

“FutureCity” Initiative: Building Age-Friendly Cities

Xuejin ZUO

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- The world population is aging rapidly due to declined fertility and prolonged life expectancy.
- The future cities should be better prepared to promote active and healthy aging.
- Started in 2006 WHO conducted a project to identify the key elements of the urban environment that support active and healthy ageing. The project involved 33 cities from 22 countries (from all WHO regions).

- The project was completed in 2007 and resulted in "Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide" which outlines a framework for assessing the "age-friendliness" of a city.
- The following eight topics were explored in the focus groups to give a comprehensive picture of the city's age-friendliness.

1. outdoor spaces and buildings
2. transportation
3. housing
4. social participation
5. respect and social inclusion
6. civic participation and employment
7. communication and information
8. community support and health services

- I will follow WHO's approach, to discuss the question how to make Future City more age-friendly?
- My presentation will involve three levels: the city level, community level and family level.

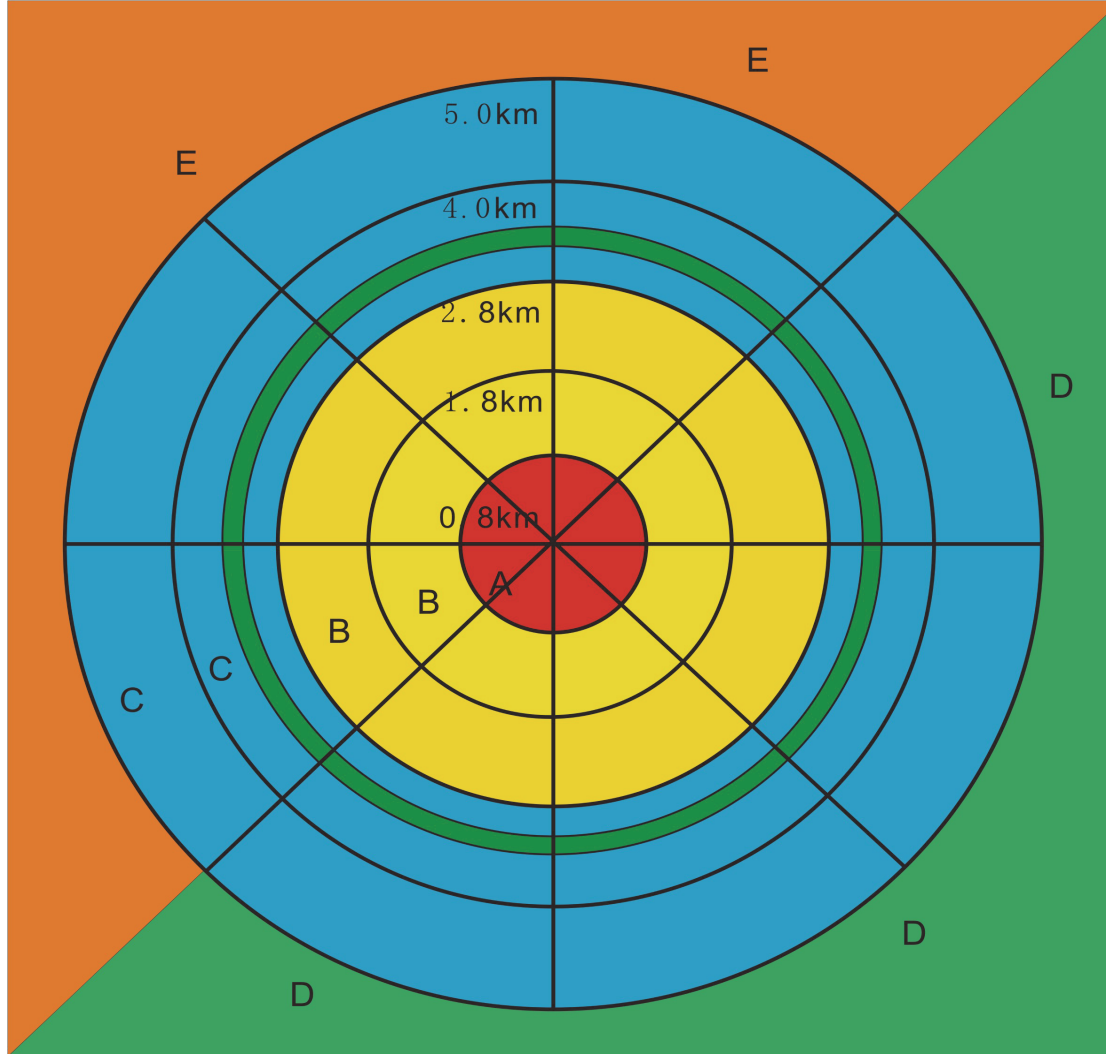
Building age-friendly cities: the city level

- To promote active aging, the cities should be more compact, so that the elderly can have easy access to public transportation, work place, health services, and other places.
- Obviously, the post-war low-density cities in North America, and the newly developed urban areas in Chinese cities, can not meet the needs of the elderly.

The Concept of the Compact City

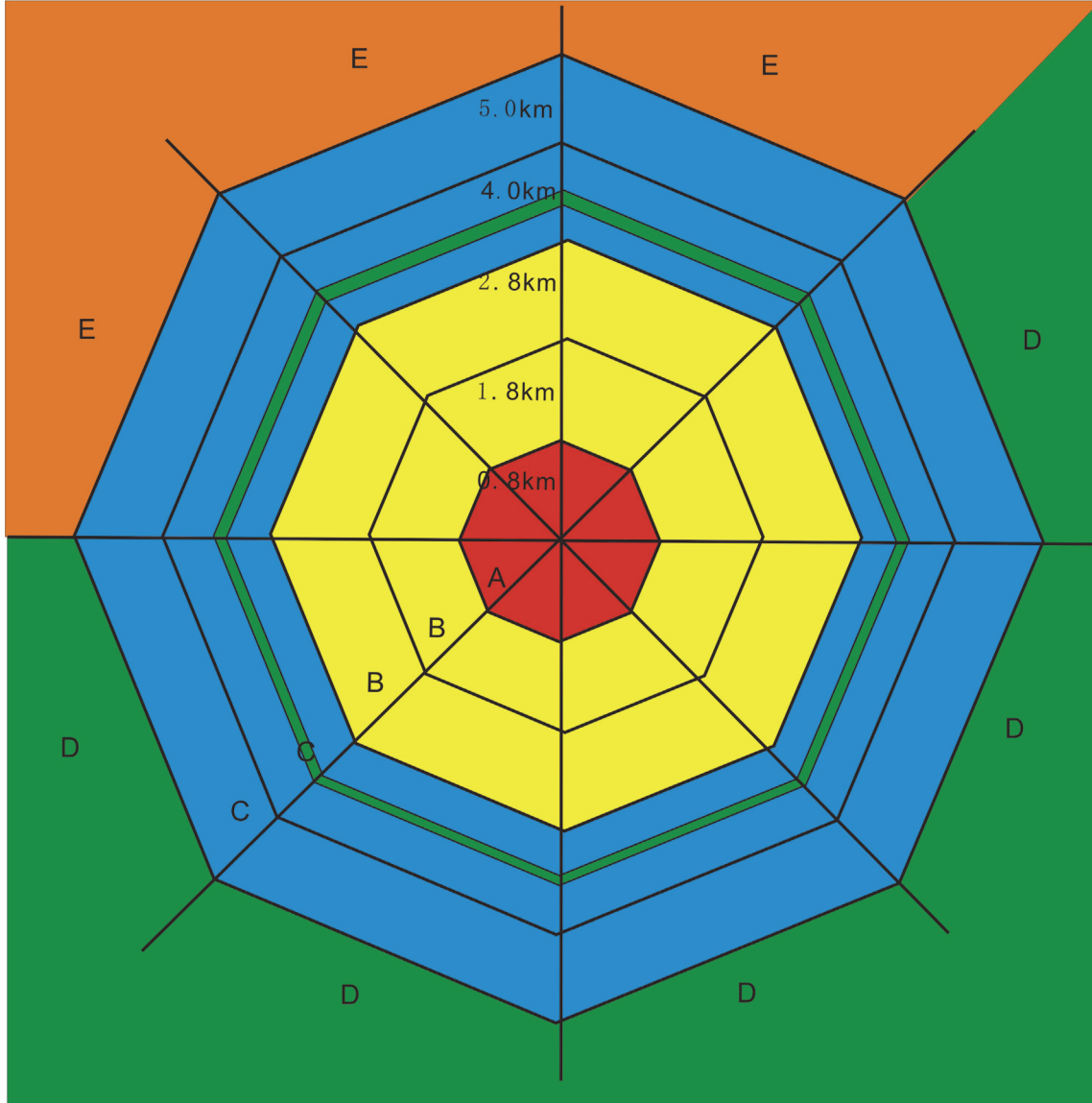
- The Compact City or city of short distances is an urban planning and urban design concept, which promotes relatively high residential density with mixed land uses.
- It is based on an efficient public transport system and has an urban layout which encourages walking and cycling, low energy consumption and reduced pollution. A large resident population provides opportunities for social interaction as well as a feeling of safety. (Wikipedia “compact city”).

- Based on the work of the garden city by Sir Ebenezer Howard, my colleagues and I have proposed some new versions of garden cities, which are much larger and more compact, with residents of about one million.
- The 3 proposed versions of city layout are shown below:



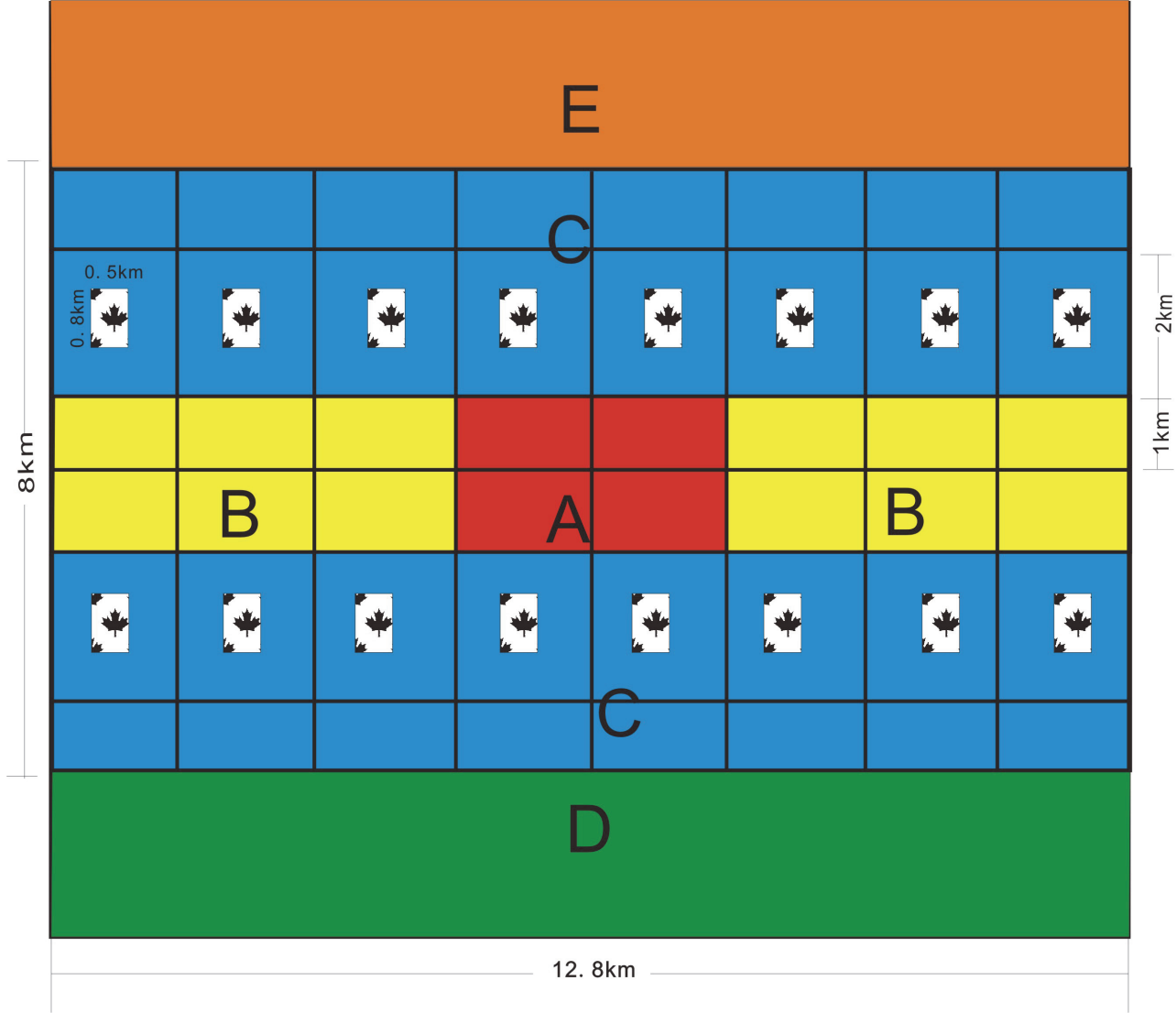
城市功能区：

- A. 中心商业/文化/娱乐/会展/行政中心；
- B. 商务区及其配套服务，如宾馆/会议设施/餐饮/社交等配套设施；
- C. 住宅区及其配套服务，如零售/餐饮/其他生活服务/中小学教育/初级医疗保障/文化休闲健身/绿地；
- D. 大卖场/体育场馆/郊野公园等，三级医疗/三级教育/科技研发和服务业园区/清洁制造业园区/城市生活供水；
- E. 发电/燃气/污水/其他废弃物处理/有污染的制造业园区。



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Building the age-friendly cities: the community level

- At the community level, urban planning should mix the residence with various needed facilities/services in the community.
- In addition to the concept of compact city, my following discussions on age-friendly community are also stimulated by the ideas of New Urbanism and Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND).

A proposed case of age-friendly community

- The land area: One square km (1 million square m).
- The land area covered by buildings should not exceed 33 % of the total.
- The maximum distance from the community to the nearest station/stop of public transportation should be less than 1 km (about 10 minutes by walk)
- The total floor space of buildings amount to 3 million square m, of which 2 million are for residential use by about 40,000 residents (averaging 50 square m per person)

- the remaining 1 million square m are for the use of community roads, public space, schools, day-care centers for the elderly, other service facilities and business.
- The roads in the community should be narrow, allowing the ride of both cars and bikes. However, higher priority should be given to bikes, imposing a relatively low speed limit (say, 15 km per hour) to cars.

- The separate pedestrian walkways should be available on both sides of the road.
- In the cross section, both bikes and cars have to yield to pedestrians.
- The under-ground parking spaces should be available too.

- The kindergarten, the primary and the junior high schools should be located in the community, as well as the day-care centers for needed elderly.
- The architectures of schools and day-care centers should be flexible for alternative use, so that they can be readjusted to the changing demand.

- For those elderly who loss part of the ability for daily living and hence need day care, can get help at the day-care center of the community. This can facilitate the close social connection of these elderly with their family members and the community, and hence helping maintain their physical and mental health.

- My research teams are very impressive by a day care center in Wuhan, which has done an excellent work for providing care and meals to the elderly in the community.
- Only those elderly who lost all their ability of daily living and totally rely on intensive care, may live in the nursing homes which are farther from their residential community for the sake of cost-saving. Nevertheless, these nursing homes should be located close to the health facilities.

- The community hospital should be able to provide the residents with health care services at very low costs, due to the public funding to the hospital. To achieve the goal of healthy aging, it is of critical importance for the community to strengthen the preventive care, due to the population aging and epidemiological transition.

- It would be more efficient if the performance of the community health services is measured based on the health indicators of the community residents, rather than the work load on curative care.
- The community health services should be encouraged to innovate on the model of services provision. For instance, to include in health services some new components such as the education of updated knowledge on health, the promotion of healthy diet and life style, and guidance/practice to physical exercises.

- The community should provide the residents with adequate public space, both in-door and out-door, including community library, cultural center, gym, parks and etc., so that the residents of old age and other age groups can participate in social, cultural and other activities within the community.
- The design of the community should also leave space for the post office, grocery and food stores, restaurants, cafeteria/teahouse, hair saloon and some other business. These facilities will meet most of the consumption demand of the residents, and create job opportunities for the residents in general, and the elders in particular, in the community.

Building age-friendly cities: the family level

- With the “lowest low” fertility (below 1.3 children per woman), there will be increasing number of “empty nest” (elderly only) households.
- The future cities should prevent the possible isolation of the elders from their children and the community and the consequent elders’ feeling of loneliness and depression.

- Therefore, the design of the residential buildings, in terms of apartment size and structural settings, should encourage the living of households of different age groups/generations.
- This will encourage the families of adult children to reside close to their parents, in the apartments of the same compound, or in the same community.
- The mixture of the elderly with younger groups will also facilitate the provision of services needed by the elders.

Comments are welcome!

Thank you!