

# Summary of Research on Urban Commercial Fitness Space from the Perspective of Space Justice

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## ABSTRACT

With the advancement of urbanization, the improvement of people's living standard and people's yearning for a better life, the residents' fitness demand is unprecedentedly high. As a lifestyle derived from urbanization, fitness consumption has become an important topic in the research of space production, and commercial fitness space as the most active space carrier of urban fitness activities has become the focus of this paper. By discriminating related terms, this paper sorts out the existing literature on space justice, commercial space and fitness space, and grasps the existing research macroscopically, so as to provide theoretical reference for empirical research on the distribution of commercial space from the perspective of space justice.

**Keywords:** *spatial justice; Commercial space; Fitness space*

## 1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Realistic background

Since the reform and opening up, in order to meet the needs of economic development, large-scale construction has been carried out inside the city, and the urban public leisure space has been squeezed by the urban construction land. In recent years, China has paid more attention to national fitness activities and the construction of a sports power, and issued relevant policies to promote national fitness as a national strategy<sup>[1]</sup>. This directly stimulates the rapid development of commercial gym in the city. As one of the leading industries of sports and leisure facilities, the optimization of commercial gym's layout in the urban space is conducive to the implementation of the national fitness strategy and meets people's spiritual and cultural life needs.

### 1.2 Theoretical background

In Space Production by Lefebvre, the production of urban space is influenced by various factors, and its form and organization are the reconstruction of cities by political, economic and social forces such as power, capital and class. Meanwhile, its form and organization also have a profound impact on the economic and social

relations of cities. The spatial view of neo-humanism<sup>[2]</sup> holds that the spatial composition of the environment gradually evolves to meet the needs of justice, cultural dignity and universal value protection of social space. As an integral part of urban space, commercial fitness space should meet the diversified needs of multi-subject society.

## 2. RELATED CONCEPTS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Definition of related concepts

#### 2.1.1 Space justice

Justice is the universal appeal of modern society. Spatial justice<sup>[3]</sup> is the product of the combination of justice and geographical space, as well as the spatial response of social justice. The main problem of the principle of spatial justice is the basic structure and organizational arrangement of space. Its theoretical perspective is the possession and distribution of spatial resources in the process of spatial production, and the purport is to seek possible ways to achieve justice through the adjustment and reconstruction of spatial production modes<sup>[4]</sup>. From the perspective of concept connotation, spatial justice is usually regarded as the social fairness and justice of citizens' use of space, that is, the justice of space in production, possession,

utilization, exchange, consumption and other aspects. However, we should realize that there is no absolute space of justice.

### *2.1.2 Commercial fitness space*

Mankind's exploration of space has a long history. Space is first of all a geographical concept, which is the place where things exist and happen. It is simply considered as the container of everything. Fitness space is the spatial projection of residents' fitness activities. Commercial fitness space refers to the leisure activity place in a city that provides people with fitness services and facilities for the purpose of profit. It is an important part of urban leisure space, the basis of urban fitness and leisure activities, and a sign of urban humanization. With the improvement of residents' leisure and fitness awareness, whether its spatial distribution is reasonable is related to residents' health and happy life.

## **2.2 Related research progress at home and abroad**

### *2.2.1 Space justice*

#### 2.2.1.1 Research progress of foreign space justice

Since 1960s, a series of urban spatial problems and social injustices in western countries have aroused the thinking of urban sociology and urban geographers. In 1968, the Welsh social planner Brandian Davis first put forward the concept of "territorial justice", believing that the distribution of social resources should not only conform to the actual situation, but also meet the actual needs of society. From the perspective of David Harvey's geographical space criticism, the concept of "social justice" is described as "territorial redistribution justice" to emphasize the just geographical distribution process and the equality of resource distribution<sup>[5]</sup>, to Lefebvre's spatial production theory that social relations project themselves into space and produce relational space, and to call for equal distribution of urban resources<sup>[6]</sup>. Then Edward Sawyer, the representative of postmodern geography, formally established the theory of spatial justice and put forward the concept of "third space"<sup>[7]</sup>. "Spatial justice" has profoundly influenced and changed the significance of contemporary urban construction<sup>[8]</sup>.

#### 2.2.1.2 Research progress of domestic space justice

Compared with foreign countries, China's research on space justice started relatively late, and space justice first attracted the attention of some philosophers and sociologists in China. These scholars introduced the ideas of David Harvey and Lefebvre into China. This period mainly focused on combing and explaining the

connotation of foreign space justice documents. Xingzhong Wang first introduced the idea of spatial justice into the geographical field, and put forward "spatial accessibility" with the direction of "social justice and spatial justice"<sup>[9]</sup>. With the cultural and social turn of geography and the rapid spread of the trend of thought of spatial justice in China, more and more scholars pay attention to spatial justice. Such as housing differentiation, chaos in school districts, gentrification caused by old city reconstruction, residence filtering caused by residents' relocation and other social phenomena.

### *2.2.2 Commercial space*

#### 2.2.2.1 Research progress of foreign commercial space

In the 1930s, the academic circles in developed countries abroad began to study the spatial distribution of urban commerce, mainly on the premise of unreal assumptions, by establishing spatial models to study the spatial structure and spatial layout law of commerce<sup>[10]</sup>. With the rise of econometric revolution, econometric methods are applied to the analysis of commercial space<sup>[11]</sup>. In the 1960s, geographers were dissatisfied with the fact that individuals had different qualities, different motivations and responded to different environmental characteristics in different ways, and strengthened the study of commercial space oriented by consumer behavior and consumer psychology, and the Behavioral Geography School of commercial space research appeared. After World War II, the western retail industry entered the golden age, and the trend of chain and large-scale retail industry was obvious. There were a large number of modern shopping centers with different commodity levels distributed in urban CBD, which met the personalized shopping needs of different groups. Since the post-industrialization and the new century, the research on urban commercial space in foreign academic circles has become more in-depth and detailed, and the spatial research on urban commercial (field) categories, brand stores and commercial space structure has been strengthened.

#### 2.2.2.2 Research progress of domestic commercial space

With the rapid development of China's social economy, the research on commercial space in domestic academic circles has risen rapidly. In 1980s, some scholars selected domestic developed cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou) as research areas, and made empirical research on the spatial structure of urban commercial space, the location of commercial outlets, the spatial distribution law of commercial scale grades, etc. With the advancement of urbanization and the rapid

development of commerce, urban commercial space also showed new characteristics and trends, and some scholars tried to explain the formation and evolution mechanism of commercial format physical space from the perspective of consumption behavior. With the change of commercial space structure, some scholars<sup>[12]</sup> think that individual and social behavior are important factors to guide the change of commercial space structure. In recent years, with the advancement of new urbanization, some scholars began to pay attention to the layout of community business centers to meet the consumption needs of community residents.

### *2.2.3 Fitness space*

#### *2.2.3.1 Research progress of fitness space abroad*

The "Muscle Beach" which appeared on the west coast of California in 1930s was the beginning of the development of fitness facilities. During World War II, gymnasiums were responsible for training national soldiers. In 1970s, with the rapid economic development, the gym got rid of military authoritarianism and became a part of residents' entertainment consumption. At present, the western research on fitness space mainly includes four aspects. One is to pay attention to the relationship between the use of non-professional fitness space (green space, park, recreational facilities) and residents' health. Second, based on the differences of residents' gender, race, occupation, economic status and age, the possibility of different social groups to obtain fitness space and the impact of fitness on their physical health was discussed. The third is to study the location changes and causes of fitness space in different historical periods. Fourth, the minority groups in the fitness space received space injustice.

#### *2.2.3.2 Research progress of domestic fitness space*

Modern Chinese urban fitness activities originated in the late Qing Dynasty, expanded in the Republic of China, shrank in the period of Japanese invasion of China, and flourished again in the contemporary era. China's fitness activities started late, and the existing research mainly focuses on three aspects: First, the function of fitness and leisure places. The research shows that fitness and leisure places provide sports space, a platform for emotional communication, a place to relax and make friends, and a stage for self-expression. And through the unique atmosphere, facilities and services of fitness places, the basic functional purpose is achieved. Second, the research on the restriction of fitness space to different groups, using the research method of behavioral geography to explore the restricting factors of sports fitness and leisure participation from micro-individuals. Third, the spatial pattern of fitness venues, including the distribution differences of fitness space in urban space dimension

and the spatial evolution characteristics of fitness venues in time dimension.

## **3. RESEARCH REVIEW**

A great deal of research has been done on space justice and commercial space at home and abroad, which has laid a good theory and method for this research. As a concrete form of commercial space, the distribution of gymnasium is influenced by commercial space. The early research on urban commercial space in foreign countries was mostly limited to the research on the central place system of material space. After the second industrial revolution, the urbanization process accelerated and the economy developed rapidly, and the commercial space itself showed a diversified trend, with the emergence of super shopping centers, brand stores, chain retail stores and so on, in order to meet the individual needs of different groups. At this time, behavioral geographers apply the research results of psychology and sociology to the study of urban geography, and turn their attention to physical space to people themselves. After entering the 21st century, the trend of thought about spatial justice is rising, and some scholars have conducted extensive research on commercial gymnasiums from the perspective of spatial justice, mostly taking a certain social group as the research object. And the research perspective starts from micro-individuals to explore whether the distribution of certain social resources has achieved spatial justice for specific groups.

Domestic scholars benefited from foreign research results and had abundant theories at the early stage of research, so early scholars mainly conducted empirical research. With the deepening of China's reform and opening up, the research on the influence of consumer behavior on business layout began to prevail, but most of them took the eastern coastal cities as research sites, studied the location, distribution, causes and spatial-temporal evolution of commercial fitness space on different research scales, and it was rare to study the spatial distribution of commercial fitness space from the perspective of spatial justice under the background of new urbanization.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

Justice is a value universally recognized and pursued by people. Both the ancient Chinese pre-Qin dynasties and the western city-state democracy reflect people's yearning for justice. Spatial justice is the manifestation of social justice in space. Nowadays, spatial justice has become an important issue in China's urban planning, and the research field covers a wide range of areas, which has penetrated into all aspects of our life. As an important part of residents' leisure and entertainment life, commercial fitness space is an important way to realize

people's comprehensive and healthy development, and its space research should return to the ontology of "people". In terms of spatial distribution, we should pay more attention to the fairness of different social groups' right to use fitness space, and fully coordinate different interest subjects (government, enterprises, society and residents) to create a new people-oriented urbanization from multiple perspectives of space production and distribution.

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