

How Cities Can Build Animal-Friendly Spaces in Chongqing, China

Ke Zeng^{1,a,*}

¹*School of Price, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 90007, United States*
a. kezeng@usc.edu

**corresponding author*

Abstract: Modern urban planning increasingly prioritizes a people-centric approach, balancing human needs with economic, societal, and environmental considerations. However, this often overlooks the urban wildlife cohabiting these spaces. This paper focuses on this oversight, specifically in the context of Chongqing, China. It investigates the city's animal-friendly spaces, highlighting the difference between designing for wildlife (animal-friendly) and domestic pets (pet-friendly). Through analysis of Chongqing's urban design, the paper reveals a significant neglect of animal compatibility in Chinese urban planning. It advocates for a more inclusive approach that incorporates the needs of all urban inhabitants, including animals, within the constraints of the natural environment. The paper proposes an optimized design framework that synergizes the urban ecosystem, emphasizing sustainable development with a holistic perspective.

Keywords: Urban Planning, Urban Animals, Animal Space, Animal Compatibility, China

1. Introduction

The coexistence of humans and animals traces its roots back to the intricate dance of interaction initiated over two million years ago on the expansive terrains of Africa. Yet, it wasn't until between 12,000 and 9,000 BC that animals, notably including dogs, cats, and birds, were domesticated and gracefully woven into the everyday tapestry of human life in Southwest Asia [1]. These animals, having undergone generations of genetic amalgamation and social acclimatization, earned the endearing title of 'pets'. Pets, a source of both emotional sustenance and practical utility, transitioned into entities regarded as private property [2]. Urban development and planning, in subsequent epochs, factored in the outdoor exigencies of pets as instrumental to augmenting human comfort. Pet parks and regimented green spaces emerged as the epitome of urban spaces tailored to accommodate and nurture the nuanced needs of pets. However, in the landscape of Asia, with a magnified lens on China, the narrative is tinged with complexity. Urban space is a prized and scarce commodity. Geopolitical dynamics and the unyielding pressure of global economic landscapes have often led to an urban planning paradigm where the natural element is relegated to the periphery. Chongqing, a pulsating metropolis in Southwest China, encapsulates this narrative. Amidst its burgeoning permanent population, the city witnesses a simultaneous upsurge in pet ownership. Yet, the city's narrative is emblematic of a broader national trend, echoed in metropolises like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, which collectively harbour twenty-eight percent of China's pet populace, yet grapple with the challenge of crafting commensurate pet and animal-friendly spaces [3]. Thus, this research

embarks on an insightful journey with Chongqing as its nexus – a city characterized by the paradox of qualitative richness yet quantitative paucity in pet-friendly spaces. The investigation is poised to unravel the intricate, multifaceted dimensions of establishing and nurturing urban spaces that not only resonate with the aesthetic and functional requisites of pets but are also emblematic of inclusivity, extending their embrace to the broader animal space.

2. Literature Review

Zhao & Gong's research on coping animals- swan, pigeon, dog and deer- in urban landscape design would benefit to restore public's mental health and increase green space usage, especially the relatively harmless pigeon [4]. However, their research result showed dogs would function contradictorily for scared people who want to use the space. They have proved that animals in urban spaces not only attribute to individual health but also engaged in ecological circle rehabilitation. This research attributed to demonstrating that urban animals do have positive influence and can be inclusive in urban environment, in term of animal friendly space. Nonetheless, the scope is not wide enough to prove that city is welcomed to all animals and ignored the consequences of multiple animals occurred in same location.

To make up on this research's limitation, Sanders's article emphasized the conflict between animals and human activities [5] Seattle be chosen as the case city and a series of facts has reflected unfavoured animal activities is not a simple controlment problem but more in depth of urban planning on animal practice problem. Sander's thesis provide evidence that contribute to construct urban animal friendly space that building fences on invisible species boundaries [5]. To accentuate the idea of animal-human relationship, Brown and Sutter's book introduces another idea about thinking of the nexus.

As the revolution of social structure, animal to human no longer means livestock but more in a sense of property. Brown acknowledges that people have the right to place their live stocks and pets which could be both dynamic and contradictory. This statement shapes the idea about animals can be considered as an important role in city building and brings the attention to pet friendly spaces to city.

3. Methodology

The primary objective of this research is rooted in a robust exploration of the public's perceptions, experiences, and anticipations concerning pet-friendly and animal-friendly spaces within urban settings, with a focus on Chongqing. Through a meticulously crafted online questionnaire, we sought to unravel intricate details pertaining to the citizens' levels of awareness, their satisfaction or lack thereof with existing pet-friendly spaces, and their aspirational visions for future enhancements.

The questionnaire was meticulously designed to ensure a comprehensive gathering of insights, offering participants an opportunity to express not only their satisfaction levels but also their envisaged improvements and enhancements. The research, while grounded in the exploration of current spaces, stretches its investigative arms into the anticipatory realms of future modifications, expected innovations, and the integration of holistic approaches that cater not just to pets but to a broader category of animals.

A distinct segment of the research hones in on a nuanced yet vital aspect – the differentiation between pet-friendly and animal-friendly spaces. It seeks to delve into the populace's comprehension of these terms, aiming to dissect whether these concepts are viewed through distinct lenses or are often merged into a singular, undifferentiated entity.

Thus, this study stands as an instrumental tool in mapping the contemporary landscape of Chongqing's pet-friendly spaces, projecting the evolutionary trajectory of these spaces, and unriddling the citizens' conceptual grasp of the dichotomy between spaces designed for pets and those

envisaged for a broader animal populace. The insights garnered are anticipated to inform policy, guide urban planning, and ignite discourse on the integrative and inclusive development of animal-friendly urban spaces.

3.1. Questionnaire

Questionnaire survey is the most common and fastest way to collect data. Through questionnaire survey, economic and time cost can be reduced to the greatest extent while ensuring efficiency. The questionnaire adopts a uniform format and collection method to ensure that each participant responds to the same questions to ensure the consistency of the collected data. In addition, the anonymity and purpose of the questionnaire helped encourage more honest and frank responses, leading to more accurate and reliable data. The questionnaire conducts in Chinese and contains a total of six questions, of which five are multiple-choice questions and one consists of open-ended question-and-answer questions (See Figure 1).

Chongqing Animal Friendly Space Satisfaction Survey
(This Questionnaire aims to investigate Chongqing residents' satisfaction with the existing pet friendly space and their understanding of animal friendly space)

1. How many pets do you have?
☐ None
☐ One
☐ Two
☐ Three
☐ More than three
2. Do you walk your pet?
☐ Yes
☐ No
3. What is the walking time range from your home to the nearest pet-friendly space?
☐ Within five minutes
☐ Five to fifteen minutes
☐ Sixteen to thirty minutes
☐ More than thirty minutes
4. How many pet-friendly spaces do you know in Chongqing
☐ None
☐ One to five spaces
☐ Six to ten spaces
☐ More than ten spaces
5. Do you understand the difference between a pet-friendly space and an animal-friendly space?
☐ Yes, I understand
☐ No, I don't understand
☐ I'm not sure
6. Do you think people should respect animals?
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Others (If you have selected this option, please provide additional information)

Thank you for your cooperation!

Figure 1: Chongqing animal friendly space satisfaction survey.

The specific questions are 1) How many pets do you have? 2) Do you need to walk your pets? 3) How long does it take from your home to the nearest pet-friendly place? 4) How many pet-friendly spaces do you know in Chongqing? 5) Do you notice what's the difference between pet-friendly and animal-friendly spaces? 6) Do you agree that humans should respect animals?

4. Results

From a total of 98 received responses, a minor fraction constituting three were discounted due to erroneous completion, where the respondents failed to mark the checkboxes appropriately. This curtailed the effective number of responses to 95, offering a robust dataset for analysis. A notable majority, precisely 56%, expressed a lack of inclination towards the utilization of pet-friendly spaces. This predominant stance underscores a prevalent perception among the respondents.

Delving deeper into the findings, a pattern emerges highlighting a limited understanding of animal-friendly spaces. For the majority, the concept of animal-friendly environments is constricted to those catering to pets, reflecting a significant gap in awareness and understanding. The distinction between spaces congenial for all animals and those tailored for pets remains obscure for a significant number of respondents.

A mere ten out of the 95 validated responses affirmed an understanding of the nuanced difference between urban animal-friendly and pet-friendly spaces. This revelation casts light on a substantial knowledge gap, an area warranting focused educational and awareness efforts.

One insightful response, in particular, stood out in the pool of feedback. It brought attention to a legal aspect that is often overlooked - the categorization of public pets as private property under the prevailing legal framework in China. This legal distinction inherently limits the scope of animal-friendly spaces, circumscribing them to the confines of pets and pet owners.

These insights derived from the 95 valid responses offer a comprehensive overview of prevailing perceptions and underscore areas requiring focused intervention, education, and perhaps, policy reconsideration. The amalgamation of these responses paves the way for an in-depth exploration of the existing urban spaces and the requisite adaptations to make them more inclusive for a broader range of animal species.

5. Discussion

People's understanding of pet-friendly Spaces is still based on meeting the needs of their owners. Few people who can truly regard pets as users of urban space take into account that pets are first animals and independent individuals who need to respect their nature, and then the so-called "contact with nature" in the city [6] The answers of pet owners and non-pet owners gave me a surprising answer to question F. Most pet owners and non-pet owners gave similar answers; that is, animals can never surpass humans—especially the right to use urban space. Urban space is designed to meet people's basic needs and can only be created by human initiative [7]. Therefore, As Brown Sutter mentioned, "Modern cities are the places where it has been easiest to make believe that we are separate from each other in the animal world. "[8] Based on this, it can be concluded from the survey results of primary research that pets or animals are never allowed to have an equal relationship with humans, let alone be above the authority of humans. However, it is difficult to reach a consensus from questionnaires and interviews that the current urban space design is unsuitable for urban pets or animals. The most common phenomena are ecological zones blocked by urban construction, sociopolitical systems unable to ensure animal safety, and few animal-friendly Spaces.

5.1. Pet-friendly spaces

Pet-friendly and animal-friendly spaces, although often used interchangeably, encapsulate distinct concepts in urban planning. Pet-friendly spaces are primarily designed to cater to the needs of domestic animals that have been integrated into human households. These are animals we are familiar with, that we have formed bonds with, and that have, over centuries, been adapted to our lifestyles. Pets, from dogs and cats to birds and more exotic companions, are considered members of our families and, by extension, members of our communities. Urban spaces that are deemed pet-friendly are,

therefore, structured to be welcoming, safe, and engaging for pets and their owners alike. They signify a city's acknowledgment of the intricate bond between humans and their pets and aim to enhance the quality of life for both.

5.2. Animal-friendly spaces

Animal-friendly spaces, on the other hand, embody a broader, more inclusive perspective. They extend beyond the domain of domesticated animals to embrace the diverse array of wildlife and other non-domesticated animals that inhabit our cities, either by choice or by circumstance. While pet-friendly spaces are a reflection of human affection and care for their domesticated companions, animal-friendly spaces indicate a city's recognition of its biodiverse inhabitants. It's a holistic approach to urban planning that considers the cohabitation of all living beings, recognizing that each species, whether pet, wildlife, or stray, contributes to the dynamic ecosystem of the city.

5.3. Challenges and solutions

However, herein lies a challenge and a discernible gap in contemporary urban development. The focus, both in planning and in public consciousness, leans heavily towards pet-friendly amenities. Parks for dogs, cat cafes, and other such spaces are commonplace and celebrated. Yet, genuine animal-friendly spaces that cater to the broader animal kingdom are not as prominent. This is not just an oversight but a reflection of a deeper, underlying perspective that values certain animals over others, tethered closely to ownership and domestication.

The dialogue surrounding animal-friendly spaces is still in its nascent stages, especially in bustling urban environments where human needs and commercial interests often take precedence. Yet, it's a conversation of paramount importance. The harmony of an urban environment is not just about the architecture, the commerce, or the human populace. It's a delicate dance of myriad species, each bringing a unique note to the city's symphony. Every creature, from the beloved pet dog to the often overlooked urban wildlife, plays a role in this intricate tapestry.

The transition from focusing merely on pet-friendly spaces to integrating comprehensive animal-friendly spaces will require a paradigm shift—a collective acknowledgment that every animal, irrespective of its domestication status or ownership, holds a rightful place in the urban ecosystem. It demands that urban planning transcend conventional boundaries to create environments where all living beings can thrive in harmony. The road ahead is complex, necessitating collaborative efforts spanning policy reform, public awareness, architectural innovation, and ecological conservation. Each step forward marks a stride towards cities that are not just clusters of human habitation but vibrant, biodiverse ecosystems radiating harmony, inclusivity, and life.

Building animal-friendly urban Spaces requires better urban planning policies and design strategies. First, governments need to pay attention to protecting non-human organisms and respecting their basic rights. Formulate corresponding shelter policies for stray animals and anti-animal cruelty laws. Secondly, strengthen the education and popularization of animal protection. Animal protection is not limited to pets defined as private property but also includes stray and wild animals that exist in urban Spaces. China's nine-year compulsory education system is a good opportunity to convey the harmonious coexistence of humans and animals to future youth. Zasloff et al.'s research confirms that exposing students to live animals not only meets the needs of the curriculum but also helps shape the humane values of young people for the future [9]. Finally, urban space is reshaped from urban design to weaken human arrogance and absolute control. Habitat garden was launched in Shanghai in 2017 to enhance the presence of urban animals by reusing abandoned urban Spaces to create gardens that connect the community and local ecology [10]. Examples of animal-tolerant urban Spaces worth studying include Nara Prefecture in Japan. The creation of the

sika deer park in Nara Prefecture, Japan, demonstrates an unusual relationship between people and wildlife, proving that cities can accommodate animals other than pets [11].

6. Conclusion

A thriving urban space is a delicate balance of natural and constructed elements, intertwining green environments and architectural marvels. While there's a discernible focus on pet-friendly designs, there's an uncharted territory in accommodating animals beyond pets. The delineation, though subtle, is profoundly consequential. Our collective affinity for pets, governed by established norms and mutual affection, doesn't extrapolate to other animals seamlessly. The challenges in creating spaces where non-pet animals can coexist harmoniously are rooted in a convoluted array of social, ethical, and practical considerations. Urban planning and design are intricate puzzles, where the integration of every life form is an ideal often chased, seldom realized. Presently, our urban constructs offer little latitude for this inclusive existence, as they're often enmeshed in human-centric ideologies.

But therein lies an opportunity, a prospect to reimagine and reshape urban spaces that align with a more encompassing ethos. The legal and social frameworks can indeed be instrumental, but perhaps there's an adjunct avenue to explore - the realm of philosophical and spiritual inclinations. Can religious beliefs and ethical constructs serve as catalysts to foster a symbiotic coexistence without undermining human comfort and progression? Every strand of religion and belief system imbues a reverence for life and nature. Harnessing these inherent values could unfurl a landscape where the rights and presence of animals are not just acknowledged but seamlessly integrated into the urban narrative. The creation of such spaces isn't just an architectural endeavor but a collective journey of revisiting, reevaluating, and redefining societal norms and values. It's about transcending the conventional and embracing a holistic perspective where urban spaces aren't just human habitats but a sanctuary of shared existence.

References

- [1] Arcari, P., Probyn-Rapsey, F., & Singer, H. (2020). *Where species don't meet: Invisibilized animals, urban nature and city limits*. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 4(3), 940–965. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848620939870>
- [2] Brown, F. L., & Sutter, P. S. (2017). *The City Is More Than Human: An Animal History of Seattle*. University of Washington Press.
- [3] Cihanger, D. (2018). SPACES BY PEOPLE: AN URBAN DESIGN APPROACH TO EVERYDAY LIFE/INSANLARIN URETTIKLERI MEKANLAR: GUNDELİK HAYATA KENTSEL TASARIM YAKLASIMI. *Mimarlık Fakültesi dergisi*, 35(2), 55–. <https://doi.org/10.4305/METU.JFA.2018.2.2>
- [4] Linder, D. (2021). *Animals and Humans: A Brief History*. <https://famous-trials.com/animalrights/2604-animals-and-humans-a-brief-history>
- [5] Zhao, J., & Gong, X. (2022). *Animals in urban green spaces in relation to mental restorative quality*. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 74, 127620–. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2022.127620>
- [6] Torii, H., Tatsuzawa, S. (2009). *Sika Deer in Nara Park: Unique Human-Wildlife Relations*. In: McCullough, D.R., Takatsuki, S., Kaji, K. (eds) *Sika Deer*. Springer, Tokyo. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-4-431-09429-6_25
- [7] TNC. (2022). "Nature makes the city more friendly" - TNC Shanghai Habitat Garden theme lecture is coming! https://www.tnc.org.cn/content/details27_618.html
- [8] VIRGINIA J. (1994). DOMESTIC PETS IN NEW URBAN AREAS, *Australian Planner*, 31:3, 148-152, DOI: 10.1080/07293682.1994.9657625
- [9] iResearch. (2021). 2021 White Paper on China's Pet Consumption Trends. https://pdf.dfcfw.com/pdf/H3_AP202105211493022800_1.pdf?1621613968000.pdf
- [10] Zasloff, R. ., Hart, L. ., & DeArmond, H. (1999). *Animals in elementary school education in California*. *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 2(4), 347–357. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327604jaws0204_8
- [11] Sanders, J. C. (2011). *Animal Trouble and Urban Anxiety: Human—Animal Interaction in Post—Earth Day Seattle*. *Environmental History*, 16(2), 226–261. <https://doi.org/10.1093/envhis/emr049>