

## Interpretation of Urban New-type Public Spaces: An Anthropological Case Study of Fang Suo in Guangzhou

Sun Jiuxia and Wang Xueji\*

*School of Tourism Management, Sun Yat-sen University, 329 Building, 135 Xingangxi Road,  
Guangzhou, 510275, P.R. China*

**KEYWORDS** Consumption Space. Cultural Space. Fang Suo Commune. Leisure Space. Multiple Interactions

**ABSTRACT** As an urban new-type public space, Fang Suo Commune has become an important place for cultural, leisure and consumption activities of urban residents in the context of mass leisure and postmodern consumption. The existence and development of Fang Suo as a unique space are worthy of in-depth analysis given the fact that physical bookstores are declining. This article interprets the unique combination of spaces of Fang Suo, and analyzes the structure of the space itself, features of different consumer groups and their interactions with the space through observation and interview from an anthropological perspective. It has been found that Fang Suo has the multiple attributes of a cultural space, consumption space and leisure space for its multimode fusion and spatial design, and the spatial consumption behavior of people is making the boundary of space form vague while shaping space form. The social significance shown in space consumption needs further exploration.

### INTRODUCTION

With the integration of mass leisure and postmodern consumption, people's lifestyle, consumption concept and social relations are undergoing great change while leisure and consumption are an increasingly important part of people's social life (Shen 2016). Leisure and consumption are often inseparable (Xu 2001). Diversified urban public spaces provide places for people's leisure, consumption, and social networking (Stobart et al. 2007). As socially constructed places of practice (Lian 2003), emerging new public spaces are often creating and communicating new lifestyles or cultural consumption trends (Kung-Hung 2004). Therefore, research on public spaces and human beings practices can often provide certain insights into the social reality and the research results often can be applied into the process of the public policymaking.

As a public cultural space, the bookstore plays an important role in urban culture and leisure, and is a symbol of urban culture and taste of life (Zhou 2012). Currently, physical bookstores are declining in cities, but a number of new-type independent bookstores with a unique style and "idealist color" are still playing a role in urban cultural and leisure life. These indepen-

dent bookstores are often "more than bookstores", and their functional diversity caters for people's multilayer needs for leisure experiences and cultural products in this age of postmodern consumption. As the subject matter of this article, Fang Suo Commune ("Fang Suo" for short) is a typical example. Located at TaiKoo Hui, one of the highest-end commercial complexes in Guangzhou City, Fang Suo integrates bookselling, aesthetic life, coffee, exhibition and apparel, and is defined by the founder as a "space shared by cultural creators". It has drawn extensive attention since its opening, and has now become a "brand of space" that is attracting more and more people. Corresponding to Fang Suo's multimode operations, its consumer activities are also diversified. For a "bookstore" as a new-type urban cultural and leisure space, functions like coffee and exhibition make the space more complex. Currently, academic studies on bookstores focus on the business mode of bookstores itself, and rarely analyze them from the perspective of space. Some studies position Fang Suo as a cultural micro-space, and discuss the construction of cultural space, and consumer perceptions and identification in official discourse (Xie et al. 2014). This article attempts to restore the multiple attributes of the Fang Suo space.

The initial understanding of space by people originated from sensory perceptions of its location (Zhang 2007), and things must be attached

\*Address for correspondence:  
Fax: +86 020 84113621  
E-mail: wxji@mail2.sysu.edu.cn

to space to exist (Zhang 2010). The Marxist outlook on space looks at the social attribute of space while recognizing its natural attribute (Liu 1998). In the 1970s, with the cultural turn of geography (Tang 2005; Sun et al. 2014) and the spatial turn of sociology (He 2006), the social nature of space has been valued by scholars gradually. Space is no longer an “empty” area, but has become a social being (Li 1987). Space is the source of social behavior and also a product of social relations (Ling et al. 2015.). Harvey (1989) also thinks that the definition of space has to be realized through social practice. Space studies have acknowledged that space is a whole of people-space interactions (Gerhard 2016), where people are the subject of space activities, while space is the result of and in turn shapes people’s behavior (Zhang 2005). Accordingly, space design is the design of people’s behavior (Souma et al. 1986).

Space is of social nature, as “space is filled up with social relations” (Bao 2003). People in a space form an overall image of the space through perceptions and experiences in the space, and thereby produce mental or spiritual meanings. The social significance carried by a space depends greatly on feelings of its users (Bao 2006). Therefore, people and their practices should not be ignored in the interpretation of space. With the rise of urban anthropology, anthropologists’ care for rural areas is extending gradually to numerous urban phenomena. An anthropological perspective has natural advantages in interpreting the Fang Suo space on a microscopic level, especially for urban new-type public spaces like Fang Suo and the spatial behavior of its consumer population (Tian et al. 2015).

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Subjects

Fang Suo has a unique geographic location on the basement floor of TaiKoo Hui in the Tianhe Central Business District, Guangzhou. TaiKoo Hui is a world-class premium development integrating leisure, entertainment, commerce and cultural appreciation, designed by the world-famous architectural firm Arquitectonica (ARQ) and managed by Swire Properties. The whole project consists of a large shopping mall, two Class A office buildings, and Guangzhou’s first Manda-

rin Oriental hotel. Fang Suo is the first multifunctional bookstore running in a premium shopping mall in Mainland China.

Fang Suo has a gross floor area of 1,800 m<sup>2</sup>, including a bookstore (500 m<sup>2</sup>), an aesthetic life zone for showing and selling creative works (400 m<sup>2</sup>), an exhibition space (260 m<sup>2</sup>), an EXCEPTION de MIXMIND store (250 m<sup>2</sup>), a cafe (90 m<sup>2</sup>), a gallery and a floral zone (Zhou 2013). Fang Suo is partitioned by theme, where the aesthetic life zone shows and sells creative works, including Japanese handicrafts and paper paintings, and handmade ware from Italy and Spain, the “green floral zone” shows and sells fresh, vivid potted plants, the “EXCEPTION de MIXMIND store” sells apparel of the EXCEPTION de MIXMIND brand, the cafe is decorated in a concise Japanese style, and offers coffee, snacks and other food, and the “exhibition zone” is an area for artistic and cultural exhibitions, salons, and other similar events. The diversification of the space meets diverse consumer leisure needs. Although it is multifunctional, the main part of Fang Suo is still the bookstore that runs through the whole space. Fang Suo has over 110,000 books that are chosen for niches. For this reason, over half the books at Fang Suo fall into the category of art and design, while other books cover human culture, social sciences, audio and video, life and business. About forty percent of the books are published in Taiwan or original foreign books, which contrasts sharply to other bookstores.

The name “Fang Suo” came from the phrase “a fixed place of residence” of Xiao Tong, a writer of the Liang dynasty, implying a home for scholars and people of refined taste. Consistent with its name, Fang Suo is positioned as a place aspired internally by all people who understand that culture creates life, and oriented to readers with basic attainment in literature and human culture. In addition, Fang Suo is a dynamic space for cultural activities. Weekly “Creator Live” is a space for knowledge sharing and cultural exchanges. A number of writers and artists would hold such events as speech, book signing and selling and artistic forum here to gather people who love culture and sharing. At Fang Suo, the unique, diverse spatial arrangement, exquisite design, well-chosen books and cultural philosophy interact with one another, attracting more and more consumers.

**Research Process and Methods**

In this study, various empirical materials have been collected using anthropological methodology like “cases, personal experiences, reflections, life histories, interviews, and observatory, historical, interactive and visual texts”. These materials describe the people’s daily lives, and stages and meanings worthy of exploration (Creswell 2006; Tian 2015; Tian et al. 2015).

In the early stage of this study, online information was collected and compiled from site.douban.com/122554, weibo.com/fangsuo-commune, and media reportage. The intermittent fieldwork lasted for over a month, and took place during February 15<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> and August 15<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014 mainly. Before and after the above two periods, the author visited Fang Suo as a consumer to gain personal experiences on cultural and leisure activities at Fang Suo, including reading, exhibition, lecture and coffee. During the survey, information was collected using the methods of observation, general interviews and in-depth interviews.

For observation, Fang Suo’s spatial design and arrangement, spatial composition and configuration, and other physical and environmental elements were observed, people in the space and their activities observed in a non-participa-

tory manner, and observation results recorded both graphically and textually (photo taking is not allowed at Fang Suo, so there is no photographic record) to analyze the space form of Fang Suo and the general pattern of human activities in this space. For general interviews, a semi-structured outline was used and 14 customers were covered, all interviewed for over 30 minutes.

Two staff members at Fang Suo and two loyal customers were interviewed in depth for over 60 minutes each. In addition, a two-hour focus group was held. The focus group included the Fang Suo Operations Director, Assistant Director, and two university scholars and researchers. The two management members of Fang Suo have frequent contacts with the founder, and are more familiar with Fang Suo’s culture, spatial design and consumer population. One scholar is a friend of the founder, and has a good understanding of the intention of founding Fang Suo, while the other scholar is accomplished in space research. See Table 1 for the information of the respondents.

This study treats the information obtained with an open attitude in an attempt to learn the in-depth structure of the subject and find out true meanings behind the appearance. All interviews in this study were recorded using a recording pen, and all records were transcribed into

**Table 1: Information of respondents**

<i>Method</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Method</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Education</i>
<i>Focus Group</i>	M1	Male	~40	Senior executive at Fang Suo	Master	Interview	C6	Female	23	Employee of a real estate company	Bachelor
	M2	Female	~25	Middle executive at Fang Suo	Bachelor		C7	Female	24	Planner of a real estate company	Bachelor
<i>Interview</i>	S1	Female	~45	Scholar	Doctor	C8	Male	23	Student	Master	
	S2	Female	~35	Scholar	Doctor	C9	Male	25	Student	Master	
	E1	Female	26	Coffee director	Bachelor	C10	Male	23	Tourism planner	Bachelor	
	E2	Female	25	Book editor	Bachelor	C11	Male	23	IT	Bachelor	
	C1	Male	24	Student	Master	C12	Male	~45	Interior designer	Bachelor	
	C2	Male	25	Student	Master	C13	Female	22	Student	Bachelor	
	C3	Male	23	Company employee	Bachelor	C14	Female	35	Sales-person	Bachelor	
	C4	Male	24	Student	Master	C15	Female	27	Company employee	Bachelor	
	C5	Female	25	Student	Master	C16	Female	~30	Company employee	Bachelor	

(The respondents are grouped as follows: customers-C, management members-M, employees at the store-E, scholars-S)

text with 70,000 Chinese characters. The information was analyzed using the strategy devised by John W. Creswell (2006) as outlined next.

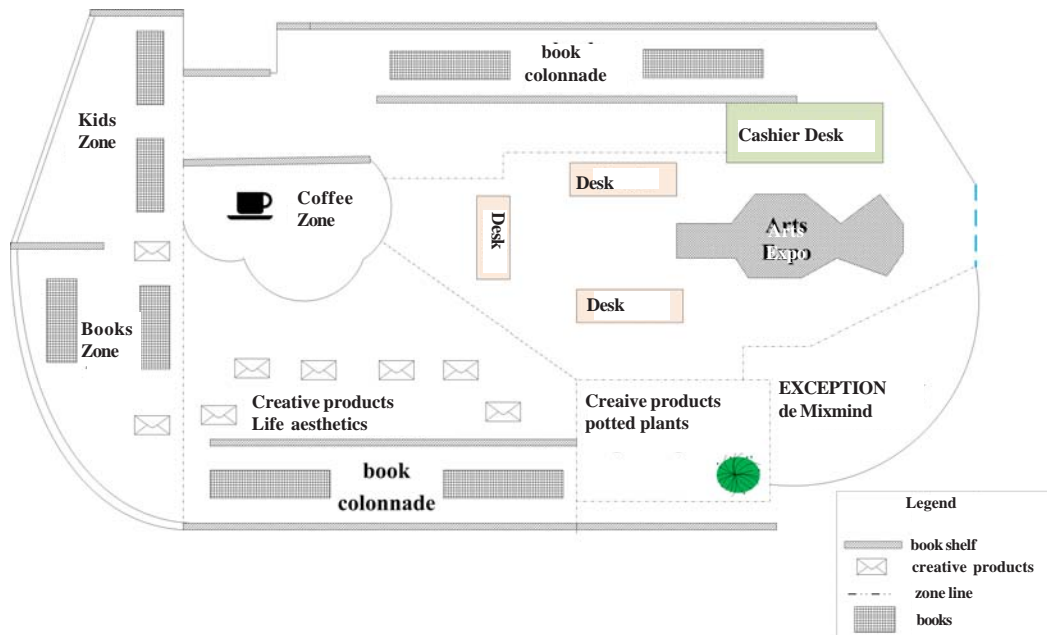
1. Reviewing the information: Browsing all interview records to get preliminary ideas and perceptions
2. Recording reading findings: Writing down and summing up findings, views and reactions after reading
3. Understanding the information in depth: Reading the interview records thoroughly to reflect true meanings to be expressed by the respondents
4. Sorting out and conceptualizing categories and keywords based on the interview records
5. Simplifying the information by categorizing it and removing unnecessary items
6. Arriving at a conclusion by finding connections between different categories by reference to relevant theories.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Panoramic Interpretation of the Space

Fang Suo is opened at TaiKoo Hui, and contrasts sharply to the prosperity of this paradise

of luxuries. In the bookstore, the warm gray matte dry-stone floor creates a quiet atmosphere. On the right is a wrinkled brown wall, and on the left is the EXCEPTION de MIXMIND store. The space between them is a long exhibition space built with bearing columns. The main part of Fang Suo is still the bookstore, in an “enclosed house” arrangement like Hakka earth buildings. Nearly 100 three-meter-high bookshelves form a spatial passage as the reading corridor, giving readers a sense of abundance when books surround them. Thus, the space creates a feel of time extension and space exploration. In the middle of the corridor, wooden square tables are arranged alternately, and have recommended books for readers. Further inward is a concise Japanese-style café that is surrounded by several arcs, and there are 20 tables and 65 chairs in this limited space, where the coffee tables are mostly provided with two or three chairs. On the right is the creative artwork zone that includes textiles, paper products, creative stationary and toys, where each commodity is endowed with a short but profound brand story. For some consumers, “*This is more like an exhibition space of artworks.*” (C2) The general spatial layout of Fang Suo has been drawn based on observation (as shown in Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1. General layout of the Fang Suo space**

Source: Authors' fieldwork notes

It can be seen from the layout that though the overall space of Fang Suo is partitioned, it is irregular, where different zones support one another and space functions are interwoven. Such a feature further supports the organic integration of the whole space, and also “guides” consumers who walk inside with “changing scenes”, thereby fully engaging them.

The drawn map is obviously unable to present the real spatial aesthetics of Fang Suo, and even real photos shot by a camera cannot express the unique atmosphere and form of the Fang Suo space. As a student reader said, “*The sense of space of Fang Suo can be experienced in person.*” (C9) The stylist yet simple spatial design is coupled with soft background music and slightly dim light to create a spatial atmosphere that makes everything look harmonious. The harmony and comfort of the whole space brings a kind of spatial enjoyment to consumers. “*Fang Suo is different in that its environment makes people feel warm and enjoyable,*” (C1) “*The appearance is classical, grand, concise yet modern, and the interior combines classics with fashion and is full of aesthetic details,*” (C2) “*The environment is comfortable, and the low-keyed gray coffee interior color is relaxing.*” (C3) When consumers are attracted by this comfortable and aesthetic atmosphere, and fully immersed in the unique space of Fang Suo, the consumption of space occurs naturally. The Fang Suo space brings a pleasant experience to consumers itself, and its attraction is undoubtedly an impetus to consumption.

#### **Diversified Space: Integration of Cultural, Leisure and Consumption Spaces**

The Fang Suo space form has become a complex combination of spaces due to its diversity in function and design, and the things contained in it involve different aspects of cultural consumption, leisure and even daily life of modern urban residents. For this reason, the Fang Suo space is diversified, in which diversified functions integrate and overlap. In addition, a space is a reflection of activities of people in it, and different activities correspond to different space forms. This article will analyze the combination of diversified spaces of Fang Suo from the perspective of space function and human activity, and reinterpret the organic integration between the bookstore space and consumers.

#### ***Above All a Cultural Space***

Cultural space essentially means a “physical space, place or site of cultural significance or nature” (Xiang 2008; Duan et al. 2012), and has such basic elements as “physical space, people, cultural activity and interaction” (Xiao 2011). A bookstore is undoubtedly a cultural place, which is evident from its books and cultural characteristics. Consequently, Fang Suo should be above all a cultural space.

Is Fang Suo a bookstore? Yes, but it is not an ordinary one. Most of the respondents thought that “*Fang Suo is above all a bookstore, but it is more than a bookstore*”, or “*Fang Suo is a unique bookstore*” (C1-5, C8, C10-13, E2). Fang Suo has a large number of Chinese and English books, and offers a reading environment to book lovers while selling books, so it is naturally a bookstore. Reading is a cultural lifestyle, and a cultural leisure activity. Visiting Fang Suo is always accompanied by “*expectation for and immersion in reading,*” (C8, C11) so possibly casual browsing can arouse people’s desire for reading. Fang Suo also has the attributes of cultural display and dissemination inherent in bookstores, where bestsellers and imported books not only disseminate cultural information but also lead cultural trends and build cultural awareness. Fang Suo is unique in that it has more things that seem irrelevant to books, and their existence adds to the cultural atmosphere. The attribute of Fang Suo as a cultural space is also shown in how its culture and knowledge sharing space is created. Fang Suo adheres to the cultural concept of “sharing”, where an array of exchanges with cultural celebrities connect the bookstore’s interior space with social and cultural activities closely. Since its opening, Fang Suo has seen nearly 200 lectures of the “Creator Live” series that featured both individualized marginal scholars and famous forefront writers. Celebrities like Ma Jiahui, Ye Si, Chai Jing and Liang Wendao have enriched this cultural space with their own cultural philosophies. These cultural activities have caught the eyes of the whole city and improve the cultural quality of the whole city. Therefore, the attribute of Fang Suo as a cultural space is reflected not only in the bookstore itself, but also in the cultural exchange and dissemination platform it provides to the city.



### *Leisure Space with Diversified Activities*

Reading and drinking coffee are the main leisure activities at Fang Suo, in which reading is the primary activity. At Fang Suo, readers are everywhere, whether in the corridor or around the tables, either browsing or reading carefully. In spacious areas, people simply sit on the floor for reading. They regard Fang Suo as a good leisure destination, *"I would stay here for two or three hours on weekends as long as I'm free, reading for relaxation,"* (C4) *"I think that Fang Suo provides another choice of leisure and relaxation to Guangzhou residents,"* (C5) *"visiting the bookstore is a form of spiritual consolation that offers a short relaxation time to urban residents."* (C11) The artistic atmosphere and comfort of the Fang Suo space improve readers' leisure experiences.

The open cafe of Fang Suo is an important leisure space. Here, you can see consumers sitting together in groups of two or three, chatting, reading or even doing nothing alone. The essential attribute of the cafe as a leisure space is also shown at Fang Suo. Soft background music and coffee brewed on the spot give people a tasteful yet quiet leisure experience. Several respondents expressed similar feelings. For example, a customer with an IT background thought, *"it feels comfortable at the cafe of Fang Suo, where I can both taste coffee and be immersed in a sea of books. This is a unique experience"* (C11). A postgraduate also thought, *"Though coffee is a bit expensive, it is worth a try"* (C9). A staff member at Fang Suo affirmed, *"An HSBC sub-branch is just upstairs. They often come here for coffee and would rest with colleagues after lunch"* (E1). Visitors include nearby office workers and strollers. Some people even stay here for an entire afternoon to "kill time".

At Fang Suo, the flow of people is very obvious. Many people visit Fang Suo as strollers. People who have just shopped a lot at TaiKoo Hui can be seen here carrying bags of varying sizes. Fang Suo seems to be a must-visit for shoppers at TaiKoo Hui, whether local or non-local. In this sense, Fang Suo is more like a leisure space as a "tourist destination". In addition, families or people with kids are often seen at Fang Suo. There are dedicated children's reading and playing zones at Fang Suo, making it an attraction to kids and a leisure place for families.

Although the cafe of Fang Suo is an exchange space, Fang Suo is not a typical space for social networking. *"I always read alone and hardly*

*notice anyone else"* (C3). People's social behavior is mostly limited to the cafe. It can be seen that social behavior does exist to some extent at Fang Suo as a leisure space, but more readers just read quietly and shoppers just shop "quietly". *"I once saw someone chatting up a stranger, but this is occasional. Most people simply read alone"* (C5). Social networking occurs rarely among readers, and between readers and the "bookstore editor". "Bookstore editors" refer to book purchasing assistants and administrators at Fang Suo. They are well educated, like reading, and have done extensive reading. Their responsibility is to choose good books, and consider "where a good book should be best placed for its potential audience", thereby guiding and inspiring readers.

### *Multifunctional Consumption Space*

Modern people pursue cultural consumption. Fang Suo has not only cultural products, including books and creative works, but also subjects of material consumption, including EXCEPTION de MIXMIND and coffee, being a typical space with both cultural consumption and material consumption. Fang Suo's multimode operations make it a multifunctional consumption space.

A consumption space is shaped by consumers and their consumption behavior, and reflects a certain consumption culture (Lin et al. 2011). Consumption in the Fang Suo space seems to be double-sense consumption with both functionality and symbolism. First, Fang Suo has a differentiated advantage over other bookstores for its books. The body of Taiwan-published books, original foreign books, and literature and art books here attracts a large number of "readers with some attainment in human culture". Except their external value in use, these books have a symbolic value that lies not only in their cultural significance but also in the status and taste of readers implied by them. Second, EXCEPTION de MIXMIND is a design brand well known both at home and abroad, and its value of fashion and taste is even higher than its value in use in a way. In addition, drinking coffee has long been a leisure activity after busy work, and coffee represents the leisurely and quiet modern lifestyle itself. As a result, Fang Suo is a combination of symbolic and functional consumption as a consumption space, and the interaction between the symbolic and consumption spaces is especially important here.

In the meantime, Fang Suo is located at TaiKoo Hui, which is a gathering place of luxury brands, which filters its consumer population. As an executive of Fang Suo said, *“At such a mall, you can actually lock down people in the upper half of the pyramid, because TaiKoo Hui has a filtering function itself”* (M1). *“Thanks to this platform, customers coming here should have a certain level of buying power”* (E1). Fang Suo is also oriented to the population with strong buying power, yet this population is not equal to the reader population. Commodities at Fang Suo, including books, are relatively expensive, and some creative works are “incredibly” expensive. Students with weak buying power would think, *“Things at Fang Suo are too expensive, so I always treat them as artworks. A small notebook takes over RMB100. I just take a look”* (C13), or *“Although Fang Suo arouses my desire to buy books, I would still buy them online at home”* (C2). The mismatch between the consumption space and consumers is also a unique point of Fang Suo.

### *Integration of Multiple Spaces*

In the study, several statements in the focus group describe the diversity and organic integration of the Fang Suo space very well. *“They are all funny. Children would sit with parents reading, and undergraduates would spend a whole day there. A very interesting point is that they are at ease and won’t think that they do not belong to this environment. Customers buying clothes would also buy books and visit bookshelves here. There is a harmonious atmosphere here in which all people coexist without interfering with one another”* (M2), *“This is a harmonious space, and everyone is very casual”* (S1), *“Fang Suo is a particularly interesting space, in which you can see many things. In fact, a bookstore is run in quite a different way from an apparel store or exhibition. However, everything is especially harmonious in this space. In fact, we are very eager to sit for a while at Fang Suo or just to see what those people are doing”* (S2). The diversity of the Fang Suo space is shown in its combination of cultural, leisure and consumption spaces, but these three space forms are not separated but integrated organically. The cultural space is also a cultural and leisure space, and a cultural consumption space, and the leisure space is also a leisure consumption space. The combination of leisure and

consumption also reflects the cultural significance of the space, both a leisure culture and a consumption culture. The space is harmonious itself, and spatial behavior is also interference free. Even different subjects of spatial behavior “foil one another” shaped the diversity, harmony and comfort of the Fang Suo space together.

### **Multiple Interactions: People and Their Spatial Behavior**

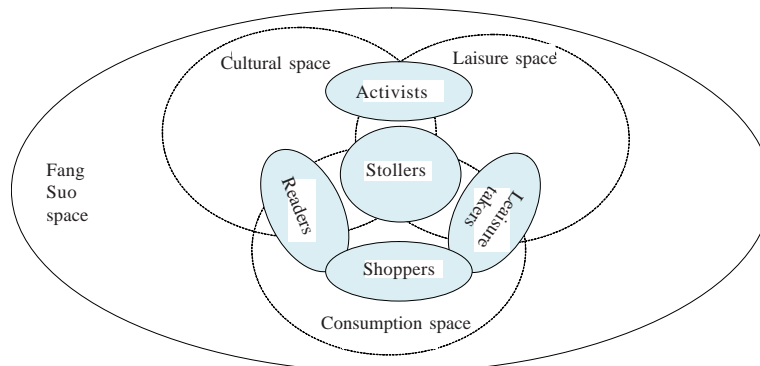
The diversity of the Fang Suo space relies on the space-consuming population and its complex spatial behavior, where people would carry out spatial activities, including culture, leisure and consumption, in such a combined space as Fang Suo. Does the space concept of Fang Suo cater for specific needs of a group or several groups of people? What are their motives? This study attempts to answer the above questions based on analysis, observation and interview information.

Fang Suo defines customers as two circles, where the core circle is composed of “readers with a reading habit”, including “cultural and art workers, creators, and cultural elites with high sensitivity to information, a strong thirst for knowledge and independent propositions for life aesthetics”, while the extended outer circle is composed of “citizens interested in learning and culture, and white-collar and office workers”. It has been found that though these definitions are somewhat generic, Fang Suo’s consumer positioning highly coincides with reality.

Although Fang Suo’s consumer population is very diverse, they have some points in common. For example, young people are the majority, and this population includes well-paid people, such as intellectuals, bourgeoisies and white-collar workers, and well-educated people, such as literary youth, students and teachers. There are also some children and old people. In terms of spatial behavior, the population of the Fang Suo space can be roughly divided into five categories, that is, “readers”, “activists”, “strollers”, “leisure takers” and “shoppers” (as shown in Table 2). These categories may overlap but their boundaries are relatively clear. They are using and shaping different spaces, and their spatial behavior makes the boundaries of the space forms vague while shaping these forms, as shown in Figure 2.

**Table 2: Categories of people in the Fang Suo space and their spatial behavior**

Category	Belonging to	Description of spatial behavior	Evidence in interview records
Readers	Cultural space Consumption space	These are people who truly want to read at Fang Suo. In their eyes, Fang Suo is above all a bookstore. They love reading, like the environment and atmosphere here, and may stay here for a whole afternoon or even a day, browsing favorite books; they don't care about people and other things around, and their activity space is the corridor mainly. These are people who attend events at Fang Suo, including lectures, exhibitions, and book signing and selling. They pay close attention to event information platforms of Fang Suo, such as <a href="http://douban.com/122554">douban.com/122554</a> and <a href="http://weibo.com/fangsuocommune">weibo.com/fangsuocommune</a> . They always choose events of interesting topics.	"I go there for reading only, because I like its environment, which is comfortable. I would stay here for two or three hours each time. I don't like their activities, which are too crowded." (C3)"I visit Fang Suo simply for reading and picking books." (C10) "I would go there whenever there is any interesting event, and leave once the event is over." (C2)"I want to work at Fang Suo, so that I don't have to attend lectures in a crowded space." (C5)
Activists	Cultural space Leisure space	They are a group of "flowing people" at Fang Suo, mostly first-time visitors, attracted by its reputation or taking friends to a visit. They stroll in all spaces of Fang Suo, feeling that everything is fresh, as if every vivid design detail can surprise them. They usually have short stays of within one hour, which may turn them into readers, activists or leisure takers; of course, there are many tourists among them.	"I'm coming for the first time, and I come here because I heard that it was a bourgeois place." (C14) "When I came to Guangzhou, I heard that there was a classical bookstore in the city, so I visit it together with schoolmates. I do like this place." (C8)
Strollers	Leisure space Consumption space	They regard this as a leisure space, in which the cafe is their first choice, though some people read for leisure here. Most of them come here for leisure and regard Fang Suo as a fresh, literary leisure place. They may order a cup of Mocca or cappuccino, and chat with friends or stay alone, watching people and things around. Drinking coffee also means consumption.	"After a day's work, I often come here for afternoon tea and rest. That's truly relaxing." (C11)"Fang Suo's coffee is good and distinctive, all being my favorite black coffee." (C12)"It is good to read or do nothing here as well." (C7)
Leisure Takers	Leisure space	They are main income source for Fang Suo; they regard it as a fashionable consumption space, including clothes of EXCEPTION de MIXMIND, exquisite artworks and even books; relatively, they are richer and have stronger buying power; their activity areas are mostly the EXCEPTION de MIXMIND store and the aesthetic life zone; for them, consumption here is a symbol of fashion and taste.	"Fang Suo's cash revenue is mainly from this high-consumption group of people." (S1)"Fang Suo's consumer population already includes a higher-end group." (S2)
Shoppers	Consumption space		



**Fig. 2. Groups of people in the Fang Suo space and spaces to which they belong**  
Source: Author



### CONCLUSION

This study reveals social reality and mass culture through the microscopic interpretation of a special space from an anthropological perspective. In this age of mass leisure and post-modern consumption, lifestyle has changed, and modern people's leisure and consumption needs can no longer be met by a single space, thereby giving rise to urban new-type public spaces. As an urban new-type public space, Fang Suo represents a combination of spatial function and design, as its functional zones do not correspond completely with its physical zones, there are no clear physical boundaries among these zones, and the irregular zones lead to the integration of diversified spaces including the bookstore, which becomes a cultural space for knowledge sharing and dissemination, there is a leisure space for reading, drinking coffee, strolling, family leisure, and there is also a multimode consumption space for both cultural and material consumption. Different spaces overlap and are organically integrated, and the whole space is also harmonious.

In the meantime, the multiple space attributes provide people's activities in the space with adequate "behavioral support". In terms of spatial behavior and space consumption motive, the population in the diversified Fang Suo space is roughly divided into the five categories of "readers", "activists", "strollers", "leisure takers" and "shoppers". This classification is just a simple grouping and description of different actors in the Fang Suo space, and is obviously inconsistent with the classification of people based on behavior and activity in a strict sense in leisure studies. These categories may overlap but their boundaries are relatively clear. They are using and shaping different spaces, and their spatial behavior makes the boundaries of the space forms vague while shaping these forms. Their spatial planning may be converted at different moments.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

This article is limited to the interpretation of the Fang Suo space and the analysis of people's behavior in this space only. It should also be discussed how the space is consumed in people's interactions. The public space at Fang Suo is not only a physical space created by spatial design and commodity portfolio, but also a so-

cial space created by consumer activities. The consumption of space includes both the physical and social spaces. Lefebvre believes that like other commodities, space can be produced and consumed. With the commercialization of space in consumption society and the extension of consumption implications, urban space has been included in the "production-consumption system" of consumption society. Urban spaces are not just places where consumption activities take place, but the consumption of spaces themselves is also becoming a prominent phenomenon of consumption society. This is driven by the sophistication of the commodity housing market, people's attention to the environmental quality of urban spaces, and the growth of space visual and experience consumption. Studies on bars reveal that frequent customers of bars come not for alcoholic drinks but for space experiences, taste of life, exotic culture and non-routine culture. Although relevant studies give similar conclusions, they do not interpret the internal logic and social significance of space consumption. Further studies should discuss how urban new-type public spaces like Fang Suo are consumed from the perspective of space consumption. What do consumers gain through the consumption of space, or what does the consumption of space mean for consumers? What social significance is held? These are also what the researcher is going to make clear.

### NOTES

1. This paper was initially presented at the Fourth International Conference on Applications of Anthropology in Business, May 24-25, 2015, Tianjin, China. This is a revised and updated new version.
2. This study was supported by the grant from the National Natural Science Foundation of China (to SUN Jiu-xia) (No. 41171124).

### REFERENCES

- Bao YM 2006. The production of consumption culture and urban space. *Academic Monthly*, 38(5): 11-13.
- Creswell JW 2006. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. London: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Duan Jin, Ji S 2012. *Consumption of Space—A New Picture of Urban Development in the Context of Consumption Culture*. Nanjing: Southeast University Press.
- Gerhard R 2016. Constructing globalized spaces of tourism and leisure: Political ecologies of the Salta Wine Route (NW-Argentina). *Journal of Rural Studies*, 43(2): 104-117.

- He XS 2006. Spatial turn of Social Theory. *Society*, 26(2): 34-48.
- Kung-Hung C 2004. Social spatialization in an urban commercial area: A case study of Anping road shopping street in Tainan. *Journal of Geographical Science (Taiwan)*, 36: 55-75.
- Li XJ 1987. Social space in geography for western society. *Progress in Geography*, 2: 63-66.
- Lian L 2003. A trial analysis of cultural significance of urban space in the age of mass consumption. *Zhejiang Social Sciences*, 19(3): 146-150.
- Lin G, Wang LJ 2011. Placeness and spaciality of bar under globalization: Case of Guangzhou City, China. *Scientia Geographica Sinica*, 31(7): 794-801.
- Ling JH, Li Q, Xing JC 2015. The influence of apartment location on household space heating consumption in multi-apartment buildings. *Energy and Buildings*, 103(15): 185-197.
- Liu XC 1998. A new look into the Marxist outlook on time and space. *Jianghai Academic Journal*, 5(6): 100.
- Shen WM 2016. Seven New Trends in Tourist Markets in 2016. China National Tourism Administration Homepage. From <[http://www.cnta.gov.cn/xxfb/jdxwnew2/201601/t20160108\\_756823.shtml](http://www.cnta.gov.cn/xxfb/jdxwnew2/201601/t20160108_756823.shtml)> (Retrieved on March 2016).
- Souma Ithirou, Sako Yorihiro 1986. *Environmental Psychology* (Zhou C, Li MM trans). Beijing: China Building Industry Press.
- Stobart J, Hann A, Morgan V 2007. *Spaces of Consumption: Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, c. 1680-1830*. UK: Routledge.
- Sun JX, Zhang X 2014. Interactions between economic and social capitals of tourist communities: A case study of Dai Park in Xishuangbanna. *The Anthropologist*, 18(3): 1029-1039.
- Tang XF 2005. Cultural turn and geography. *Reading*, 6: 72-79.
- Tian G, Liu Y, Tian D 2015. New Economic Anthropology paradigm: Interphase operational development theory with Chinese characteristics. *The Anthropologist*, 19(3): 633-643.
- Tian G 2015. Mode and approach: Anthropological perspective on entrepreneur. *Journal of Beifang University of Nationalities*, 3: 88-97.
- Tian G, Trotter D, Liu Y 2015. Anthropological methods are meaningful in business research: A case study of foodservice at a Chinese university. *The Anthropologist*, 19(1): 11-24.
- Xiang YJ 2008. A talk on "Cultural Space". *Journal of the Central University for Nationalities (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, 35(3): 81-88.
- Xiao XM 2011. Value of libraries as public cultural spaces. *Library Forum*, 31(6): 62-67.
- Xie XR, Feng D, Zhu H 2014. Study on the perception and identification of cultural micro-space—Taking Fang Suo Commune at TaiKoo Hui in Guangzhou as an example. *Journal of Geographical Sciences*, 2: 184-198.
- Xu DD 2001. Value existence of leisure, consumption and people—An economic and non-economic review. *Studies in Dialectics of Nature*, 27(5): 50.
- Zhang HY 2005. About the social and cultural capital of urban spaces—Study on citizen attributes of urban public spaces. *Urban Problems*, 24(5): 2-8.
- Zhang P 2010. Theory of space production and inspirations for China's urban construction. *Forward Position*, 17(7): 96-99.
- Zhang ZK 2007. Comments on Lefebvre's The Production of Space. *Journal of Jiangsu University (Social Sciences)*, 14(5): 10-14.
- Zhou XY 2013. Spring for characteristic private bookstores—About the innovative development path for private physical bookstores. *Science, Technology and Publication*, 21(10): 34-36.
- Zhou ZQ 2012. Physical bookstore—A symbol? *China Book Review*, 26(4): 1.

---

**Paper received for publication on October 2015**  
**Paper accepted for publication on April 2016**