gender issues in the program content. Women should be equally represented in the training. The trainees should be exposed to women's groups, non-government organizations and shown how these groups work with the government to solve housing problems for women.

D. Monitoring of China's Own Commitments to the Rights of Women.

Foreign countries and donor organizations should monitor closely China's commitments to the rights of women. When the commitments are not being met, China should be diplomatically encouraged to do so.

7.5 CONCLUSION

The study has revealed that housing redevelopment gives a substantial improvement to the
housing situation for women in Jinhua Street. It addresses many of the practical gender needs such as providing more space and improving the environmental quality of the neighbourhood. There are some serious design flaws, such as lack of elevators, which should be addressed. The redevelopment program does not address the practical need of providing a safe community.

The reform program does not address any practical needs but it does help with strategic gender needs. The reforms will benefit married women when they jointly own their housing, but it will take a number of years before most families can afford to participate. Due to housing reforms, more couples will eventually live in privately owned apartments, and this bodes well for women who divorce in the future. At that time, housing will be considered joint property and they will be given due consideration by the legal system.

The case study showed that housing reform and redevelopment is considered necessary and is desired by most residents. The desire to preserve the old housing was limited as all residents wanted larger and cleaner apartments. The only residents who did not want to move to high level housing were those who had renovated the old housing. The residents of new housing were happy and glad that they had moved. Allocation process still continue in many work units until the place of work is eventually divorced from housing. In all likelihood, this process will continue to discriminate against women although in a hidden and unrecognized way.

In conclusion, the male bias in the Chinese housing system is still strong, but some improvements are visible. The outlook therefore for women in China is very mixed. The future depends on the ability of the Chinese government to reform itself.
REFERENCES


References


Xu, Zhenliang. 1991. Directions and objectives of the housing system. Wenhuibao (Shanghai), Jan. 5:3.


INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

FAMILY

1. Family size and composition of Hukou

2. Children / Grandchildren living elsewhere (did they ever live here?)

3. Parents (Where does your mother live? father? mother-in-law?, How long does it take to visit her?, How often do you visit her? When did you see her last?, Is she able to visit you?)

4. Family member's jobs, household income

5. Woman's life history (birthplace, when married, when moved to Guangzhou, when retired)

HOUSING

1. After you were married, in what kind of housing did you live?

2. After registering your marriage, did you immediately live together? What were the reasons for this period?

3. Have you had to live separately from your husband since then?

4. Describe to me the last housing in which you lived. How did it impact you? Was it convenient?

5. Present housing (How you received this housing? - from your danwei, husbands, parents, other, How long have you lived here? Why did you choose this place? What other choices did you have? Rent. How is it different from your previous housing?)

IMPRESSIONS

1. What do you like best about living here?

2. What do you dislike about living here?

3. Do you know your neighbours? Do you have a good relationship with them?

4. What do you do with your leisure time?
5. How does your housing impact other aspects of your life?

6. Do you feel that women are given equal housing opportunities as men? If no, how can this be resolved?

7. Do / did you have any conflicts with your husband or other family members regarding this housing?

HOME AND WORK

1. How long does it take you to go to work/ husband? What form of transportation do you use?

2. What time do you usually go to work and come home?

3. Have you or your husband changed jobs since living here? If you wanted to change jobs how would this affect your housing?

CHILD CARE

1. Where do your children attend school or nursery school? How and why did you choose this? What would you prefer?

2. Who looks/ed after your children during the day when they were very young? What would you prefer? yourself, granny, maid, other

WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

1. Are there any organizations which help people who have troubles with their housing?

2. Do you / did you belong to any women's organizations?

HOUSING REFORMS

1. Will your family participate in the housing reforms of Jinhua Street? How will they impact you? Have you considered buying your housing? Do you think that housing reforms will address any of the housing problems that women have?

2. If you had a choice to live anywhere, in any kind of housing, in what and where would you live?
Appendix 2

HOUSING CONDITIONS CHECKLIST

Appliances
Refrigerator
Television
Fan / Air Conditioning
Stereo / CD Player / VCR
Washing machine
Gas Cooker
Electric Shower

Furniture
Sofa
Chairs
Bureaus
Beds

Room Conditions
Attic
Ceiling height
Floor area
Kitchen area
Location of eating area
Quality of lighting

Outside conditions
Noise
Pollution
Water Source - cooking
- washing
- drinking
Toilet
Garbage disposal
Type of Housing

1. ELIGIBILITY
The applicant must have worked in the university since before December 31, 1985, have an official residential registration in the city of Shanghai, and must be currently living in conditions below the standard of less than four square metres per person.

2. HOUSING AREA POINTS FORMULA
Basic needs + Job rank + Additional points
(one point equals one square metre)

A. Basic needs
Five square metres per family member for the first four members, the fifth member is allotted three square metres, the sixth allotted two square metres, the seventh one square metre, while the eighth and above member does not receive extra space.

B. Job rank (square metres)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITION</th>
<th>&lt; 10 years</th>
<th>10-14 years</th>
<th>15-19 years</th>
<th>20-24 years</th>
<th>25-29 years</th>
<th>&gt; 30 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry-level professional</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-level Professional 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-level Professional 2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice High-level Professional 1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice High-level Professional 2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-level Professional</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-level Administrator</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Additional points
A family in compliance with the single child policy will receive five extra square metres as an incentive; a family with male and female children over age 16 will receive one extra square metre;
people returned from overseas will receive two extra square metres per family.

3. PRIORITY POINTS

Seniority I + Seniority II + Job Rank + Additional Points

A. **Seniority I**
   - Years of working since 1949, one point for each year

B. **Seniority I**
   - Years of working in the university, one point for each year

C. **Additional points**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELIGIBILITY</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National/City outstanding honour winner</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three generations share one room or living area per capita &lt; 3 square metres</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revolutionary martyr's family or university outstanding service winner</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired Party/administration leader or returned overseas Chinese</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver, cook, facility operator or cleaner</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Housing situation &lt; 10 square metres</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20 square metres</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-30 square metres</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 30 square metres</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GUANGZHOU HOUSING REFORM POLICY (August 16, 1989)

According to the State Council’s housing reform policy presented to the provincial government, a municipal housing policy for the City of Guangzhou is hereby issued. The policy has three main objectives:

1. To change the low rent - hidden subsidy welfare housing allocation system for which the city is presently responsible.
2. To increase housing development in order to form a rational consumption and sound productive structure.
3. To encourage urban redevelopment, the real estate industry and the construction and materials industry.

The general policy is to:
A. Commercialize housing first.
B. Increase rent in stages.
C. Provide subsidies relevant to rent increases.
D. Establish a new allocation method for new housing.

I. Encourage public housing privatization.

All public housing should be sold to employees (except housing defined as not to be sold by the municipal government). Public housing includes housing managed by both work units and the various housing management bureaus.

When selling public housing, the following should be kept in consideration:
1. Reasonable property evaluation and fair pricing. All public housing sold to employees should be sold at standard public prices. In terms of new housing, the price should cover the construction costs, including building, land assembly and relocation costs. In terms of the old housing stock, the price should be reduced on the basis of the age of the building, the environment, conditions, orientation, number of stories, etc. The reference base for the price of old housing is the price that was used to appraise new housing in the previous year. The price should be decided by organizations like the housing management bureau, housing appraisal offices and other relevant organizations.

2. The price of housing is calculated according to the indoor floor area which is determined from the after construction plans, if such drawings exist. Otherwise, measurements will be required. Shared space in the building is to be distributed according to indoor floor areas.
3. Residents who purchase their current housing should pay less for land assembly charges and relocation costs. Employees who want to purchase their current public housing should receive a discount if their floor area is under the official standard (set by policy in 1983). If the floor area exceeds the standard, and the space cannot be returned or sub-divided into smaller units, residents will be allowed to exceed the standard by five metres without penalty. If greater than five metres, no discount will be provided.

4. A preferential pricing policy will be applied to those who complete payments within one year. The monthly housing subsidy will not be granted during the payment period. In order to encourage early payments, a 20 percent discount will be applied to those whose floor area is lower than the standard or within the five metre excess limit. The preferential pricing policy will be reduced by five percent each year as long as payments are forthcoming.

5. According to the provincial policy, those below the standard floor area should receive a .3 percent discount per year of employment.

6. Work units who sell new housing to employees are exempt from construction taxes and profit taxes. Employees will receive a free ownership certificate, will be exempt from property taxes, land use taxes, and processing fees will be reduced by 50 percent.

7. Minimum price controls will be established. A minimum price of 180 yuan per square metre will be applied to brick and concrete structures built in 1979. Concrete structures will be cost 198 yuan per sqm. A one percent increase per year will be applied to those buildings constructed in 1980 or later. Buildings constructed before 1978 will receive a one percent discount per year, up to a maximum discount of 30 percent. If the quality of the building, environment and interior decoration is high, no matter when constructed, the minimum price will not go below 180 yuan per sqm.

8. Two payments schemes will be offered, instalments or lump sum payments. Work units can offer another 25 percent discount to those who pay in a lump payment. If payment is applied according to the instalment scheme, the first payment should not be less than 20 percent of the total price. If the first payment exceeds 20 percent, a three percent discount will be applied to every 10 percent payment beyond that. The total payment period should not exceed 15 years. Interest will be applied at the existing rate to those payments made within a five year period. A 10 year repayment scheme will have an annual fixed rate of interest. A 15 year repayment scheme will have a fixed rate of interest for three year periods. When
the final payment is calculated, the owner, work unit and financial organizations must agree.

9. A property insurance policy at preferential rates will be established to protect the interest of home buyers.

10. An after sale property maintenance policy will be established. If natural causes are responsible for damages to shared areas of housing, and are professionally identified, the original owner (the work unit or housing management bureau) will be responsible for repairs within three years. Damage to private sections and the maintenance of the repaired shared areas will be the responsibility of the individual households.

11. Each employees family can receive only one opportunity to benefit from the preferential pricing policy. People who are not public employees or who are retired will not be allowed to purchase housing under this policy. Those who both own private housing and rent public housing, will be ineligible to purchase the public housing if the quality of the private one reaches the standard.

12. Employees who purchase public housing according to this policy can resell the property at market prices five years after the final payment is made. The housing can then be sold to either the original work unit or to local housing management bureaus. If these two groups are not willing to purchase the property, sales on the open market will be permitted. A 20 percent payment from the actual profit from this sale must be made to the original owner (work unit). If the property is sold within five years, then the property can only be sold at the original price back to the original owner or the local housing management bureaus.

13. Extra space charges will be laid. A surcharge of 20 percent will be applied to housing which exceeds the standard by 5-15 sqm. A surcharge of 60 percent will be applied to housing which exceeds the standard by 15-25 sqm. A surcharge of 100 percent will be applied to housing which exceeds the standard by 25-35 sqm. Full market prices will be applied to housing in excess of 35 square metres.

II. Gradual changes in the low rent reform policy.

1. A new standard rent will be applied at the beginning of 1990. If rents for state or collective owned public housing are below the standard, they must be adjusted. Rental subsidies should be carried out according to the city standard. Tenants will receive a 40% rental subsidy from their work unit as long as they do not exceed the standard floor area. Housing with a floor area in excess of the standard will
Appendix 4

be charged at the new rate of 1.61 yuan per sqm, without subsidies. When this policy is implemented, all previous subsidy programs will become void. Public employees who rent private housing, will receive subsidies as mentioned above if the rent is in accordance with the private housing rental structure.

2. By 1991, the rent for public housing should be increased according to the increase in the standard of living. Guangzhou should increase rents so that within a few years, rent will be 1.61 yuan per sqm without subsidies or until rent subsidies are discontinued. Then, the rental housing system will have been transformed into a commercial housing system. Plans are to increase rent by 0.8 yuan each month starting in 1991. The rent will be subsidized and the new rental policy will be publicized when necessary.

III. A new allocation system for changes in housing (relocation).

The new rental policy applies to housing from either work units or the housing management bureaus. It also applies to those who have increased their floor area, those who have moved to new housing blocks or simply to another flat.

The policy is as follows:

1. Buy first then rent. The majority of the housing stock should be sold. The remainder should be rented to those who are not financially ready or able to purchase.

2. Rental deposit policy. New rent should be no less than 20 yuan per year and exceeded floor area multiplied. Some households may pay their rent in an annual payment. The interest earned on this may be used by the work unit to maintain, manage and repair housing. When the household ceases to rent the house, the money paid will be returned without interest. Those who choose to purchase their housing may use the annual rent payment towards the down payment. Only those households whose average income is lower than the Guangzhou yearly average will have the right to make monthly payments, if their floor area is within the standard. If their area exceeds the standard then the money for the excess area must be paid for in an annual payment.

3. Additional rent for excess floor area. If the floor area exceeds the provincial standard, the rent should be doubled to 3.22 for the excess area before the rent subsidy is calculated.

4. After employees purchase public housing, it does not matter how they have given up the old housing or the right to use it, the work unit should be no longer
responsible for new public housing. The work unit should no longer be responsible for providing public housing to those whose floor area is reduced due to relocation, even if the move creates housing difficulties.

In the future, the public housing stock should be sold to employees at subsidized rates. The costs should be controlled by the building standard. The design of the homes should be practical and low cost. Some housing can be built and sold without interior divided walls to reduce the building costs.

IV. Easing the housing shortage.

Easing the housing shortage and improving the living conditions and standards for employees is one of the most important aspects of housing reform. A target of the reform is to reach a "comfortable standard" by the end of the century. Each level of government and every work unit should put improving housing conditions at the top of their agenda. Various financial channels should be developed to provide better access to funds. Housing reform should provide housing of a range of quality to meet the different needs of different people, along with improving the living standard for everyone.

Housing improvement is a long term task that is a major component of the urban housing system reforms. The necessary institutions of housing reform should be permanently established to oversee coordinated planning and housing development. In the meantime, the levels of government should provide some preferential policies to support these activities.

As soon as the problem of "difficulty households" (those with less than two sqm per person - defined in 1985 Guangzhou Housing Census) is solved, further research and studies will be required to understand the situation of unallocated households and overcrowded households. This understanding will assist in the development of future policies.

In the future, low income "difficulty households" should get priority to purchase housing built either by government funds or funds collected by work units. Some financial organizations should be set up to guarantee the improvement of the housing poor.

V. Every level of government, including work units, should fund housing.

The financing of housing reforms requires an efficient use of funds. The money should be devoted to housing production, trade and management, and maintenance. Funds should be utilized together to form a reliable resource. The city, district or county should be involved to direct the cash flow and fund raising. The organizations responsible for raising funds at all levels should be organized in a logical way. Housing funds at different levels should be self-sustained in terms of management and cash flow to reach an equilibrium.
The main channels of housing funds for work units include:

1. The rent should cover the costs of maintenance and major repairs for older buildings.
2. 10 percent of the profit made from housing development should be put aside for use towards future housing development. A portion of the profits earned from welfare programs and awards should also be devoted to future housing development.
3. The sale of public housing.
4. Rental charges.
5. A portion of the profit made in excess of expected profit should go to the housing funds.

The main channels of housing funds for district level or company association level include:

1. Excess profit made from rental increases (after covering the subsidy payments)
2. Company associations should arrange their own housing funds.

The rent earned from property belonging to the housing management bureaus should be limited to use for repairs, run-down housing redevelopment and low cost housing development.

The main channels of housing funds for the municipal level include:

1. City annual budget
2. Increase in property tax after reforms
3. The portion of the taxes retained by the city from housing construction (remainder go the province).
4. Work units will give five percent of their profit to the city, earned from the sales of housing stock
5. Other channels like housing development bonds.

At the county level, each county authority should establish a housing foundation within each level. Any state work unit within the city, military organizations and provincial organizations should establish a housing foundation.

While the housing foundations are being set up, financial organizations should continue to invest money in housing development. They should also focus on the housing problems of the disadvantaged groups rather than improving the conditions of those who are already adequately housed.
The housing foundation should be specially designed to support housing reforms and housing production. Therefore, those funds should be limited to this use so that the related financial organizations are required to report their financial situation to higher authorities. A specific policy will examine these aspects in more detail.

Before a special real estate bank is set up, an appointed bank will establish a branch office to make loans available for real estate development. This branch will also look after funds for housing production maintenance, cash flow and keeping budgets balanced. The nature of this branch office is that it will be financially independent and will therefore have the authority to organize business, profits and policies. When the conditions are ready, this branch should start to offer low interest housing loans.

VI. Guangzhou areas involved in housing reforms.

Any state, provincial, city, or district institution, military branch, work units and people located within the city in the following eight districts: Dongshan, Haizhu, Liwan, Yuexiu, Baiyun, Tianhe, Huangpu, and Fengcun. No matter the level of organization, government branch or type of ownership, all will abide with the new policy.

VII. Improving housing reform management.

Housing reform is a major component of the entire economic reforms. It is a very complicated process which requires a good policy. Housing reforms will have a wide impact and will have to overcome many difficulties. Housing reform is bound to challenge conventional concepts that have been well engrained over the last few decades. It involves a lot of thought and care, so all levels of governments, branches and work units should organize an education campaign and develop effective management methods. Housing reform agencies at all levels should be very professional. There should be certain cadres responsible for those organizations with the necessary professionals to carry out the policy. In the process of implementing the policy, the focus should be on easing the housing shortage and establishing an effective housing foundation. This process should be widely publicized and the voices of employees should be heard. New corruption in housing reform should be prevented. Work units should issue their own detailed policies so that the general ideas of this policy are kept intact. Each organization which carries out the actual work should meticulously check the implementation process. Inspection teams, and housing reform institutions should be available to hear the public's opinions and criticism to effectively correct mistakes and stamp out corruption.

Counties belonging to the city should issue their own policies according to their own situations, following the guidelines of the city policy. These policies should be submitted to the city for approval before implementation.
HEILONGJIANG COURT DIVORCE AND HOUSING RULES

1. The dispute on housing allocation does in general not constitute a case separate from the divorce case; it is therefore adjudicated alongside with the divorce.

2. When making a decision, the interests of women and children have to be taken into account, furthermore the interests of the "unguilty parties," those of invalids and those with economic difficulties.

3. When dealing with these disputes, the courts can separate the "right of tenancy" (or leasehold) from the "right of use." When it is found that both parties are tenants, the court allocates the housing according to principles set out under no.2. The court should not pay much attention as to whose name the leaseholds are registered, instead, they have to examine the real circumstances.

Both parties are joint tenants under the following circumstances:

   a. When one party has been the sole tenant before marriage, the parties will be considered joint tenants after five years of marriage.

   b. Housing has been granted to only one party by the work unit or housing administration bureau after marriage.

   c. The parties have moved to a new home during the marriage.

   d. Both parties are members of the same work unit and have been provided housing by it.

4. When it is found that only one party is the tenant (i.e. when 3a-d do not apply) the courts can allocate the other party the "right of use" on a temporary basis. In their ruling, the courts have to determine the duration, conditions and the fee of this "use."

5. Under the following conditions, the party involved will be considered to have sufficient housing (i.e. the other party gets the housing):

   a. The party has voluntarily moved back to her or his parents home and has lived there for over six months.

   b. The party has lived in a work unit provided or other dormitory for over three months.

   c. The party's work unit provides alternative housing.
Appendix 5

d. The party has lived in empty housing provided by friends or relatives for over two years.

6. When the party which has to find alternative housing has difficulties to do so, the other party can be ordered to pay post-marriage support of up to 50 yuan per month.

7. If the parties live in housing rented by their parents, the parents remain entitled to dispose of the housing after the divorce of the children.

8. If the parties have lived in their parent's housing for over two years, the party which has to move out (i.e. the son/daughter-in-law) can be allowed to stay temporarily if the housing in question is relatively spacious.

9. When the housing has been built or bought jointly by the two work units of the parties, they will be considered joint tenants.

SELECTIONS ON DIVORCE AND HOUSING SETTLEMENT SUGGESTIONS BY TWO
SUPREME PEOPLE'S COURT JUDGES

A difference has to be made between privately owned housing, housing rented from private landlords and housing rented from public landlords (work unit and housing administration bureau).

1. When making a decision, the interests of women and children have to be taken into account, furthermore the interests of the "guilty parties," those of invalids and those with economic difficulties.

2. Jointly owned housing is dealt with according to Article 13 and 31 of the Marriage Law (Article 13: All property acquired during marriage is joint property unless otherwise agreed upon; Article 31: Joint property is divided on the basis of a couple’s agreement, the court will decide if no agreement can be reached). When the jointly owned house cannot be divided, allocation will take place according to no. 1.

3. When the house is the sole property of one party, the other party can be allocated the housing until remarriage or moving to alternative housing under the condition of Article 33 of the Marriage Law. (Article 33: support of divorced spouse in economic difficulties)

7. Housing owned by one party before marriage will be considered joint property after ten years of marriage if they have jointly used and managed the housing during this period. Under special circumstances, this period can be shortened (i.e. if the other party has invested a lot of money in the house).

12. When the housing has been rented by one party from a private landlord before marriage, that party gets precedence. The parties will be considered joint tenants if the housing has been rented after marriage, no matter under whose name the lease has been granted.

17. When there is a dispute on the allocation of housing among a couple seeking divorce, the parties have to try to find a solution with the work unit or the housing administration bureau first. When this fails, they can go to court. The court can adjudicate on the leasehold after negotiating the dispute with all parties and after consultation with the housing authorities.

18. When the housing has been provided by the work unit of one of the parties, the party will get tenancy priority, no matter whether allocated before or after marriage. When the housing has been obtained from the housing administration bureau by one party before the marriage, that party will be given precedence. If the housing has been obtained by the housing administration bureau after marriage, both parties have equal rights, no matter who is the formal tenant.

20. If the parties live in housing rented by their parents, the parents remain entitled to dispose of
the housing after the divorce of the children.

21. If the couple has been moved due to the demolition of old housing, both parties enjoy equal tenancy rights after moving, no matter what the situation has been before.

26. If one of the parties has sold his or her private housing in order to support the family, the parties enjoy equal tenancy rights even if the other party has been the sole tenant of public housing before marriage.

29. If it is found that one party gets tenancy priority, in general, the court should not separate the "right of use" from the lease and allow the other party to use the housing. Only under special circumstances and if there is no other solution, this can be done for a maximum period of two years. The party enjoying this right has to pay the other party a fee (different from above rules). If, during this period the party enjoying tenancy priority remarries, it cannot require the eviction of the party enjoying the right of use unless there is an agreement between the parties.

30. If it is found that both parties have equal tenancy rights, a decision will be made according to the following priority list:

a. the needier party
b. (if both parties have the same difficulties) the party who has custody of the children
c. (if both have custody of the children) the party that is not guilty; one party is considered guilty when there is a "third person" involved, when they have abused the other party or wilfully caused the disruption of the marriage.

31. The above mentioned rules are to be applied by analogy to unmarried couples living together.

32. If the solution of the housing problems proves to be difficult, the courts can adjourn the divorce, first settle the housing problem and then resume the divorce case.

33. If no agreement can be reached by the parties and the work units, the courts can adjourn the whole case until the parties have found a solution out of court.

34. These rules are not to be applied narrowly. Every case is different and under concrete circumstances, different solutions might be appropriate.

A LETTER TO THE GUANGZHOU WOMEN'S FEDERATION

Dear comrades,

How are you? I work at the Guangzhou Commercial Bank as a bank teller. I am a man, age 32. I started working in the above-mentioned bank in August 1988. I had registered for marriage with my lover several years ago, but we could not marry [hold a wedding banquet] because we had no housing. My lover is now 31 years of age. She is a worker in an electronics manufacturing factory. Her work unit is concerned about our housing situation but is unable to help us as they have a housing shortage. Priorities are given to those couples who both work for the unit and to the male workers. We think this arrangement is reasonable and understandable. My lover has a large family which includes her parents, brothers, sister-in-law, and nephews. The whole family is crowded into 40 square metres. Therefore, they cannot give us any help, even though they sympathize with us. In addition, as my parents do not live in Guangzhou, I don't have any housing in the city. The work unit for which I work also has a housing shortage. Even older workers who have worked there for many years cannot be properly housed, so I understand why I cannot be allocated a unit. At present, I am living temporarily in various friends' homes. I know my lack of accommodation brings much trouble to my friends.

The more crucial point is that we are both "old youths" now. We wonder when we can manage to get a home of our own. We are particularly worried about the possible bad consequences of delayed marriage on bearing children in the future. I am sure you will understand this difficulty.

Recently, the local government announced that they will assist those families living in an area of less than two square metres. But for a person like me who is living in an area of zero square metres, who will help me?

At present, we are really desperate. We appeal to your respectful agency for help. We really hope that you will give a helping hand so that we can eventually end our separation. Thank-you very much!

*Recommendation remark of the Women's Federation:
Our agency is not able to help this case. Filed.