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Editorial

Inclusive cities: Less crime requires more love



Urban diseases show three levels of characteristics: the most discussed by the academic community is usually heavy traffic and serious pollution, while for low-income urban residents, the essence is housing shortage and increased unemployment, which leads to the most worrisome issue for the government, social stratification and increasing crime (Henderson, 1974). It is only natural, then, that inclusive growth is a hot topic.

In 2016, the UN-Habitat III proposed a new urban agenda, with the core idea being inclusive growth (UN-Habitat, 2016). Urban development and management should be people-centered, considering both people of different ages and incomes. An inclusive city must reflect child-friendliness, promote elderly health, and benefit youth development. Additionally, inclusive cities need regular commercial housing for middle-income individuals, improved housing for the wealthy, and affordable housing for low-income residents. Poverty is often an inducement to crime; therefore, the number one goal of the UN's 17 SDGs is to eradicate poverty. In other words, cities need love to reduce crime. In the papers published in this issue, we are very pleased to see Kourtiti et al. (2024) address the issue of “city love” and the empirical papers on the relationship between urban form and crime, which show that the city is indeed a complex system (Chen et al., 2024).

Children are the future of humanity. Child-friendly cities or communities not only require attention to the “one-meter height sight” of urban space but also to the equality of education. In the United States, the main source of local finance is property tax, leading to an imbalance of educational resources between rich and poor areas, and is also a symbol of gentrification. In China, the phenomenon of “school district housing” is caused by the spatial inequality of basic education resources. Due to the distinction between key primary schools and non-key primary schools in cities, housing prices around key primary schools are high. The equalization of public services remains a long and arduous task.

Aging has become a worldwide trend, and developing China is no exception. According to the seventh census of China, the number of elderly people aged 60 and above accounted for 18.7% of the total population in 2020, an increase of 5.44 percentage points compared with 2010. In 2023, China's median age will be 38.5 years, already surpassing that of the United States. By 2035, China will enter a super-aging society. The construction of a 15-min urban greenway system service circle and the optimization of the spatial layout of medical resources are extremely important. In China, there are currently a large number of 7- or 8-story buildings in cities without elevators, making urban renewal a key focus for the future. At the same time, for some high-income retirees, it is urgent to introduce reasonable urban policies to develop the “silver hair economy.”

A city conducive to youth development is particularly important for developing countries. In China, local governments are financed mainly by land revenue and production-led taxes. With the transformation of real estate development, land income will be greatly reduced in the future, and if production-led tax is further strengthened, it will be worse for young people. Fostering a good business environment, promoting private economic investment, and increasing jobs are the top priorities of future urban management. Additionally, the tax system should be reformed to avoid discouraging wealth accumulation. This includes timely introduction of property tax, transforming local financial sources from production tax, and coordinating consumption tax and property tax (Wu et al., 2016). It is worth mentioning that the issuance of ultra-long-term Treasury bonds should target two directions: issuing housing consumption vouchers to reduce the burden on non-homeowners and subsidizing newborn families to reduce childcare costs.

A city is a dynamic, complex giant system (Lai, 2018). Although the time effect of age replacement is predictable, the multiplier effect of economic operations and the possibility of abrupt changes in social ecology create a sensitivity of cities to initial conditions. The so-called chaos effect of cities was exemplified by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019. Only love is the eternal theme of a city.

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Yuzhe Wu

School of Public Affairs, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

E-mail address: wuyuzhe@zju.edu.cn.